Psychodrama Handout
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Jacob Levy Moreno

 EARLY LIFE:
- Born May 18th, 1889 in Bucharest Romania to a Sephardi Jewish family
- In 1895 his family moved to Vienna to escape political turmoil and embrace the intellectual creativity of Vienna at this time.
- Moreno was recognized as being a particularly bright child, full of spontaneity and creativity.
- He was very fascinated by interpersonal relationships at a young age, which he explored through his siblings and neighborhood friends.
- From childhood, Moreno desired to be recognized as exceptional.
- He had a reputation as being a rebellious youngster, and he was known for telling wild stories in the park to other young people, which usually focused on the defiance of authority. This earned him a mixed reputation among adults.

 EARLY ADULTHOOD:
- He studied Mathematics, Medicine, and Philosophy at the University of Vienna.
  ○ He was particularly interested in the social ties that bind and separate people.
- In 1910, Moreno developed the Theater of Spontaneity, which focuses on the concept of acting out improvisational impulses.
- Began rejecting the ideas of Freud while still in college.
  ○ Moreno famously recalls an encounter with Sigmund Freud in 1912:
    "I attended one of Freud's lectures. He had just finished an analysis of a telepathic dream. As the students filed out, he singled me out from the crowd and asked me what I was doing. I responded, 'Well, Dr. Freud, I start where you leave off. You meet people in the artificial setting of your office. I meet them on the street and in their homes, in their natural surroundings. You analyze their dreams. I give them the courage to dream again. You analyze and tear them apart. I let them act out their conflicting roles and help them to put the parts back together again."
- Rather than focusing on clients’ pasts, Moreno preferred to focus on the present and future with particular attention paid to interpersonal relationships.
- He became a Doctor of Medicine in 1917.
- During the end of WWI, he was assigned to a children’s hospital in the refugee camp of Mitterndorf in Austria.
  ○ He became very attuned to social relations in this setting, noting how these helped individuals endure extremely difficult circumstances.
  ○ He began diagraming the interpersonal relationships of the people here.
  ○ He also became very sensitive to cultural differences and individual experiences.

 MIDDLE ADULTHOOD:
- In 1925 Moreno moved to the U.S. to take a teaching position at Columbia University.
He loved the freedom he experienced in New York City, thus believing it was the ideal place to develop his theories.

- He continued researching and diagraming interpersonal relationships in various settings, such as the Hudson School for Girls and Sing Sing Prison.
- He believed that those who were able to relate well to others would ultimately survive and create a new world order.
- He also held a position at the New School for Social Research.
- In 1932 Moreno introduced group psychotherapy to the American Psychiatric Association. However, group psychotherapy as conceived by Moreno was more like individual therapy in a group setting than our contemporary conceptualization of group therapy in so far as relationships and interactions within the group are intended to be reciprocal.

Theory of Interpersonal Relations:
- In 1937 Moreno created a new academic journal, *Sociometry: A Journal of Interpersonal Relations*.
  - By spearheading research and collaboration between multiple disciplines, Moreno hoped to develop an integrated approach to interpersonal relations.
  - *Sociometry* also helped provide a venue for Moreno’s interest in research.
- Moreno continued to develop his theory, which he called the Theory of Interpersonal Relations.
  - Any given moment is involved in change, thus demanding a reaction.
  - He believed “the moment” to be often undervalued, for it serves as a gateway to creativity and authenticity, which is best accessed via spontaneity—an inherently genuine expression.
    - Spontaneity demands flexibility, which in turn brings us in contact with un-flexible aspects of our self.
      - These aspects are connected to our values, fears, and most protected and defended parts of our self.
    - Increasing our capacity for spontaneity increases our ability to connect with our true values—our authentic self—and helps free us from the constructs associated with our fears.
    - Spontaneity is attitudinal and may happen through thought, emotion, or action.
  - Equilibrium is established by a balanced proportion of spontaneity to momentary change.
    - When spontaneity is reduced in proportion to change, disequilibrium arises.
    - Disequilibrium may manifest from, and in, mind, body, or emotion.
- Moreno’s Theory of Interpersonal Relations includes several social science tools, such as “sociodrama,” “psychodrama,” “sociometry,” and “sociatry.”

Later Life and Death:
- Moreno continued to develop his theories and establish teaching centers and institutes,
with a focus on working within university settings.

- In the 1950’s, he handed over his control of Sociometry to budding contributors and began travelling the world, broadening his experience and spreading his ideas.
- He continued to revise and develop his work until late in his life.
- Moreno died in New York City in 1974, aged 84. He chose to die by abstaining from all food and water after a long illness.

**Basic Elements of Psychodrama**

**Director**
- the catalyst, facilitator, analyst

**Protagonist**
- the person who works on stage during the action phase of the group
- Considered the group’s representative, working with the theme that is most relevant for the group at the time

**Auxiliary Egos**
- anyone in the group that plays a role representing a significant other in the life of the protagonist

**Stage**
- constructed reality the protagonist's individual space

**The Group**
- Many societal roles in the group ex: If the protagonist is an alcoholic then there may be a parent, sibling, child, partner, etc who can present their own view of what happened to them in relation to an alcoholic family member
- Consistent change in role structure (based on who you are asked to play) can help prevent the role rigidity that may occur in other groups

**Stages of Psychodrama**

**The Warm-up**
- Serves to produce an atmosphere of creative possibility, it creates a safe place in which the individual can establish trust with the director, the group, and the method of psychodrama
- Warm up exercises fall into group: introductory (getting to know you), physical (designed to increase energy levels), intimacy (to increase trust amongst group members), protagonist-centered (establishing the protagonist in the group, deepen levels of personal awareness)

**The Action**
- The selected protagonist takes the work to the core of the problem
- Role-playing portrayal of various key scenes
- Uses various techniques to reveal the problem and move towards its solution

**Sharing**
- Intensive examination by the protagonist and the group of the meaning of the session

**Psychodrama Techniques**
- Doubling
- Role Reversal
- The Mirror Technique
- The Soliloquy
- Future Projection technique

**Strengths**
- Actively involves clients
- Can be integrated easily with other theories and interventions
- Versatile, can be used with many populations
- Emotionally powerful
- Empowers client

**Limitations**
- May not work with antisocial, introverted, or anxious clients
- Director must be weary of physical contact, confidentiality among members of group
- Requires many roles to be played and focuses mainly on one “protagonist” at a time

**Current Application**
- Children & adolescents
- Marital & couple counseling
- Unresolved loss, trauma, addictions
- Mood disorders
- LGBTQ community

**Professionalism & Training**
- American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama ([www.asgpp.org](http://www.asgpp.org))
- Zerka T. Moreno Foundation (wife of J.T. Moreno)
- Trainings offered internationally, need 780 hours of training, 52 weeks of supervised experience to become certified