

Sociodrama à Deux: A New Hybrid

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Sociodrama à deux (SAD) is a new variation of sociodrama which combines elements of psychodrama, sociodrama, and motivational interviewing. SAD allows clinicians to work with clients in the early stages of the change process. Safety is regulated by limiting the use of self-disclosure through the use of a fictional character. This article outlines the theory of this new hybrid technique and the procedure.

KEYWORDS: Sociodrama; psychodrama; psychodrama à deux; motivational interviewing; safety; stages of change; role development; bibliodrama.

Sociodrama à deux (SAD) is a new hybrid that combines psychodrama à deux (PAD), sociodrama/bibliodrama (SOC), and motivational interviewing (MI). This blend was developed primarily as a way to bring safety to the early stages of the psychotherapy process. Counseling individuals who have built up layers of denial or who are not yet warmed up to the process of intrapsychic development can be slow. At times, it can be extremely intimidating for the client. Therefore, out of our endeavor to create a safe environment for our client's early therapeutic work, the concept of SAD emerged.

PSYCHODRAMA

Psychodrama and sociodrama were developed by Jacob Levi Moreno (1889–1974) after extensive work and observation of various marginalized groups of people (Marineau, 1989). Psychodrama and sociodrama were designed to explore roles, relationships, and connections both individually and in groups (Sternberg and Garcia, 1989). Moreno believed that each person is a composite of the roles he or she plays. In his early groundbreaking work, Moreno (1946) explained that roles are culturally recognized clusters of behavior which have both collective and private components. For example, the collective role of a teacher has many tasks

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that are shared by all teachers, such as grading papers, assigning homework, and having parent–teacher conferences. However, privately, how each individual teacher handles these aspects of the role is very different. For instance, each teacher has his or her own way of handling discipline, building community in the classroom, and choosing the types of assignments to hand out.

Moreno developed psychodrama to explore the private aspects of roles and sociodrama to explore the collective aspects. He believed that psychodrama dealt with an individual's exploration of issues and roles within the safe structure of a supportive group, while sociodrama helped individuals to explore the collective aspects of roles within a social context or group.

SOCIODRAMA

Where psychodrama endeavors to help the protagonist to understand, have catharsis, and integrate his or her own experience on a *personal* level, sociodrama is a group's collective decision to explore a relevant topic (Moreno, 1953). In a sociodrama there is no therapeutic contract except in the sense of understanding an issue as it relates to all. Therefore, no one expects to have to share personal information. Sociodrama is used to educate and explore feelings and issues related to particular situations and has always been used in a group structure. Traditionally, sociodrama has been used as a way to build safety in environments where sharing is considered risky, including settings where self-disclosure might endanger the individual's privacy or status within a group. Schools, workplace environments, and community groups are typical places where exploration of specific issues might be threatening. Sternberg and Garcia (1989) describe sociodrama as

“a group action method in which participants act out agreed-upon social situations spontaneously. Sociodrama helps people to express their thoughts and feelings, solve problems and clarify their values. Rather than discussing social issues, sociodrama gets people out of their chairs and exploring in action topics of interest to them. As they explore various issues, they put themselves in other people's shoes in order to understand themselves and others better.” (p. 12)

BIBLIODRAMA

Bibliodrama, as an offshoot of sociodrama, was developed by Peter Pitzele in Europe in the 1970s and has since been gaining popularity in the United States. It uses the written word to explore the collective role aspects of Christian and Jewish scriptures, fairy tale, story, and myth (Condon, 2007). It is used in the same sorts of environments that sociodrama would be used. Through the use of bibliodrama, people are able to explore the deeper, often hidden meaning of these parables and stories in action, applying the knowledge and insight gained to their own spiritual journey, while deepening their connection to their faith. Pitzele stated that bibliodrama is akin to the Jewish concept of midrash, where the rabbi would make up stories to illustrate particular passages from the Torah.

Story and myth have been part of human culture since long before the written word. In earlier cultures, stories were used to impart religious values, illustrate cultural traditions, and hand down political ideologies. It was not until the days of early Greek theater that the value of personal catharsis through watching action was realized. The impact of story and myth carries on today, as evidenced by the popularity of the movie industry, where people flock to lose themselves in others people's stories.

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was one of the first psychoanalysts to identify the power of archetypes and myths as ways of connecting to our deeper truths (Jung, 1964). His theory was rich with symbols and projections of the individual's inner world. Jung spent a great deal of time looking at the stories, myths, and belief structures of human experience. He pointed out that themes seem to recycle in various forms but with similar icons. The legend of King Arthur and the more modern movie version of *Star Wars* are examples of the repeating themes of the battle between good and evil. Since the beginning of time, stories have been used to teach, entertain, and provide an emotional release, proving that the power of story is invaluable when contemplating the complexities of the human psyche.

Greek theater is an example of the first vicarious experience of catharsis and the benefits of emotional release. People were able to safely explore another's story while making connections on an unconscious or conscious level. When attending a movie, one need not explain to their friend the reasons they are crying over the loss of Old Yeller, because most of us have had a similar experience of loss. Therefore, the projective quality of story as a medium for emotional exploration without the pressure of self-disclosure, through bibliodrama, is infinitely safer than the exploration of a personal story accompanied by the risk of self-disclosure through psychodrama.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

The last piece of the SAD hybrid is the integration of motivational interviewing (MI) techniques as a way to bridge the safety of the impersonal story to the increasingly threatening aspect of the personal. The theory behind MI shares commonalities with Moreno's theory of psychodrama. MI emphasizes the importance of a nondirective approach to helping people process through ambivalence and identify strengths while building their own motivational cues. Miller and Rollnick (2002) view Motivational Interviewing as a client centered approach that works with an individual's ambivalence towards change. It is goal oriented and is designed to elicit a collaborative response to problem solving. Originally developed for work with addictions, MI provided an alternative to the confrontational approach many clinicians had taken when working with people with addictions (LaChance et al., 2009). Rather than challenging resistance directly, MI believes that resistance arises when the therapist and the client are at different stages in the change process.

The four major components of MI are (Miller and Rollnick, 2002):

- expressing empathy (client centered)
- developing discrepancy (pointing out inconsistencies)

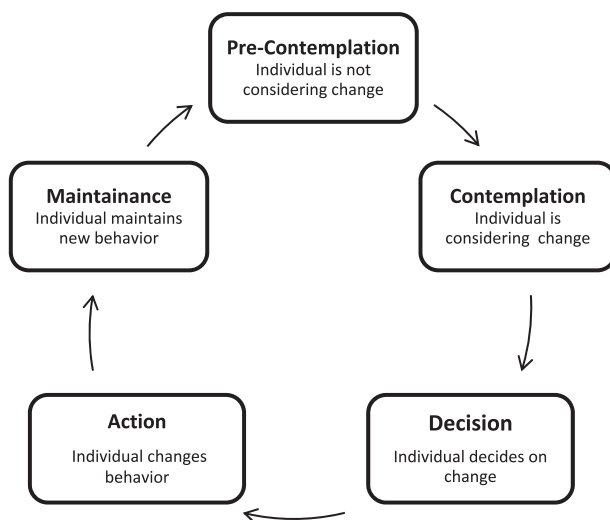


Figure 1. Stages of change model.

- rolling with resistance (not fighting against client's perceptions)
- supporting self-efficacy (identifying strengths)

MI uses the Stages of Change model (see Figure 1; Prochaska and Norcross, 2001). It purports that many clients come to counseling in the precontemplation or contemplation stage of change (Miller and Rollnick, 2002). Simultaneously, the therapist is in the action stage of change. As the result of the two parties' being in different stages, the client appears to be resistant to change. Rather than confront the resistance directly, this model works *with* the resistance to help the client change. MI uses reflective questioning and empathic listening as a way to help the client identify obstacles to change (Miller and Rollnick, 2010).

PSYCHODRAMA À DEUX

While psychodrama explores personal stories within the context of a group environment, psychodrama à deux (meaning "psychodrama for two"), recognized by Moreno as a valid therapeutic method (Knittel, 2009), allows individuals to explore threatening issues in the safety of the counseling office one-on-one with their therapist. Psychodrama à deux explores the same personal stories as in a traditional psychodrama, except without the audience as a witness or in an auxiliary role (Buchanan and Garcia, 2008). The intimate and limited scope of a drama without an audience provides a level of safety for self-disclosure that is not found in the larger group (Stein & Callahan, 1982).

Sociodrama à deux (SAD) combines the safety of the individual environment of psychodrama à deux (PAD), the meaningful structure of story

from sociodrama and bibliodrama (SOC), and the clinical direction of motivational interviewing. Thus SAD facilitates insight with clients in the earlier stages of the counseling process, when fear of approaching personal core issues might be at its highest level.

MI AND PSYCHODRAMA

Motivational interviewing and psychodrama work well together, as both are inherently collaborative approaches, both are client centered, and both work with the individual’s lack of warm-up (psychodrama) or the individual’s resistance (MI). In psychodrama, during the warm-up the therapist follows the protagonist (the client) as a way to help move the process forward. In MI, the therapist works with the client at whichever stage he or she presents, rolling with the resistance and not attempting to move the client faster than he or she is able (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999). Both modalities offer a holistic approach where the client has his or her own resources and the facilitator helps him or her connect with those resources. This collaborative approach helps to build rapport and facilitates the building of trust. In the initial stages of counseling, when the therapist is building rapport with the client, it is important for the client to know the therapist is able to see the world through the client’s eyes. In MI this is accomplished through reflective listening and empathic understanding, while in psychodrama this is done through the use of doubling statements. As the client works through issues, both MI and psychodrama seek to build self-efficacy while identifying strengths and instilling hope. The use of SAD as a technique cements this in action by having the client actually step into the role of the resource that is able to help him or her make the changes he or she is seeking.

SAD AND SAFETY

We can conceptualize sociodrama à deux within a construct of self-disclosure on a continuum with psychodrama at one end and sociodrama at the other. The continuum represents the level of vulnerability or discomfort the client may feel in working in each of these areas. Thus, one of the many benefits of SAD is its inherent level of safety. While SAD may evoke strong emotions, it allows the client to be once removed from dealing with issues directly and hence provides another layer of safety for the client.

Psychodrama (PSY)		Psychodrama A Deux (PAD)			Sociodrama (SOC)			Sociodrama A Deux (SAD)	
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Most Vulnerable							Least Vulnerable		

Psychodrama: This end of the continuum represents the greatest degree of risk taking and vulnerability experienced by the client in working through issues as

it is done in a group context. The client's (protagonist's) story is the one being told. Self-disclosure may feel more threatening to the client due to fears of being judged by other group members (Brown, 2009).

Psychodrama à deux: In this modality the client is still working with personal issues directly. It is the client's (protagonist's) story being told within the context of individual therapy. The client (protagonist) will be using the empty chair for other roles in the drama, and the only other person present in session is the therapist. According to Bailey (2007, p. 168), "sometimes a situation is too emotional or intense for a client to encounter in therapy without becoming overwhelmed emotionally. More distance, through fictionalizing a situation, using a metaphor to represent the problem, or using a technique like puppets, removes the situation a step from reality." Psychodrama à deux, like MI, reflects the Person Centered Approach of Carl Rogers, fostering an environment of safety through accurate empathy, congruence, and acceptance. These factors strengthen the therapeutic alliance, enhance safety, and encourage self-disclosure (Rogers, 1961).

Sociodrama à deux: This modality represents an even safer—or rather, less threatening—method of resolving issues. Sternberg and Garcia (1989, p. 5) say, "Sociodrama is one of the most efficient yet safe methods available for obtaining information in the area of psychic emotional experience without actually undergoing the actual experience." The safety of sociodrama combined with the safety of individual therapy creates a metaphorical safety net. Rather than working on personal issues directly, the client is asked to step into the role of a mythological, fictional, or historical figure who can help with the issue being presented. For example, if a woman is working on issues of empowerment, she can step into the role of an empowered woman such as Oprah Winfrey or Joan of Arc. She will then be able to speak from the role about her qualities and available resources. The therapist may then interview this person in the role and through role reversal assist the client in claiming her own empowerment. Since this is a therapy session and the contract with the therapist is to work on personal issues, the client does in turn then relate this work to her own life.

Sociodrama: This modality represents the greatest safety in dealing with issues, as it does not directly work on any one client's particular issues. (Sternberg and Garcia, 1989). Sociodrama deals with collective roles, while the three techniques previously discussed deal with personal roles. Sociodrama is enacted in group, as is psychodrama, but it operates from the group's consciousness. For example, if the group wanted to explore the impact of domestic violence on a family, the group would create a composite family filled with an array of characters. Together the group members would decide who was in the family, what type of violence was being perpetrated, who was the victim, and so on. The personal story of any one group member would not be told in this context. While there could be members in the group who had been affected by domestic violence, their own personal stories would not be told. After the sociodrama, and during the sharing phase of the enactment, group members would be asked to share what they learned about domestic violence and would not be asked to share information from their own lives. Instead, the facilitator would encourage sharing of a personal response (e.g., "What did you think or feel about the situation?") to the experience

of the enactment. Certainly this might bring up feelings for the participants, but again, they would not be asked to share from their own experience. In this way, sociodrama is very impactful on everyone both personally and impersonally, but the level of self-disclosure remains focused on the topic as opposed to the personal issues (Garcia, 2011).

With these techniques it is important to note that psychodrama, psychodrama à deux, and sociodrama à deux are all therapeutic modalities. The contract is to work on personal issues. In sociodrama the contract is to work with social issues, not personal issues. Therefore, participants avoid disclosure of a personal history. In her article "Exploring the Boundaries between Sociodrama and Psychodrama," Garcia states, "The sociodrama contract is one in which group members agree to assume hypothetical roles spontaneously, not their personal roles. The contract is educational rather than therapeutic" (2011, p. 41).

HOW IT WORKS

Once the client has identified the character he or she would like to work with, the therapist asks him or her to identify a place in the room or an object to hold the place of that character. Many psychodramatists use props such as scarves, stuffed animals, and so on to hold the place of the character that has been brought into the room. In lieu of those, a pillow on the floor or in a chair could be used. Once the character is physically situated, the client reverses roles with the character. Role reversal is a psychodramatic technique where the client physically changes places with the character; that is, the client moves from his or her sitting position to the place where the character is located. The client is then interviewed in the role of that character using open-ended MI questions (see appendix for examples). Keeping in mind Prochaska and Norcross's (2001) stages of change, the therapist must tailor the MI questions to reflect the client's relevant stage of change, such as precontemplation, contemplation, and so on.

Plenty of time should be given to the development of insight while the client is in the role-reversed position of the character. Gentle probing questions, using an attitude of benign curiosity, help the client to problem solve, gain insight, and discover new areas of growth. Special attention should be given to exploration of the specific character's strengths as a means of bridging the gap between fantasy and reality. Once these strengths have been specified, they can be translated back to the client's individual life situation. It is often easier to identify another's strengths, especially those of a fictional character, than it is to identify our own.

Once the interview process feels complete and the client feels that he or she has learned all he or she can, the client is then role-reversed back into him- or herself and his or her own physical position to process the similarities and differences between his or her own life and that of the character. The client identifies how the data learned from the character will help to resolve the issue he or she came into session with. Just as in psychodrama, one of the benefits of SAD is the action insight which comes directly from actually stepping into the role of the character so that the client embodies the new knowledge and insights. Often act hungers (a strong desire to act) will arise based upon the newly gained perspective. The job of the therapist at this point is to consolidate, review, and help

the client put structure around the experience, while coming up with creative ways to move it out into the world. Finally, as the client sits with the newly acquired perspective, it is important for the therapist to emphasize the importance of taking time to reflect and integrate the material. New and important decisions should be put off for at least twenty-four hours.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

As we have previously stated, Moreno developed psychodrama to explore the private aspects of roles and sociodrama to explore the collective aspects of roles. Sociodrama traditionally has been used in a group setting to explore a hypothetical situation the group agrees upon, and is not used to tell a specific person's story. For example, a group of teachers may want to explore the issue of bullying in school. The group identifies the enactors in the sociodrama: the bully, the victim, and other students and teachers involved in the situation. Group members volunteer to play specific roles and enact the scene. The director can stop the action at any time and ask someone else to step into one of the roles, or an audience member may double for anyone in the enactment. During the sharing, participants discuss what they learned about bullying and how they might handle the situation differently. Even though some of the teachers might have had personal experience with bullying, no one would ask them to share anything specific from their own life history.

In SAD we bridge the gap between sociodrama and psychodrama, and the method becomes a tool for use in therapeutic settings with a therapeutic contract. It then becomes a new method for using sociodrama in an individual setting rather than a group setting, and the focus changes from collective roles back to the personal. The client and therapist use SAD to help explore dimensions of a problem or issue from a less vulnerable perspective.

Both PAD and SAD are used in the context of individual therapy, and in both the therapist is directing and guiding the course of the action. Both of these methods use core components of psychodrama such as doubling, role reversal, and role training as techniques of the work. In PAD and SAD, the therapist doubles only for the role the protagonist/client occupies, whether the client is in the role of the auxiliary ego or in his or her own role. In sociodrama, any audience member may double and exchange roles with any character to gain perspective from different viewpoints.

CONCLUSION

Sociodrama à deux offers clinicians working with clients in the early stages of the psychotherapy process a new method to help their clients work with difficult issues in a format that enhances safety and reduces feelings of vulnerability. By harnessing the projective power of story, SAD allows the client to be once removed from the issue and explore the problem through the role of a character. This distance helps the client gain insight into his or her problem while simultaneously warming him or her up to future work.

As an action method, SAD has many benefits beyond its inherent safety. It helps clients explore creative solutions and practice newly acquired skills in the role-taking stage of role development, provides role relief, and in the earliest stages of change provides room for role contemplation. It allows clients to think and move creatively outside of the box into a greater number of options. Lastly, the use of SAD helps build trust as the therapist and client together discover new and important information for the process of change and the development of insight. It brings together many different types of therapeutic interventions and combines the best of all for the enhancement of a client's growth.

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APPENDIX

Examples of SAD Using Motivational Interviewing Questions

- 1. Joan of Arc, how did you maintain the course despite so much adversity?
- 2. Cowardly Lion, when did you realize you had courage?
- 3. Tin Man, what are your strengths?
- 4. Cinderella, how did you deal with your wicked stepmother?
- 5. Peter Pan, why do you think happy thoughts allowed you to fly?
- 6. Peter Pan, do you ever help others to have happy thoughts?
- 7. Oprah Winfrey, how do you feel about being a role model?
- 8. Tinker Bell, what makes you so feisty?
- 9. Snow White, how do you feel about having to clean up after everyone?

Mock Interview

Director Cinderella, how did you deal with your wicked stepmother?

Client Well, I had to find ways to see the positive aspects of my situation. I would wake up each morning and think of all of the things I was grateful for.

Director Really? And what kinds of things did you find to be grateful for?

Client I was grateful for a roof over my head, for all of the animals in my garden, and for the flowers that grew right outside of my window.

Director When things were particularly bad, when you were treated so poorly, which strengths did you call on?

- Client I used my resiliency to keep working hard, my work ethic to get me through hard tasks, and I sang happy tunes to remind me of happier days. I knew if I kept my spirits up then I was the winner and not my stepmother.
- Director So hope was directly related to your ability to change the way you thought about your circumstances?
- Client Oh yes, the more positive my thoughts the better I felt.
- Director Do you think that positive thinking helped you to attract the prince at the ball?
- Client I think the prince thought I was beautiful because I smiled and was confident and was able to think positively about myself even though I was masquerading as a princess. Positive thinking made me confident. And a fairy godmother didn't hurt either.
- Director So your fairy godmother really believed in you and supported you. Was that important?
- Client I think that having someone who believes in you and wants you to succeed is really important.