



- 5 Wang PS, Berglund P, Kessler RC. Recent care of common mental disorders in the United States: prevalence and conformance with evidence-based recommendations. *J Gen Intern Med* 2000; **15**: 284–92.
- 6 Wang PS, Lane M, Olfson M, Pincus HA, Wells KB, Kessler RC. Twelve-month use of mental health services in the United States: results from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 2005; **62**: 629–40.
- 7 Soloff C, Lawrence D, Johnstone R. *LSAC Technical Paper No. 1: Sample Design*. Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2005.
- 8 Australian Government Department of Human Services. *Medicare Statistics*. Australian Government Department of Human Services, 2018 (<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/about-us/statistical-information-and-data/medicare-statistics>).
- 9 Hiscock H, Danchin MH, Efron D, Gulenc A, Hearps S, Freed GL, et al. Trends in paediatric practice in Australia: 2008 and 2013 national audits from the Australian Paediatric Research Network. *J Paediatr Child Health* 2017; **53**: 55–61.
- 10 Goodman R. Psychometric properties of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2001; **40**: 1337–45.
- 11 Blakemore T, Strazdins L, Gibbings J. Measuring family socioeconomic position. *Austr Soc Policy* 2009; **8**: 121–68.
- 12 Pink B. *Technical Paper: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2011*. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013.
- 13 Furukawa TA, Kessler RC, Slade T, Andrews G. The performance of the K6 and K10 screening scales for psychological distress in the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being. *Psychol Med* 2003; **33**: 357–62.
- 14 Muthen L, Muthen B. *Mplus User's Guide*. Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2011.
- 15 Ryan SM, Jorm AF, Toumbourou JW, Lubman DI. Parent and family factors associated with service use by young people with mental health problems: a systematic review. *Early Interv Psychiatry* 2015; **9**: 433–46.
- 16 Lawrence D, Hafekost J, Johnson SE, Saw S, Buckingham WJ, Sawyer MG, et al. Key findings from the second Australian child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. *Aust N Z J Psychiatry* 2016; **50**: 876–86.
- 17 Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven de Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, et al. *The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents: Report on the Second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*. Department of Health, Canberra, 2015.
- 18 Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 2005; **62**: 593–602.



## psychiatry in history

### Jacob L. Moreno and psychodrama

Michele Augusto Riva , Luca Grassi and Michael Belingheri 

Psychodrama is a method used in psychotherapy, in which patients dramatise their lives to explore and solve personal problems. The Romanian–American psychiatrist Jacob Levy Moreno (1889–1974), the father of modern psychodrama, conducted the earliest experiments on this subject in Vienna in 1911, working with children in the *Stegreiftheater* (Theatre of Spontaneity). Moreno did not accept the psychotherapeutic approach of the time: as a medical student, he attended a lecture by Sigmund Freud in 1912; when Freud approached him, asking his occupation, he replied, ‘Well, Dr Freud, I start where you leave off. [...] You analyse their dreams; I try to give them the courage to dream again. I teach the people how to play God’. Moreno gave the birthday of psychodrama as 1 April 1921 – April Fool’s Day, as he specified later. On that date the psychiatrist staged a drama without actors at the Viennese Komödienhaus (comedy house), proposing that the spectators themselves were actors and directors of the presentation. Despite the harsh criticism of Austrian society, Moreno continued his experiments, focusing this time on adults. His ‘spontaneity theatre’ was turning into a ‘therapeutic theatre’, as shown by the case of the actress Barbara, accurately described by the psychiatrist. She improved the relationship with her husband thanks to the role specifically given by Moreno in cathartic representation on the stage.

Moreno emigrated to the USA in 1925 and first demonstrated therapeutic theatre there in 1927. He came into contact with the academic world in New York City, introducing the concept of group psychotherapy and sociometry to the American Psychiatric Association. In particular, he successfully conducted group therapy in schools and prisons, including Sing Sing. In 1936 he opened the first psychodrama theatre at the Beacon Hill Sanatorium; the first theatre of psychodrama in a public hospital opened in June 1941. In 1942 Moreno founded the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. Between 1936 and 1953 he wrote mainly on the major concepts and methods of sociometry and psychodrama. Finally, he was appointed an adjunct professor in the Department of Sociology at New York University (1951–1966) and special lecturer at various universities in North America, continuing his studies until his death in 1974.

Moreno claimed to have moved analysis and the treatment of mental illness out of the psychotherapist’s office. Indeed, he believed that the complexity of the human psyche could not be represented by static images, but it required the action of the theatre, which allowed the individual to become aware of their condition and to critically observe it through fiction. In his opinion, this process was allowed by the fall of narcissistic defences that were an obstacle to the application of psychotherapy, including Freud’s psychoanalysis. The original theory of psychodrama proposed by Moreno in 1921 has been reinterpreted by several authors over recent decades. The absence of clear definitions has resulted in a diversity of applications of Moreno’s techniques and concepts. So, as noted in a 2018 review by Cruz *et al* (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01263>), ‘almost 100 years after its foundation psychodrama still lacks theoretical and technical coherence within the international clinical community’.

© The Authors 2020

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2020)  
217, 369. doi: 10.1192/bjp.2020.65