

Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching and Education 3

Heloisa Junqueira Fleury  
Marlene Magnabosco Marra  
Oriana Holsbach Hadler *Editors*

# Psychodrama in Brazil

Contemporary Applications in Mental  
Health, Education, and Communities

 Springer

# Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching and Education

Volume 3

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The series situates psychodrama studies and research in Asia and beyond in a global context. It provides a unique and innovative resource for the latest developments in the field, nurturing a comprehensive and encompassing publication venue for humanistic psychodrama and sociodrama in therapy and coaching. The series publishes peer-reviewed volumes related to therapy, psychotherapy, counselling, coaching, HRD, team development and education including training. The series reflects on cultural creativity and new developments beyond J L Moreno in the second century of the existence of Psychodrama. The editor, with the assistance of distinguished scholars from Asia and elsewhere specializing in a variety of disciplinary and thematic areas, welcomes proposals that are related to the above-mentioned wide-ranging psychodrama studies. The series promotes the understanding of psychodramatic tools which are relevant in education, coaching, and team development. The series will appeal to researchers, clinicians/practitioners, and graduate students in the behavioral, social, medical, psychological and MBA sciences as well as leaders in Education, Corporate world and politics. It accepts monographs, edited volumes, and textbooks.

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Editors


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*To those who, during adversities, continue to dream and realize the (im)possible.*

*To all collaborators who brought the best of the theory and practice of Brazilian psychodrama. Their participation allowed us to bring different strands and areas of application, multiple theoretical and cultural influences representing the colorful of the Brazilian psychodramatic production.*

*To all individuals and groups portrayed in the chapters of the book. They brought the best of their life experiences, which allowed the confirmation of the richness of Brazilian psychodrama.*

*For beginners and experienced in working with groups. We hope to inspire them to bring new advances in their practices in different application contexts.*

## Series Preface

We are pleased to continue this Springer Nature psychodrama book series titled, *Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching and Education* (edited by Jochen Becker-Ebel and by Scott Giacomucci).

This edited volume is the third book of the series—*Psychodrama in Brazil*, edited by Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Marlene Magnabosco Marra, and Oriana Hadler. The editors and contributing authors articulate the rich practice wisdom of psychodrama in Brazil including content on history, culture, diverse clinical contexts, work with various vulnerable populations, and psychodrama within politics and society. The previous book of the series, *Experiential Therapy from Trauma to Post-traumatic Growth: Therapeutic Spiral Model Psychodrama* by Kate Hudgins and Steven Durost, offers an updated and comprehensive presentation of the Therapeutic Spiral Model of psychodrama for trauma treatment. We also look forward to introducing future books in this series soon.

The series situates psychodrama practice and research in Asia, the USA, South America, and beyond in a global context. It provides a unique and innovative resource for the latest developments in the field, nurturing a comprehensive and encompassing publication venue for humanistic psychodrama and sociodrama in therapy, coaching, education, and communities. The series publishes peer-reviewed volumes related to therapy, psychotherapy, counseling, coaching, human resource development, organizational dynamics, education, and training. This series will annually publish two monographs, edited volumes, and/or textbooks.

The rich tradition of Dr. Moreno's methods, including sociometry, psychodrama, and sociodrama, has been primarily disseminated through private postgraduate training institutes over the past 100 years of its existence. This academic book series brings the creativity and innovation of these experiential approaches more fully into academia with publications included in academic databases freely accessible to thousands of individual students, researchers, and professors.

The series reflects on cultural creativity and new developments beyond Dr. Jacob L. Moreno in the second century of the existence of psychodrama. The editors, with the assistance of distinguished scholars from Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, India, Taiwan, Turkey, and USA specializing in a variety of disciplinary and thematic

areas, welcome proposals that are related to the above-mentioned wide-ranging psychodrama studies. Books in this series will also emphasize the unique histories and methodologies emerging in international psychodrama communities. The platform created by this series highlights psychodrama practice wisdom from around the world in the English language, making it more accessible for a wide audience. Additionally, this book series includes books that systematically integrate psychodrama philosophy and practice into other established fields of group psychotherapy, social work, counseling, psychology, coaching, trauma theory, education, and organizational development.

The series promotes the understanding of psychodramatic and sociometric tools which are relevant for counselors, supervisors, trainers, educators, creative arts therapists, group workers, and community or organizational leaders. The series will appeal to researchers, practitioners, and graduate students in the behavioral, social, medical, psychological, and business sciences as well as leaders in education, the corporate world, and politics.

As series editors, we would like to extend our gratitude to Springer Nature, Mrs. Satvinder Kaur, and her team, for believing in the creativity and strength of psychodrama. This series will serve to promote the methods of sociometry and psychodrama in multidisciplinary contexts to ultimately enhance the provision of social services, psychotherapy, education, scholarship, and research throughout the world.

Chennai, India/Hamburg, Germany  
Philadelphia, USA  
March 2022

Jochen Becker-Ebel  
Scott Giacomucci



# Acknowledgements

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, with cultural, geographical, ethnic, economic, and social differences. Since the colonial period, there has been an ethnic and cultural mix involving indigenous, Portuguese, African, and, in the last century, immigrants from many countries. In this context, J. L. Moreno's writings were interpreted from the perspective of social demands, merging into new sociopschoeducational methodologies. In recent decades, psychodrama has been accepted by universities as a scientific method in qualitative research, which stimulated cross-fertilization with other theories, generating unique peculiarities of Brazilian psychodrama.

This book emerges as a record of this story. We thank all the protagonists of these experiences which followed the history of the formation of Brazilian society.

We thank the initial invitation of Jochen Becker-Ebel and Scott Giacomucci to be part of the Board of Springer Nature Series on Psychodrama in Counselling, Coaching and Education, with the aim of promoting psychodrama. After some time, they invited us to write this book, the great opportunity to map the main current trends in the Brazilian psychodrama.

We invited psychodramatists from different regions to discuss their influences and the state of the art of their practices. The initial proposal was to merge the experiences of professionals from different generations to produce texts based on the most experienced and on the new generation of psychodramatists. We thank the coauthors who challenged themselves to produce this updated reading of their practices.

The project was extensive, including mental health, education, and communities. Several hands were necessary for this construction. Heloisa Fleury and Marlene Marra had been partners in the organization of several books in Brazil. Oriana Hadler, one of the exponents of the new generation of Brazilian psychodramatists and an important partner in the editorial team of the Brazilian Journal of Psychodrama, completed the trio of editors of the book. We thank our rich partnership.

The chapters began to arrive, and we identified the need for an evaluation committee, with the function of ensuring the timeliness, originality, and internal consistency of the texts. We thank Amanda Castro, Luisa Bandeira Coelho, Luthiane Pisoni Godoy, Marília Meneghetti Bruhn, and Oriana Hadler, who led the group.

We thank Linceu Editorial, its reviewers, and translators for the exquisite care in the final production of this content.

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction to Psychodrama in Brazil: Resistance, Inventiveness, and Social Change</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Marlene Magnabosco Marra, and Oriana Holsbach Hadler	
<b>Part I Historic Acts: Foundations of Brazilian Psychodrama</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Fundamentals of Brazilian Psychodrama: A Net of Ideas, Concepts, and Practices</b> .....	<b>9</b>
	Valéria Cristina de Albuquerque Brito and Devanir Merengué	
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Socionomy</b> .....	<b>17</b>
	Heloisa Junqueira Fleury and Marlene Magnabosco Marra	
<b>4</b>	<b>Brazilian Spontaneous Theater: Scenes that Spring from Resonances</b> .....	<b>31</b>
	Rosane Rodrigues, Eduardo Tessari Coutinho, Patricia Franco de Andrade Franco, Maria Andrea Ferraro Suplicy, and Amauri Silva Prates	
<b>5</b>	<b>Public Psychodrama: More Than a Century Valuing Groups</b> .....	<b>43</b>
	Terezinha Tomé Baptista	
<b>6</b>	<b>Training in Psychodrama: Democratic Project Under Construction</b> .....	<b>55</b>
	Leila Maria Vieira Kim and Marília Josefina Marino	
<b>Part II Clinical Acts: Psychodrama, Psychotherapy, Human Development</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Psychodrama with Children in Brazil</b> .....	<b>73</b>
	Rosalba Filipini, Rosana Rebouças, Maria Luiza Vieira Santos, and Vanessa Ramalho Ferreira Strauch	

**8 Who Am I? Psychodrama and Its Possibilities for the Recognition of the Self in Teenagers** ..... 89  
Amanda Castro and Gisela M. Pires Castanho

**9 Psychodrama with Older Adults** ..... 101  
Algaides de Marco Rodrigues and Darlise dos Passos Gomes

**10 Relationship Psychotherapy: A Minimalist Psychodrama** ..... 113  
José Fonseca

**11 Symbolic Images in Individual Psychodrama and the Intermediate Object** ..... 127  
Leonídia Alfredo Guimarães

**12 Psychodramatic Group Psychotherapy and Its Modalities in Brazil** ..... 141  
Aline Oliveira Belém and Cybele Maria Rabelo Ramalho

**13 Psychodrama and Family Therapy: Methodological Interface** ..... 153  
Célia Maria Ferreira da Silva Teixeira,  
Marlene Magnabosco Marra, and Silvana Rita Silvestre de Oliveira

**14 Psychodrama and Sexuality** ..... 165  
Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Kathya Regina Mutti Tilieri,  
and Carmita Helena Najjar Abdo

**Part III Sociotherapeutic Acts—Psychodrama, Psychosocial Practices and Vulnerable Populations (Or Turned Vulnerable Populations)**

**15 Psychodramatic Resources in Psychosocial Interventions Against Sexual Violence: Victims and Offenders** ..... 181  
Liana Fortunato Costa, Marlene Magnabosco Marra,  
Denise Lima Moreira, and Monique Guerreiro de Moura

**16 Psychodrama Applications in the Protective Measures of the Brazilian Justice System** ..... 195  
Maria Inês Gandolfo Conceição and Maria Aparecida Penso

**17 Between the Open Sky and Raw Concrete: Reflections on Sociopsychodramas with Street Population** ..... 207  
Oriana Holsbach Hadler

**18 On the Recognition of Ignorance: Popular Education and the Psychodrama Encounter with Indigenous People** ..... 219  
Oriana Holsbach Hadler, Rebecca Torquato de Almeida,  
Larissa Leite, and Pedro Carrard Sitta

**Part IV Socioeconomic Acts: Psychodrama, Politics, and Society**

- 19 Psychodrama and Politics** ..... 235  
Marcia Almeida Batista and Lucia Helena Nilson
- 20 Ethnic Psychodrama: Perspectives from a Palmarine Clinic** ..... 247  
Maria Célia Malaquias, Daniela Aparecida Cardoso da Silva,  
and Paulo Sérgio Amado dos Santos
- 21 Public Sociodrama in Brazil Without Homophobia: The  
Dreaded Stage** ..... 257  
Sissi Malta Neves
- 22 The Use of Psychodrama as a Pedagogical Strategy  
for the Implementation of Public Policies in Health  
and Education** ..... 275  
Marlene Magnabosco Marra, Larissa Polejack,  
and Heloisa Junqueira Fleury
- 23 Brazilian Organizational Psychodrama: Paths, Practices,  
and Reflections** ..... 287  
Andréa Claudia de Souza, Alcione Ribeiro Dias, and Rosely Cubo
- 24 The Future of Psychodrama** ..... 301  
Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Marlene Magnabosco Marra,  
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# Abbreviations

AF	Assisted freedom
ANEPS	National Articulation of Popular Education in Health
APA	American Psychiatric Association
ECA	Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente
Febrap	Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama
HTP	House-tree-person tests
IBGE	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
IIO	Intra-intermediate object
IO	Intermediate object
J. L. Moreno	Jacob Levy Moreno
LH	Left hemisphere
PNEPS	National Policy of Permanent Education in Health [Política Nacional de Educação Permanente em Saúde]
rap	Resgatando a Auto-Estima e Proteção
RPG	Role-playing games
RT	Replay theater
SARC	Social Assistance Reference Centers
SRCSA	Specialized Reference Centers in Social Assistance
TEN	Teatro Experimental do Negro
TO	Transitional object
TU	Transpersonal unconscious
UFRGS	Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
UHS	Unified Health System
UNATI	Universidade Aberta à Terceira Idade [University Open to the Third Age]
UnB	University of Brasília
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAS	Unified Social Assistance System
VC	Vigilant care

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Psychodrama in Brazil: Resistance, Inventiveness, and Social Change



**Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Marlene Magnabosco Marra,  
and Oriana Holsbach Hadler**

**Abstract** Composing with a series of publications that discuss theory, research and fundamentals in Psychodrama, this volume presents works that discuss with property the complexity of the Brazilian multicultural context in which Psychodrama is placed as an ethical-political tool involved with social change. Based on the epistemological foundation of psychodramatic theory and its processes centered on the development of persons and groups, the writings gathered here aim at the main goal of Morenian philosophy: actions that reach all humanity. Thus, this book presents Brazilian psychodramatic practices in its collective and singular craftsmanship, allowing a look at the new developments of Psychodrama in the second century of its existence.

The second decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed the struggle of global peoples against a violent pandemic. The new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus is breaking geographical boundaries, ravaging every country on the planet, and cutting across how we relate to each other. The meaning of “we” is put to the test when new senses of a social atom are actualized: With whom can I continue to relate? With a mask? Without a mask? How close does social distancing allow me to be in my relationships? What sociometric criteria are created so that we can approach with minimal risk? What affective contagions become necessary for the survival of those I love?

Never has the question posed by Moreno in his sociometric trilogy “*Who will survive?*” become so present, daily questioned and fearfully concrete. In Brazil, along with a generalized fear and experience of continuous mourning, we witness a lack of hope linked not only to health issues caused by COVID-19 but also to a dismantling in the field of health, education, social assistance, culture, and security policies: the

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worsening of a pandemic of inequalities (Carvalho, 2020). All of this accentuates the feeling of hopelessness precisely because it is added to the physical and social distancing from our affective networks. In this scenario, the need for spontaneity and worldly invention to renew belief in human potential, for the production of mental health and strength of resistance amid discouragement, has become paramount.

The Morenian revolution has never been so crucial. This is how the socio-economic project of psychodrama finds us today, moving us toward the understanding that everything is in relation. Every action we take, every thought and narrative we mobilize produces effects in the social dynamic on humanity. During the darkest moments, the psychodramatic philosophy opens up into possibilities. This revolution is about finding creative power even in the face of oppression, abandonment, and tyranny. And if there is one thing that Latin American peoples make possible, it is to transform our “outsized reality ... A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty” as the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez (1982, para. 6) expressed with such intensity in his Nobel Prize for Literature speech.

In *Psychodrama in Brazil*, we find the fortitude, resilience, and inventiveness in Brazilian psychodramatic practices when there is a shortage of so much. The lines that follow in each chapter are narratives implicated with social change, a historical review of the pioneering figures who brought and adapted psychodrama in Brazil, such as Guerreiro Ramos (black sociologist), Abdias do Nascimento (black writer, poet, playwright), and Mother Cristina (educator, psychologist, political activist), who, instead of words, put into action the psychodramatic technique as a utopian and driving force to transform society. This is how this book presents works involving psychodrama and its application in the field of practices promoting social transformation in multicultural contexts throughout the Brazilian territory.

Being part of a series of publications that discuss theory, research, and foundations in psychodrama, the writings gathered here turn to the description and critical analysis of psychodramatic practices in a reflective scientific manner to produce psychodramatic knowledge updated to the contemporary sociohistorical context. Thus, this volume presents works that involve psychodramatists, researchers, professionals, and students in the field of social, human, and political sciences, who discuss with propriety the complexity of multicultural contexts regarding the action of psychodrama as an ethical-political tool involved with social change, considering the subject and the social as coproduced forces, historically located and not separated. Having as their epistemological foundation the psychodramatic theory and its processes centered on the development of subjects and groups, the writings gathered here have as their objective the central goal of Morenian philosophy: actions that reach all humanity, since psychodramatic practice can be translated as a soul in action. In this sense, this book presents authors who reflect scientifically on their own cultures and practices, making it possible to discuss the idea of cultural creativity and the new developments beyond Moreno, producing an effect of interconnection among diverse practices in the second century of psychodrama's existence. The set of chapters selected here have been written in such a way that each section connects

to the others; however, the reader can choose to read each grouping of themes independently of each other. In this way, the organization of the sections is composed as a mosaic where each chapter piece contains a colorful sharing that addresses Brazilian psychodramatic practices relevant to social change, at the same time as its multicolor set configures a universe of actions in act. For this reason, we present four acts on stage, each act containing a set of chapters tied together by a thread.

The first act or section—“Historical acts: fundaments of Brazilian psychodrama”—presents what makes Brazil a fertile ground for developing psychodramatic practices. This Latin American country’s cultural, geographical, ethnic, economic, and social diversity creates a unique mix that enables the Moreno revolution to manifest itself in challenges and creativity. Bringing the inventive character of *socionomy* and the originality with which psychodramatic philosophy is put to work in the Brazilian scenario (Chap. 2), this section introduces the theoretical and methodological procedures of Brazilian psychodrama as a scientific instrument of social action (Chap. 3). Going through practices that have become iconographies of Brazilian psychodrama, such as the spontaneous theater and its Brazilian modality, the replay theater (Chap. 4), and public psychodrama, with its democratic and innovative characteristic (Chap. 5), the first act of this compendium ends its narrative presenting the formation of the Brazilian psychodramatist (Chap. 6), in its implication with continuing education and social transformation.

The second act or section—“Clinical acts: psychodrama, psychotherapy, human development”—addresses the suitability of psychodramatic techniques for the psychotherapeutic setting. By addressing spontaneous–creative actions at different stages of human development, whether with children, adolescents, or the elderly (Chaps. 7–9), the malleability of the psychodramatic technique opens to the *locus* of the relationship (Chap. 10). An invitation for the reader to adopt a posture of a social investigator of the inner world (Chap. 11) is finding in Morenian philosophy the possibilities to deal with the nuances of the therapeutic context in the Brazilian reality. This is also how we are introduced to the different modalities of group psychodrama in Brazil (Chap. 12), in articulation with family therapy references (Chap. 13) and in an integral look where psychodramatic methodology and technique are directly linked to biological, psychosocial, and cultural aspects in psychotherapeutic care to people with sexual difficulties, who do not identify with the gender assigned at birth and/or in situations of suffering related to sexual orientation (Chap. 14).

In “Sociotherapeutic acts: psychodrama, psychosocial practices and vulnerable populations (or turned vulnerable populations)”, we get to know a harsh reality in Brazil, where the psychodramatic practice becomes a possibility to produce innovative responses in contexts of violence. In the chapters of this section, we find practical interventions in the fight against social inequality and for the human rights of vulnerable groups. Vulnerability, in this respect, refers to a process of social exclusion and the effect of greater oppression on specific social groups. The expression “turned vulnerable”, thus, alludes not to a natural condition, but a condition as a result of centuries-old sociohistorical processes of domination and subjection (Souza, 2018). By addressing reports of psychosocial interventions in the care of victims of sexual violence (Chap. 15), we find psychodrama as a force for welcoming and listening.

In developing methodologies for working in the sphere of justice (Chap. 16), more specifically in the field of child and adolescent protection measures, psychodramatic tools enable the creation of playful spaces in the “as if”. With homeless people and indigenous populations (Chaps. 17 and 18), the reader will learn how social psychodramatic experiences are presented as ethical–political tools to inhabit the encounter and to put oneself in the place of the other through an ethics of care permeated by the Brazilian multiculturalism.

In the last section of this book, the fourth and final act—“Socioeconomic acts: psychodrama, politics and society”—questions that cross the whole Brazilian society that are found in its structuring core, and, thus, demand psychodramatic practices that trigger the Moreno’s maxim are deepened: a socioeconomic project that focuses on the entire humanity (Moreno, 1992). That is how the chapters in this section turn to the indissociation between psychodrama and politics (Chap. 19), whose scenes propose the decolonization of psychodramatic practices in a country that brings psychodrama by the hands of black people implicating it from its Brazilian roots in the confrontation of racial inequalities (Chap. 20). This last act goes on to address the Brazilian psychodramatist as a social interventionist guided by a group ethics of collective doing in the fight against LGBTphobia (Chap. 21), in the construction of public policies in an interdisciplinary manner and committed to the democratic ideology and to guaranteeing rights (Chap. 22), and, finally, by presenting sociometry in the organizational context where the quality of life becomes a bet for a new work culture in the Brazilian scenario (Chap. 23).

Jacob Levy Moreno directed the first psychodramatic session on April 1, 1921, in Vienna. Since then, psychodrama’s contributions to contemporary culture are inexhaustible. Social network analysis tools in the search for social conflict resolutions (Moreno, 2014) become one of the multiple nuances that the Brazilian psychodramatic facet adopts. In the Brazil of diversity, of resistance against autocratic cultural conservation, psychodrama follows a flow of plural intensities. On the 100-year commemoration of its existence, the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama (Febrap) released a documentary entitled *Psicodrama: 100 Anos em Cena*. Amid testimonials from various psychodramatists, and Dalmiro Bustos (Febrap, 2021) provokes us with the following question: “Does psychodrama exist? No. There is the psychodramatist”. It is the phenomenon of dramatic multiplication. According to Mascarenhas (1996), this technique takes the group field as a force machine in producing meanings. Each participant exposes and amplifies multiplied scenes, resonant in a junction of stories. This action proposes a suspension in the gesture of authorship of the initial scene, transforming the present into a collective and singular artisanship. And this is one of the great characteristics of psychodrama in Brazil: its ability to be artisanal, unique, and resistant.

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**Part I**  
**Historic Acts: Foundations of Brazilian**  
**Psychodrama**



# Chapter 2

## Fundamentals of Brazilian Psychodrama: A Net of Ideas, Concepts, and Practices



Valéria Cristina de Albuquerque Brito and Devanir Merengué

**Abstract** This chapter synthesizes the paths and shortcuts of the Brazilian psychodrama and its foundations. From an image, the net, and its weaves, the authors record the various psychodramatic productions, trying to situate them in the country's complex history, considering technical–scientific production as processes subject to social and political changes. Some genealogies are identified in the lines that interweave the net of the Brazilian psychodrama from the 1940s until the present. In an attempt to identify these diverse moments and situate them, the authors name these lines as follows: (a) lines of resistance to political oppression; (b) lines of scientific production; and (c) lines related to minorities. Each of these lines is explicitly or implicitly sustained by philosophical ideas which, in turn, are not dissociated from political moments. Therefore, there is an important distinction between the Brazilian psychodrama during military dictatorship (1964–1985) and after the period of redemocratization in which, increasingly, under right-wing or left-wing governments, the country is ruled by a neoliberal conduct that translates into economic thinking and also affects subjectivities and expressions. The authors point out the extreme complexity of the plots and voids that weave the net of the Brazilian psychodrama theories.

**Keywords** Psychodrama foundations · Philosophies · History

### Introduction

Jacob Levy Moreno defined psychodrama as a method that studies existential truth through action and was very critical of a wide variety of philosophical and artistic schools, as well as scientific theories (psychiatric, social, psychological) and religions as overly abstract (Moreno, 1975). Thus, many Brazilian authors (Motta, Castelo de

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Almeida, Guimarães) have dedicated themselves to identify in the references that Moreno indicates or ignores as foundations of his works. Beyond this historical recovery and exegesis of texts, the multiplicity of microcultures that comprise the young Brazilian culture generated many thinkers who accepted the invitation to meet (Moreno, 1975) and, taking his life and work as “an answer that provokes a hundred questions” (p. 9, our translation), have produced an impressive volume of conceptual and technical propositions that enrich and expand psychodramatic methodology and highlight Brazil in the international scenario. In the present chapter, we intend to present a synthesis of these contributions, a panorama of the Brazilian psychodrama foundations.

Psychodrama was introduced in Brazil through works in diversified areas of the human and health sciences; the first available records are from the sociologist Guerreiro Ramos (1915–1982), a self-taught psychodramatist who directed sociodramas on themes of the black movement in the 1940s (Malaquias, 2020; Motta, 2008). In the following decades, the dissemination of psychodrama expanded from the works of the French educator and psychologist, resident in Brazil, Weil (1924–2008), who developed works in the educational, social, and psychotherapeutic area, was a university professor and published several works with original propositions from Morenian psychodrama (Kladi, 2009). The institutionalization of psychodrama training and the organization of training entities and publications, developed in the 1960s and 1970s, started in São Paulo with the psychiatrists Rojas-Bermúdez and Bustos who lived in Argentina. The last decades of the twentieth century and the first ones of this century have been very fruitful, psychodrama has established itself as a theoretical and methodological contribution in universities and the practices in different areas of health, psychology, and education, and it would be impossible to describe all the schools lines of thought related to Morenian theory in Brazil. To describe in a more didactic way, but no less complex, the many influences, confluences, departures and intertwining of psychodrama/sociotomy with Western philosophy, we try to look for strands that best express themselves production of Brazilian psychodramatists. To guide us, we use as a synthesis image of this panorama a net<sup>1</sup> (lines and nodes that compose wefts that sustain actions), and we will present some of the lines of thought that make up the weft of psychodrama in Brazil and indicate how these interweavings shape the practices of Brazilian psychodramatists.

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<sup>1</sup> In Brazilian Portuguese, the word “net” has intrinsic meanings that are difficult to translate. While “net” means “an open-meshed fabric twisted, knotted, or woven together at regular intervals” and “a group of railroads, telephone, telegraph, canal lines, etc. operating under unified control”, it also means “hammock”. The image of the hammock, of traditional modes of rest and care of colonized populations, is important as a subtext for this chapter. Thus, it is paramount to create this imagery of “weaving the net(work)” as well as “weaving a hammock” for a proper understanding of the text, not only as a stylistic issue, but as an important ethno-racial reference to the native peoples of the Americas and Asia.

## Lines of Resistance to Political Oppression: Psychodrama and Emancipation

Marxist thought focuses on socioeconomic analysis, class struggle, and social conflict. Materialistic concepts support the movements that influenced authors and embattled devices, with the most significant decline at the end of the twentieth century. The relationship of the elites with the working classes, in this view, has a labor exploitation character, reiterating the oppressor–oppressed relationship.

How can we rethink psychodrama, whose history has religious roots and a somewhat idealistic character, a therapy that, in the conception of its creator, aims ultimately at changing the world? Some constituent aspects of psychodramatic theory and practice make it easier: an open project based on an action aimed at the liberation of forces contained by cultural conserves. The concept of cultural preservation understood as the result of spontaneous and creative action is only nuanced and therefore fits many understandings. In the same way, creative spontaneity, deliberate action for change can be reread from the oppressor against the oppressed as a vital force emerging from this struggle. The protagonist, in turn, embodies this emergent, who represents the drama of the group, the figure of the proletariat and its variations. A markedly Marxist reading that did not focus precisely on class struggle but instead on unveiling power relations between the dominator and the dominated.

When the dictatorship showed signs of fatigue in Brazil, when every commonsense Brazilian seemed to be left wing, a criticism with this forcefulness made much sense. In this period, many works engage psychodrama in a markedly more progressive political project, as we try to demonstrate next.

The release of the book *Psicodrama Descolonizando o Imaginário* by Naffah Neto (1979), his master's thesis, mentored by the philosopher Marilena Chauí, presents a rereading of the Morenian work in light of dialectical materialism and has as its most outstanding contribution the proposal of an original organization of the Morenian work from concepts rather than techniques/practices. The set of all Morenian production comes to be called, by the whole Brazilian psychodramatic movement, *sociometry* and divided into three branches, with their respective preferred methods: *sociometry* (sociometric test), *sociodynamics* (role-play), and *sociatry* (psychodrama).

The critique undertaken by Naffah Neto (1979) of the Morenian project reaches the very notion of the human being who is no longer an auxiliary of God, an abstract entity in the construction of the world, but an actor who actively places himself in the struggle for the transformation of the world.

The same author (Naffah Neto, 1985) presents this argument more consistently in his doctoral dissertation *Poder, Vida e Morte na Situação de Tortura: Esboço para uma Fenomenologia do Terror*, in which he presents how psychodrama sessions were used to give voice to those tortured during the military dictatorship, in which he presents psychodramatic techniques as a markedly libertarian instrument in an oppressive context.

The socioeconomic project is here politically instrumentalized when the country was experiencing the extreme right wing, with persecution, torture, and death to opponents. The book, robust research on torture, also has a symbolic value for that historic moment.

In the same line of thought derived from dialectical materialism, Boal (1975) created a broad set of theatrical techniques, the *Teatro do Oprimido e Outras Poéticas Políticas*, which influenced many of the psychodramatists who employ psychodrama as a tool for social transformation, especially in public health and education (Souza et al., 2016). In the wake of the end of the dictatorship and transition to the democratic regime, a number of authors (Oliveira & Araújo, 2012) resume the theatrical bases of psychodrama. In this scenario, the work of Moysés Aguiar stands out. He was a political activist with a prominent role in psychology as a science and profession in Brazil and the production of psychodrama, including its training model, the Tietê School (Aguiar, 2009).

In *Teatro da Anarquia*, Aguiar (1988), following the example of Naffah Neto, recasts the foundations of the Morenian work concerning left-wing political movements, in this case, anarchism. Aguiar (1998) defines his proposal as psychodrama's "effort to reconstruct the threatened identity" that intends to be an act of "rebellion against ready-to-consume obviousness" (p. 6, our translation) and is intended as an opposition to the more current use of psychodrama as procedural psychotherapy, restricted to the middle and upper classes of the population. Aguiar's (1998) proposal is better explained in his best-known work, *Teatro Espontâneo e Psicodrama*, in which he insists on the differentiation of his work from the applications of psychodrama as a psychotherapeutic modality and insists on its potency as an artistic manifestation, which intends to be transformative, without goals a priori, "those who help should not enlarge the chorus of external pressures to which they are subjected in the sense of changing or not changing to this or that new configuration, defined or established by others" (p. 39, our translation).

Moysés Aguiar's works and training at the Tietê School (Aguiar, 2009), besides influencing the theories and practices of sociology in Brazil, created a movement of its own, the spontaneous theater spread throughout Brazil and Latin America (Freitas et al., 2020). Among the thinkers who have expanded and created original works from this line of thought, it is worth mentioning Rosane Rodrigues (2016), who, from references to improvisational theater modalities, especially the *playback theater*, created the *replay theater*. The line of resistance here is not toward one or another economic-political model, but toward institutionalized power, including in psychodrama teaching institutions.

## Scientific Production Lines: Psychodrama and University

Brazilian universities maintain much of their colonial origins, much of what is produced in scientific terms is based on European theories, with significant lines of research guided by the competitive logic of the USA (Cunha, 2017). In this scenario,

psychodrama enters the universities through the “back door” of the health area, specifically mental health, in the wake of the anti-asylum movements and the establishment of the Sistema Único de Saúde—SUS, in the technical vacuum of psychoanalytic theories, until today more prestigious, in dealing with the most challenging manifestations of psychopathologies in the popular classes, especially the majorities with deep religious/spiritual convictions and with the care of large populations. In this process of assimilation, there are necessary adaptations that translate into rereadings that bring Morenian theory closer to both developmental theories, in the stage model, and theories of dysfunctional relational patterns in the behavioral–cognitivist model.

The doctoral dissertation of psychiatrist Fonseca Filho (1980), *Psicodrama da Loucura*, inaugurates this line of thought, which is very important among psychodramatist psychotherapists in an exciting way. Taking the existentialist philosophy of Moreno’s contemporary as a starting point, Buber (1979) recovers a concept, identity matrix, formulated by Moreno in a text coauthored by his first wife, Florence B. Moreno (1877–1952), to propose a theory that differentiates thoughts/actions and feelings in a much more complex way than in the original text, doubling the number of phases. This epistemological “turn”, a developmental theory based on philosophical rather than empirical propositions, but which offers a more secure and linear framework for empirical investigation, simultaneously allows an adherence by clinicians who did not find Morenian psychopathology, similar to that of psychodynamic theories, to anchor themselves, and to researchers, a set of well-formulated concepts, as opposed to Moreno’s overly open, employing common sense, and markedly contextual terms that allow empirical investigation, with hypothesis testing, along the lines of neopositivist.

The path of this line of thought is stable and with countless contributions outside and inside undergraduate and graduate university courses in the area of mental health, a little less in psychiatry, starting in the 2000s, with the popularization of psychotropic drugs, which in Brazil can be prescribed by doctors of any specialty and have very fragile control over their sale. Along these lines, the shift to more traditional epistemological strands is made without much opposition. There is minor discomfort, in that the political dimension is less evident, the philosophical justification of an individual and small group practice. Madness is presented in this line not as a political or social, sociohistorical manifestation, but as an individual, familial, a chronicle of the parental relations of bourgeois families.

Not exactly in the same epistemological perspective, in fact, in many ways opposite, a series of publications, also related to the university insertion of psychodrama in the 1980s and 1990s, is being developed, aimed at clinical practice and psychotherapy, but including broader models of family group organization. In the wake of American and European experiences in assisting hospitalized psychiatric patients and chemical dependents, systemic family theories in their multiple variations allow theoretical and practical articulations (Seixas, 1994) and give rise to several publications that relate them to psychodrama. These formulations vary in this continuum that ranges from the more openly theoretical–conceptual ones, such

as *Uma Abordagem Sistêmica do Psicodrama* (Seixas, 1994), to the more technical–operational ones such as *Erotismo, Sexualidade, Casamento e Infidelidade: Sexualidade Conjugal e Prevenção do HIV-Aids* (Zampieri, 2004). This line continues to be quite productive with recent works, such as *O Fenômeno da Transgeracionalidade no Ciclo de Vida Familiar: Casal com Filhos Pequenos* (Dal Bello & Marra, 2020). Along these lines, psychodrama seems to be dealing more with individuals than with groups, to have more conscious than counconscious concerns, with more punctual than general goals, more operative than existential.

It is essential to point out that this line of insertion of psychodrama in the academic context develops hand in hand with the change like the publications of the psychodramatic movement. In 1990, the *Revista Brasileira de Psicodrama*, with an editorial board and publication rules, replaces the *Revista da Febrap* (Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama), institution that congregates the training entities in Brazil. In the 2000s, the process of “academicization” of the journal follows agile, and, currently, it integrates a ranking of scientific journals that follows international standards and has the suitable qualification (Qualis A4). It should be noted that publications in journals in this ranking are among the criteria for public evaluation/funding of undergraduate and graduate university programs and professors.

## Minority Lines: Philosophies of Difference

In parallel to the discussions among theories based on more or less structuralist or post-structuralist philosophies, a philosophical current is developing that questions the very basis of Western philosophy—the concept of the universal human being, the rational individual. Generically termed as philosophers of difference (Deleuze, 1998), this set of thinkers, who besides Deleuze include Derrida, Guattari, Foucault, some feminist, and *queer* theories, are interested not in what is naturalized, universal, ideal, but in what is uncommon: gender, sexual diversity, ethnicity/race, biopolitical issues, necropolitical, in the wake of the defense of multiple existences, and the critique of neoliberalism and its social and environmental consequences.

Embryonic since the early 2010s, this movement to value a less “neutral” psychodrama, a transparent device that supports any and all use and abuse, takes concrete form in two publications: *Psicodrama e Relações Étnico-Raciais*, organized by Malaquias (2020) and *Por uma Vida Espontânea e Criadora: Psicodrama e Política*, organized by Dedomenico and Merengué (2020).

In the two works, essays written by several authors, voices of more critical and engaged psychodramatists are multiplied and engaged in the micro and macro political sphere. Issues such as whiteness and blackness, the indigenous issue, sexual diversity, health and illness, and all the resulting social pathologies such as sexism, racism, homophobia, Brazilian elitism and classism, religious or philosophical fundamentalism, and anti-science are present in these essays.

Psychodrama is presented in these writings less as an easy, practical, interesting, and attractive theory or technique and is presented as a political and creative device.

In this sense, the psychodramatist begins to implicate himself in what he writes as a black man or woman, as a homosexual, as a woman, as a white man discussing his privileges, as a professional who attends to the wealthier classes, and many other alternatives. It gives meaning to historical roles and rescues the depsychologization of neoliberalism by giving it historical acceptations. It can begin to understand that the disturbances that cross us can be interpreted in countless ways, with multiple and singular meanings. A psychodrama that is alive, nomadic, puts itself to the test that dialogs with other knowledge are certain that the socioeconomic project has many creative future existences.

## **Plots: Tension Points and Voids**

The panorama we outline here is a plot necessarily composed of gaps, names, and works that we do not list, but that also weave this net of thought that captures in Morenian work aspects to be more or less explored or (re)known, sometimes seeking in other theories, techniques, or philosophies enlargements or revisions of his works and practices.

Moreover, these voids support the lines of one type, intertwine with another type, and we have experiences of psychodramatists who develop corporate theater anchored in competitiveness and strengthening of “self-esteem”, developed based on the ideas of the theater of spontaneity with improvisational techniques/spontaneous theater. Furthermore, at the other extreme, constructions of a technical nature anchored in structuralist theories of a cognitivist matrix, employing sociodramas to develop projects in peripheral communities. Moreover, psychodramatists scattered around the country, anonymous people who develop innovatively and instigate texts and practices, neither write nor publish their work.

Hybridism, mestization, is a characteristic of Brazilian psychodramatic production that, as in our cultural production, at times enriches and strengthens us and, at other times, places us in positions of submission and denial of identity. Netweaving<sup>2</sup> to share with colleagues from other cultures simultaneously encourages us to continue to be attentive to our lines and plots and gives us hope to see psychodrama renewed by possible encounters with more productions.

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<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, we have in English the possibility of building the evolution of the word “net” into “netweaving” throughout the text, giving the correct impression of a common “net” of people starting their work with Brazilian psychodrama, “weaving the net” throughout the process and ending in the term “netweaving”—which is the practice of making contacts and establishing professional relationships based on reciprocity and detachment from the immediate result, because the return will happen in some other way, at another time, through maybe another person—becoming this affective/supportive network after years of conviviality/contact.

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# Chapter 3

## Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Sociometry



Heloisa Junqueira Fleury and Marlene Magnabosco Marra

**Abstract** This chapter details the theoretical and methodological procedures of Brazilian psychodrama as a scientific instrument of social action. The method is based on spontaneous interactions. It addresses the relational dimension, expressed by the roles (in interaction with counter roles), and the implications of these fundamentals for methods and techniques. It presents the group as a social atom in interaction according to criteria, and all participants are authors and actors in a movement to reconstruct reality. It explains how spontaneous states and affective manifestations in group interaction, with movements of approaching and distancing, allow explicit coconscious and counconscious affective contents, expanding the group's sociometric matrix's apprehension and the consequent transformation of social reality. It presents the organization of these fundamentals in therapeutic dimensions (sociodynamics, sociometry, and sociatry). It describes the main methods for each of them (role-playing, dramatic games, spontaneous theater, sociometric games, psychodrama, group psychotherapy, and sociodrama), the psychodramatic session elements, the techniques, and adaptations to different contexts and populations. The reference for promoting the evolution of the group is based on sociogenetic law. The methodology for directing a psychodramatic session consists of three stages (warm-up, dramatic action, and sharing). Considering each one's objective, it describes the application of psychodramatic resources that facilitate the group's evolution.

**Keywords** Psychodrama · Sociodrama · Groups

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## Introduction

Jacob Levy Moreno, the creator of psychodrama, proposed, in the 1930s, a conceptual basis for social transformation—a therapeutic procedure that would facilitate man and groups to seek new possibilities for the organization. The method was based on spontaneous interactions and aimed to create new references for the classification, construction, and reconstruction of the clusters when necessary.

In this chapter, we present theoretical concepts that underlie the psychodramatic methods, organized in three dimensions (sociodynamics, sociometry, and sociatry), as well as methodological aspects, such as techniques, contexts, instruments, and stages of the psychodramatic session, so that those interested, mainly by group practices, can use this method as an instrument for the sociocultural development of society, as one of the scientific resources of social action.

## The Development of Spontaneous Interactions

Psychodrama is based on the development of spontaneous states—the affective and perceptual reactions of each member of the group with the others, responsible for the production in the dramatic scene of movements, displacements, visible and invisible scenes, improvisations that form new configurations of the group, transforming the reality of its members.

Understanding the potential of human interaction in constructing new action possibilities is based on theoretical concepts, such as spontaneity, creativity, tele, social atom, sociometric networks, and role theory (Giacomucci, 2021).

Spontaneous action produces a connection between participants similar to an affective agreement with characteristics of attraction, rejection or indifference, which produces a nucleus of relationships around each individual. This approach or departure factor was called “*tele*”. When the group interacts, the choices are motivated by a certain criterion, transforming this nucleus of relationships into a social atom. In this way, the tele factor creates communication channels, such as a telecommunications network, which transmit affective content circulating in the group and its social context and forms sociometric networks when they connect several social atoms.

With the intensification of spontaneous participation, participants can make more and more sociometric choices, expanding their expansiveness, which allows for more free self-exposure. The context is transformed into a multidimensional stage, giving space and freedom to spontaneous states expressed in movement, action, and interaction between people.

In these spontaneous interactions, the participants act as therapeutic agents, sharing their emotions, stories, and perceptions. In the process, they expand their resources for a more effective interaction for themselves. Through the spaces of intersection and the present resonances, the group interaction makes visible the

group's needs, objectives, and expectations. This form of group intervention makes all participants protagonists of the dramatic action.

The action can be observed by the roles that the individual is playing. The role is an interpersonal experience lived and observed in an individual's relationship with another, who will play his complement, and is composed of individual elements, specific to that individual, and collective elements, specific to the group in which he is inserted. Sociometric networks can crystallize relationships of this role and counter role, making it difficult for participants to seek new positions or expand their experiences.

The objective is not only to "do" an activity but to "experience" a dialectical process of spontaneous states that include doing, moving and interacting, and facilitating the protagonist to advance in the knowledge of himself, the other, and the group movement.

## Coconscious and Counconscious States

Seeking a consistent theoretical body, Moreno (1975) also developed references for understanding child development. He considered that the first relational patterns are developed in the newborn's bond with his context in the process called "identity matrix". These first interpersonal structures are formed by biological, psychological, and social components and influence social interactions throughout life.

In the development process, the child interacts with caregivers who bring the entire sociocultural context adjacent to the interrelational space. Naffah Neto (1997) understands that Moreno transferred the unconscious concept to an intersubjective dimension, which expands to include cultural preserves with roots in culture, with its rules, prescriptions, taboos, and ideologies.

In groups, tele acts in intersubjectivity through exchanges of conscious and unconscious content and the bonds generated between participants with the proximity and intensity of relationships, which creates its own relational and group dynamics (Costa & Conceição, 2020).

In the biological field, these theoretical conceptions correspond to the operation of a system of mirror neurons in the brain, which was recognized, in the early 1990s, as the neurological basis of how we understand the actions of another human being and can explain our social abilities (Giacomucci, 2021). Since the beginning of social life, they act, favoring creating an intersubjective space; however, they can lead to distorted perceptions due to differences between people, which tends to be accentuated when they are from different cultures.

From the first encounter between two individuals, the coconscious and counconscious states are reinforced. When a group meets for the first time, a thin connection begins to grow between the participants. This preliminary network starts with a double, then trios, until it extends to the formation of subgroups. It is strengthened according to the previous experience or the coordination of the group. It is influenced

by the environment, the group's history, the similarities and differences between the participants, the leader, political and/or social determinants, etc. (Moreno, 1961).

The images, intuitions, and feelings created in action can be understood as manifestations of coconscious and counconscious states (Fleury & Knobel, 2011; Knobel, 2016). The participants' emotions, modulated by the tele factor, form a telic network in the group that can create similar subjective states in some of them. This network's focus brings organization to experiences, emotions, thoughts, and sensations, transforming this content of the counconscious into the participants' material. Knobel (2007) understands that this experience brings familiarity, intimacy, and momentary fusion, the feeling of understanding the other. For this author, sharing scenes on the here and now opens channels for new spontaneous roles.

The group must be conducted in such a way that representations of the group experience are manifested. The externalization of movements of approach or withdrawal and content shared in coconscious and counconscious states must be revealed in the action. The group mood is produced by phenomena of the social and group context that create a field in different coconscious and counconscious ways of existing, updated in the dramatic context. In this respect, the group can lead to both the empowerment and the devitalization of its members (Knobel, 2020).

## **Socioeducational or Sociotherapeutic Intervention**

Socioeducational or sociotherapeutic intervention is a practice committed to the empowerment of subjects in groups, which occurs by explaining common identity elements dispersed among all and the experience of the action–reflection–action process (Marra, 2004).

The group is understood as a social atom with an observable presence, with characteristics that define it. It also presents a sociometric matrix, as an invisible structure, subject to dynamic changes resulting from affective flows in the social atom. In a group intervention, the dialectical opposition between the observable presence and the sociometric matrix is sought, as a synthesis created by the group with the dynamic interpenetration of these two dimensions, producing the truest social life at that moment. This process, called social trichotomy by Moreno (1978), reveals the group's spontaneous–creative potential and makes explicit the value system that the subjects choose and intend to incorporate in their attitudes. These values (or criteria) are different for each group and each culture and account for the system's sustainability.

The group participants (management team and members) create situations that are instruments for investigating the reality in which they are inserted. At the same time, they become investigated and investigators and powerful instruments to treat all of them' common symptoms.

In a group intervention, the group's evolution is sought, using as a reference the sociogenetic law, originally developed by J.L. Moreno, based on the study of child development stages. It refers to a trend of evolution of groups from simpler forms

to more complex ones, going through three stages of differentiation of relational structures: organic isolation, horizontal differentiation, and vertical differentiation (Knobel, 2009).

Awareness and reflection occur in a learning process through a group experience. Realistic and transformative solutions for that group are found in the group's social context, based on its culture and resources, and aim to transform and promote social health.

Psychodrama, also called socionomy, consists of a set of methods divided into three complementary dimensions: sociodynamics (studies the structure, evolution, and functioning of groups), sociometry (studies the measure of human relationships), and sociatry (treatment of social systems). These dimensions, when overcoming individual and subjective analysis, seek understanding and transformation of the group. Participants have the opportunity to discover themselves on the affective-emotional screen of human interactions, which turns this gathering into a group (Nery, 2010).

These methods are based on the transforming potential of the interaction promoted by the psychodramatic practice, organized in defined stages, considering the changes in contexts and characterized by certain elements.

The steps will be detailed in the description of a sociodrama. The relevant contexts in a psychodramatic session are as follows: social context (where the individual or the participants of a group come from), group context (the reality lived in the therapeutic relationship or the relational experience of the group), and the dramatic context (relative to the experience of the imaginary and fantasy, where dramatization occurs).

The elements of a psychodramatic session are five: scenario (space where the dramatization takes place, often a simple delimitation of space), the protagonist (the individual or the emergent of the group), director (who directs the session), auxiliary ego (who goes to the action, a group participant, or the therapist himself), and public or audience (group participants) (Giacomucci, 2021).

The psychodramatic methodology's basic techniques are three and are related to the child's development phases. The double technique parallels the cinematic stuntman. The auxiliary ego expresses feelings, perceptions, and thoughts as if it were the protagonist, helping him broaden the experienced scene's perception. The mirror technique allows the protagonist to watch himself (represented by the auxiliary ego who plays his role) as if he were in a mirror. The role reversal technique places the protagonist in the other's role with whom he is opposite, who takes the protagonist's role, inverting the position of the pair in interaction (Giacomucci, 2021).

These basic techniques originated all the others used in psychodrama. Symbolic expression through dramatic games and the construction of images expands the individual and group reference on the topics covered and may have the function of visual sharing of the group. In the constructed images, the conscious content can facilitate the emergence of other content not yet known, favoring their integration.

Psychodramatic techniques favor the search for spontaneous group production anchored in the principle of spontaneity. In the face of contradictory psychological currents and the conflicts expressed in these movements, these techniques balance

spontaneous social forces, bringing unity to the whole. They promote the realization of the individual's internal world or the group's affective content in action.

- **Sociodynamics: movement**

Sociodynamics unveils group processes, making it possible to study the individual's roles and functions in the group. It refers to the locus and generates the subjects' movement, intermingling the individual and the social and triggering states of spontaneity, which is the research material.

The participant can perceive himself in the relationship with the other and with the group, apprehending the group situation. The here and now of experience brings the marks of its functioning to the subject, highlighting both what they cause in group functioning and what the group causes in them, expanding their knowledge of the intersubjectivity present in the situation (Costa & Conceição, 2020).

Through the performance of the role, the subjects show themselves and let themselves be known in the group, bringing the necessary concreteness for the investigation of the manifestations, both individual and social, and compel individuals and groups to migrate to new locus and/or build new arrangements that support their needs. All this is caused by the maturation of social behavior that allows them to make choices and make decisions in the form of attraction, rejection, or indifference. Thus, the group shows itself through the roles, bringing elements to the sociometric analysis.

Sociodynamics identifies the movements of the group in any method used. In sociodramatic intervention or sociometric activity, it is possible to identify, by the participants' behavior, group processes, such as resistance and exposures. The individual may fear knowing his position in the group or explaining his choices and the group's desired position.

The applicable methods in sociodynamic research are as follows: role-play (Ramalho, 2021), dramatic games (Baptista, 2019), and spontaneous theater (Freitas et al., 2017).

- **Sociometry: understanding the group structure**

Sociometry is the research of the development and organization of groups and the situation of individuals in them and studies group structures and the positions of individuals in group interactions; it comprises the affective patterns that organize social groups and systematizes them based on sociograms and the sociometric matrix.

The here and now experience brings multiple interpretations of the individual's position and the role he plays in that group, constituting its sociometric matrix, which will provide the perception of the individual's sociometric status in the group.

Throughout recognizing the needs of the group, the path (method) or therapy that best meets the demand becomes evident.

The recording of sociodynamics analysis occurs through sociometric methods: action sociometry (dramatic games) and sociometric tests (Lira et al., 2016; von Ameln & Becker-Ebel, 2020).

- **Sociatry: therapeutics**

When a crisis or discomfort occurs in the group, it is necessary to make an intervention that makes it possible to seek a new balance of their relational forces to reorganize and become productive. Then, the group makes new arrangements to re-establish its functioning, thus initiating a new process, in such a way that these three instances—sociodynamics, sociometry, and sociatry—act as waves that are in constant effervescence, using the resources of action proposed in the sociodramatic methodology to identify new sociometric configurations. In this way, we can conclude that the group's design and its observable or underlying structure are never the same. On the contrary, they are constantly changing.

The methods of sociatry are group psychotherapy (Belém, 2019), psychodrama (Khouri, 2018), and sociodrama (Nery & Gisler, 2019). The first works on the group and its dynamics using action and verbal resources are understood as procedural work. Psychodrama addresses the individual and their dramas, that is, the group allows group manifestants to bring the theme to be worked on, expressing the will and involvement of all and, by sociometric choice, elects a protagonist for action in the dramatic context (Alves, 2020). Sociodrama, in turn, works with social themes, with the collective (Ramalho, 2021).

## The Brazilian Sociodrama

In a socioeducational or sociotherapeutic work, the demand for intervention is made by the institution's leaders or by the group itself. In such cases, it is usually a thematic sociodrama, in which the theme is previously defined by the needs of the group. However, although the theme is defined, there is no ready script. The group interaction will define how the theme will be approached.

The direction of a sociodrama can be focused on: an individual issue (an emerging representative of the group brings scenes from their personal history that express everyone's experience), relational structures (sociometric model), and the art of spontaneous dramatization. In any of these focuses, the other types of action will be present (Knobel, 2020).

The psychodramatic treatment method has the group as its protagonist, considering it the focus of action. Participants are transformed from spectators into actors of their experience, with everyone included. They tell their stories and make their narratives seeking to develop spontaneous states, allowing original responses to known situations and looking for new alternatives to face their problems and propose solutions.

The intervention can be a single act, with a beginning, middle and end, or extend to other meetings. It is defined with the clarification of the group contract. Psychodrama seeks to welcome and mitigate feelings of persecution and anguish, which are frequent in the initial phase, especially in groups with no shared history and relational experience.

The recommendation for interventions using any of the sociodynamics methods is that the psychodramatist has a sociodynamics stance, characterized by the perception of the individual in constant interaction, moving in his sociometric network, approaching and distancing himself from his social atoms, involved in choices (attraction, rejection, and indifference), according to criteria defined by the context.

Sociodynamics, sociometry, and sociatry are present and interacting in the group process as dimensions of the same phenomenon. They are integrated, continually intermingling with individual and group experience, promoting the individual and the group's organization and evolution.

In sociodrama, one of the roles that participants must work on corresponds to the objectives, purposes, and criteria by which the group meets. This role will be the organizing element of the group's needs since it motivated everyone's participation. And only this organizing role can be worked on, that is, in a sociodrama, there is no permission to access, in the here and now, other issues or roles not defined by the contract established with the group, allowing the focus to remain in the group, and not in individuals with their particularities.

The role cluster concept clarifies that the construction of a role is not an isolated and unprecedented event. Each role is related to others, adopted throughout the individual's development process. Roles with similar dynamics make up a grouping or cluster, with identical ways of acting (Bustos, 1990; Cunha, 2018). When a role is the focus of sociodrama, the other roles in that grouping are also organized. Thus, this outstanding role becomes the organizing role of the others. In institutions, the organization of the role chosen by the group allows other roles from the same group of roles to be organized, even if they have not been the focus of sociodramatic action.

## The Stages of the Psychodramatic Session

A psychodramatic session takes place in three stages: warm-up, dramatic action, and sharing.

**Stage 1. Warm-up.** It is divided into two moments: nonspecific warm-up and specific warm-up. The group is in the stage of organic isolation, requiring the activation of physical, mental, and social mechanisms or initiators for the apprehension of the group's affective–emotional mood, preparing for action, and developing a proximity mood (Espírito Santo, 2017). The focus is on the group's real level, intending to favor group contenance in a relaxed field.

In the nonspecific warm-up, the management team comes into contact with the external reality of the group. Participants are still immersed in their own difficulties and perceptions while still maintaining control of their actions. The group presents itself so that it exposes only what is visible, that is, the external society of social trichotomy. In this stage, the group coordinator presents their work methodology and can propose physical or mental initiators to facilitate the participants' contact with themselves, stimulating sensations in the here and now of the group field and creating a beginning of group experience. He can also propose identity cuts (Knobel, 2009),



asking participants to group themselves according to different criteria: profession, age group, sex, among others. Participants explore where and with whom they are based on the role defined by the contract, initiating a group experience.

The start of a specific warm-up occurs when the group begins to move toward its sociometric matrix. At this stage, they leave the social context and begin constructing the group context, developing the horizontal differentiation of relational structures.

Group interaction is essential, and the coordinator must be aware of their relationship with the participants, the appreciation of the relationship between them, and the relationship of the participants with the topic to be worked on (Alves, 2020; Marra, 2004).

The relationship is the basic element in any socioeducational or sociotherapeutic proposal, as it allows for a relaxed environment necessary for the development of spontaneous states. The affective flows that radiate from one individual to another (including the members of the management team) make each participant assume a role, not always corresponding to their social role, which will influence the development of a psychological dynamic in that group.

Although the focus is always on the group relationship in convergence with the theme, it becomes almost secondary, as the wealth of what will be produced will depend on the relationship between the participants. The protagonist of the sociodrama is the group, which means an opening for improvisation since everyone has a voice and vote, brings their projects, and makes their possibilities available. Everyone, with their divine sparks, will learn about their own acts, articulating content and emotions. It is assumed that each participant is the therapeutic agent of the other. Everyone is an actor, and the group is experienced as a unit.

The coordinator can propose awareness-raising exercises (e.g., experiencing the balance and the imbalance related to the theme or the experience lived in the here and now), making it easier for the participant to keep observing what is inside and what is outside, being able to follow the development of the group and contribute to the clarification and resolution of the questions presented. Group production is a real achievement, with the expression of lived and known situations, related to an analytical, conceptual level (Romaña, 2019). The experience makes it possible to start the creation of shared states.

The coordinator's sociometric stance also implies perceiving the group's structure, the individual's position in the group in which they are inserted, the roles they play, and the dynamic and continuous movement of the sociometric matrix. At this stage, the group or some members may try to bring other roles that are not part of the contract previously established, often to avoid deepening the proposed experience. The management will have to maintain the group's involvement with the role/criteria of choice of the group.

For example, in institutional work, the person did not always choose to participate, which makes it more difficult to overcome this stage; therefore, a specific warm-up is one of the most important stages of sociodrama, which is decisive for the success of the work.

**Stage 2. Dramatization:** In dramatization, with the representation of dramatic scenes or action sculptures and/or sculptures, the group's sociometric matrix emerges.

The dramatic action favors the group to find its social reality, characterizing the dramatic context.

The group is invited to experience a symbolic realization, with the dramatization of feelings, expectations, sensations, etc., related to the synthetic conceptual level (Romaña, 2019), aiming to promote the recognition of idealized roles, which were avoided or performed in a dysfunctional way for, from there, finding an innovative or renewing way of dealing and interacting with them in everyday situations.

Dramatic action is the process itself and the development of conflicting opposites, the dialectical process, since, in its unfolding, each moment always refers to an earlier situation that is generating the later one. It is a force that starts from one point and goes to another during the scene's construction in the very chain of these units of opposites.

In the evolution process, in the dramatic context, the group experiences the stage of horizontal differentiation. The roles of the group members interact, emerging conflicts and dialectical situations. The dramatic experience allows for collective catharsis, showing signs of moving to the stage of vertical differentiation.

Throughout the dramatic action, when constructing scenes, assembling images that express their feelings, sensations, and thoughts, and playing the most diverse roles, the protagonists of sociodrama are in full movement to expand shared powers and responsibilities, requiring much decision-making.

Action sculptures and/or sculptures and scenes are considered a practice that endorses sociodramatic theory and methodology since they facilitate participants to enter a situation that is the very extension of life and performance with the possibility of contact with issues and problems unsolved in a freer, broader, and more flexible social context. The dramatic action that produces creative acts results in changes in the participants because it broadens the understanding of complementary roles, reverses roles, and seeks the creative assumption of the role itself.

When all group members are involved with the scene, the intensified focus facilitates the emergence of a more sensory consciousness that arises from within the field of health forces—the telic field—provoking feelings of inclusion and belonging. These are leading movements.

In the “as if” space—a universe that tries to indicate reality through dramatically represented imagery—the group can investigate and experience the subjective impressions and feelings that concern each one's role, the place that each one occupies in the group and the functioning of the group and the social reality. The group also investigates how all these aspects intervene in their behavior, how the bonds and the complementary relationship with their peers take place and are structured, realizing the communication networks present in these relationships, and what social representation they have for this group. With these experiences, the elements that were most cited and synthesized considered the indicators for the construction of knowledge, are made explicit, and we can then gather the information and contributions of the group.

When the group finds its social reality due to a dynamic interpenetration of the external society and the sociometric matrix, referring to social trichotomy, it moves

from the horizontal differentiation stage to the vertical differentiation stage. Participants can present themselves differently from the others and, at the same time, understand their sociometric status in the group. It is time to make a synthesis of group work, which brings strength to changes and organization, which Romaña (2019) defines as dramatization at the generalization level.

This group work—more action-oriented than verbal and adapted to local culture and cultural diversity within the group—creates an agreement, a “permission state” within the group, allowing them to be themselves, giving a voice to all.

**Stage 3. *Sharing.*** It occurs at the close of the session. The group members share their experiences, roles, or scenes that each mobilized and relived in resonance with what happened on the dramatic scene. It is this stage that allows the expression, fundamentally affective, of the group sounding board. It is the moment to share lived experiences and integrate and generalize knowledge, and it is up to each one to take their new knowledge and return it to their social context (Aguiar & Tassinari, 1999).

Depending on the spontaneous states’ intensity, the group started in the organic isolation stage, went through the horizontal differentiation stage, and reached the third stage, the vertical differentiation, confirming the groups’ evolution’s sociogenetic law.

## The Development of Coresponsibility

Sociodramatic practices aim at developing coresponsibility in the face of what was created and built by the group, social reintegration into the sociometric network, changing attitudes, relational learning and learning new roles and concepts, experimenting with the other’s place, joint decision-making, and the creation of alternative ways of solving problems. It is, therefore, a method of intervention in the community, in organizations and institutions because it accounts for the diversity and intensity of the problems that arise in the interaction of a changing group. Based on the moment lived in the here and now, this interventionist practice provides the group members with opportunities for their knowledge, valuing it and confirming it.

The psychodramatist must know the culture and the social context in which the group is inserted (the group in the situation, its structure, its functioning, its sociodynamic contents) to contribute to the coconstruction of new meanings and narratives for the questions and difficulties related to the role worked.

Morenian pedagogy aims to allow a relaxed environment: the expression of spontaneous states (feelings, sensations, impressions, thoughts) so that learning is complete. This spontaneous performance of the group through the action promotes a cathartic and healing effect. Group participants gain greater clarity about the need for change when they see their feelings, thoughts, and imaginations expressed in action. The finding of satisfaction with group interaction promotes changes.

The group has a relational dimension (expressed in coconscious and counconscious states) and a sociocultural dimension (sociodemographic differences and the population’s subjective culture). The psychodramatic methodology makes it possible

to face the complexity of reality by promoting the involvement of all group participants and favors mobilization, participation and popular organization, the transformation of concepts, and the construction of alternative services, being characterized as a clinical-educational program, a social clinic, an on-site sociotherapy (Marra, 2004).

In Brazil, sociodrama has been consolidated as a fundamental resource for promoting groups' social health because it creates the opportunity to express conflicts in the here and now. The coordinator defines the rules, but the group creates the content. In this process, feelings of belonging are strengthened, creating a force field for social therapy (Fleury et al., 2015).

The group is the matrix of learning and knowledge, and all participants are responsible for the bonds and roles that are being mobilized by the interaction. This joint construction requires exchanging experiences and mutual respect for the other's knowledge, favoring different expression forms.

This type of intervention promotes a culture of respect and of building a dialogue between different people, as essential values of citizenship, and enables transformations in individuals and groups through the preservation of the autonomy and coresponsibility of each one for the common good (Marra, 2004; Marra & Fleury, 2010).

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# Chapter 4

## Brazilian Spontaneous Theater: Scenes that Spring from Resonances



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**Abstract** The text traces the history of the spontaneous theater, since J.L. Moreno created the theater of spontaneity in the 1920s in Vienna and its arriving and development in Brazil. It highlights the precursors and the revolutionaries in Brazil, giving visibility to psychodramatists forgotten by the psychodramatic movement, but who influenced, in a decisive way, the paths that were taken by this approach. Furthermore, it reflects about the spontaneous theater having been transformed from the foundation of psychodrama to one of its modalities, which made it lose the streets and squares and migrate to the consulting rooms, accepting the working mode of economic hegemony. It discusses the replay theater (RT), a modality of spontaneous theater, which is described as a method, detailing its assumptions and its management. It also brings an approximation between Augusto Boal's theater of the oppressed and the RT.

**Keywords** Theater · Spontaneous theater · Psychodrama · Sociodrama · Replay theater · Theater of the oppressed

### Introduction

The theater of spontaneity was created and developed by J.L. Moreno in the 1920s in Vienna. He carried the innumerable innovations of that early century, in addition to the influence of important expressionist artists, who responded to an aristocratic and bourgeois theater of the time, with whom Moreno lived beyond medical school. Moreno (1984) believed that the theater had strayed far from its primordial form:

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nature. The free nature and spontaneous creativity of improve actors. The strength of the theater for Moreno was not in the dramaturgy previously built by an author, but was created spontaneously with and by the audience. For Moreno (1984), the spontaneous spectator jumps onto the stage with the purpose of coming into conflict with his past (cultural conserve), with his almost immutable destiny, presenting a new dramaturgy on stage: creaturgy.

Moreno's theater of spontaneity method gradually became the spontaneous theater, that is, it was done spontaneously and not only with the aim of developing spontaneity. When Moreno discovered the therapeutic effects of the method, he favored the psychological focus, and this was accentuated in his partnership with Zerka T. Moreno. Hence, we know this methodology more as a role-play or simply by its generic name of psychodrama.

It arrived in Brazil in its sociodrama version at the hands of sociologist Guerreiro Ramos, but it was only widely known in the psychodramatic environment many years later, probably because he is a black man, not from the psychological field. Sociopsychodrama gained repercussion and sympathy from Brazilians at the 1970 International Congress, at the São Paulo Museum of Art, in which important artists of the time were present, who were looking for renovations. An explosion of freedom and joy, in a method that approached *Tropicália*, an important Brazilian movement of music and poetry, "it consisted of rediscovering and criticizing tradition, according to the experience of cosmopolitanism of artistic processes, and sensitivity to the things of Brazil" (Favaretto, 2000, pp. 31–32, our translation). Psychiatrists were fascinated by the joy of the Morenian approach, the possibility of freeing themselves from the couch, and the neutrality of the psychoanalytical aspects, coupled with the exemption that the methodology provided through dramatization.

However, when psychodrama arrived at the clinics, it was, over the years, framed in a ready script, like a booklet. It left the streets and confined itself, becoming property of doctors and psychotherapists. It longed to get closer to the then established and respected psychoanalysis and set out to write and record truths and recipes for technical management in publications that, many times, did not have the life and enthusiasm it had gained in 1970. It seems that for a long time Brazilians remained especially from southeastern Brazil, absorbed by showing science, writing, and constituting a number of followers that would guarantee the survival of the method beyond *Tropicália*. Little by little they were moving away from spontaneity and also losing their partnership with the artists.

Clóvis Garcia, a theater critic, set designer, and psychodramatist, wrote part of the statute for a very important psychodrama teaching institution in Brazil at that time. As an artist, he was also forgotten in the history of Brazilian psychodrama, although he fought for nonclinical psychodramatists, like himself, to manage this federation. This is a sequel that probably led Brazilian psychodramatists, and perhaps of other nationalities as well, to become intolerant of the theatrical past of the streets from which psychodrama originated and its association with artists. From there, the path of institutionalization and bureaucratization was inevitable.

The spontaneous theater in Brazil, based on psychodrama, was being sidelined, like a bastard child, until it reached the category of a modality of psychodrama.

Something considered very joyful, with producing scenes by subgroups, without deepening them and that was confused with dramatic play, in which there is no conflict: “a game is started and maintained as long as the pleasure in expressing oneself outweighs the tension, greater or lesser, that it involves” (Rodrigues, 1995, p. 112, our translation). The author considers that conflict is sought in a dramatization and that in a game one works in a relaxed field focusing on pleasure. The game would end when tension overcomes pleasure, according to Roger Caillois (1967) referential about games.

Until a school of psychodrama, born in the 1990s in Tietê, an inland city of São Paulo state confronted this conservative path. It has taken the spontaneous theater again into the streets of this city, facing conflicts with joy and depth, respecting and inviting the viewers to express what they saw and suffered. Again, art and science go hand in hand.

This school paradoxically rescued Moreno from the streets, who was based on an attitude of direct coconstruction with the community, while devaluating the figure of a perfect Moreno, who taught his students many times without listening to them. This new movement generated a reaction in the consolidated psychodramatic community of the time. The result of the clash within the Brazilian psychodramatic movement was the relative expulsion of the creator of this school, his dissenting ideas and followers. This happened against all the assumptions of the Morenian principles of inclusion to the point that this school was simply forgotten in the first historical book on psychodrama in Brazil and all its intense unfolding in the Brazilian psychodramatic movement. Its creator and manager, together with a bold and competent team of psychodramatists, were the controversial figure of Moysés Aguiar, a former pastor and psychologist, who was the president of the Brazilian Federal Council of Psychology and advocated for the regulation of the profession in Brazil, founder of the Companhia do Teatro Espontâneo, a group that survived the closure of the school and even the death of its creator in 2015. It is worth noting that, in its time, most psychologists were women and doctors were men. At that time, there was also a hyper valuation of doctors and foreigners in psychodrama, reinforced by the sexism in force at the time. What reigned was a strong Argentine influence, with a strong medical vision of repairing deviations, fixing pathological dynamics and mapping deformations.

The Tietê School, among other innovative actions, has proposed that its students direct psychodrama from the first months of their education, in classes and in public psychodramas. Aguiar, at one point, invited the most renowned Brazilian psychodramatists to present to them their paradoxically revolutionary ideas of a psychodrama that would return to occupy the streets. He proposed that the spontaneous theater was synonymous with psychodrama and not its modality of “theater”, without major implications, responsibility, and seriousness.

The presentation to renowned psychodramatists resulted in further reprisals and exclusion of their ideas. However, he continued talking about a dramatic project, which is currently used by Brazilian colleagues. He created the International Festival



of Spontaneous Theater and defined its various modalities: role-play, living newspaper, axiodrama, replay theater (RT) (which at that time was still called playback theater), dramatic multiplication, and didactic play by Brecht.

The Tietê School proposed bold coconstruction as a form of therapy and learning, based on playfulness, in the joint creation of scenes. This form, apparently, did not go directly to the conflict or to the protagonist theme; however, these emerged because of characters immersed in the counconscious and with strong mobilizers of spontaneous states. He proposed that the viewer could enter the scene at any time representing a character, which is the indicated way to interfere in the plot. It was enough for him to announce his entry to the director, who would never filter this initiative.

This proposal was opposed to that of a “medical” psychodrama in which the patient chose who would represent his mother, his boss, himself, etc. It was in fact group psychotherapy and not just treating an individual inside the group.

The Tietê School, by choice, was not affiliated with the powerful Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama, which still works today based on a representative democracy and not on a direct democracy of its psychodramatists.

Aguiar was the pioneer to do a Brazilian experience of directing the playback theater (Salas, 2000) in 1993 at the Tietê School (Aguiar, 2009), which ended up evolving into what is now the RT.

## The Replay Theater

The RT’s transformative potential, as a good offspring of the spontaneous theater and its modality, lies in its possibilities of generating creative power, through the spontaneity that passes between the audience and the team, mediated by the direction, seeking a permanent inclusion of the differences. Therefore, both the director and the egoactor/actress and egomusicians improvise according to the present moment, despite some previous arrangements.

As it seeks emerging people that lead the group concern (public and team), this methodology allows the collective “voice” to be heard. This makes the RT an important social intervention that provides power to the group gathered there, in a political act of creating meanings, with many different truths.

The RT, in the act of intervention, follows the three stages of the spontaneous theater and denominates them as “warm-up to bond and dramaturgical warm-up”, “dramatic action”, and “sharing”.

The method also values the team prewarm-up before the start of the intervention. The “previous warm-up of the team” takes place in a rehearsal in which, led by management, the objective of the work is fine-tuned and strategies are created. At that moment, the team counconscious thickens. There is also the “warm-up of the team on the day”, which involves the organization of the workspace, the costumes, tuning of the instruments, body and vocal warm-up of the team, the egotechnician in the case of online RT, microphones, if necessary, in addition to the connection between people, remembering the arrangements and making adjustments.

A well-structured contract that is accessible to all participants is a fundamental requirement for the smooth running of this work.

In the intervention, in their “warm-up to bond” with the group, some games are held in which, in a light way, the group addresses the theme of the day and/or welcomes a free theme. It is noteworthy that the leading theme arises from the group itself regardless of whether there is a previous theme or not. An example “warm-up to bond” bringing about important transformations was the RT carried out in conjunction with a nongovernmental organization project for pregnant teenagers on the outskirts of São Paulo, in which the improvised group (the group to which the authors belong) had the opportunity to propose to the teenagers, some husbands, nurses, and social workers to play a game called “*roda indígena*” (moment of sharing stories between participants inspired by an indigenous tradition) to deconstruct myths about pregnancy. The speeches, which were gaining strength and freedom of expression, led to the awareness of beliefs that were destructive for the adolescents present. Beliefs, for example, that a key could never be put in a pregnant woman’s pocket because the baby would be born with that key marked on their forehead.

In addition to the “*roda indígena*”, other games are used, such as “*atando e desatando nós*” (tying and untying knots/us<sup>1</sup>) (Rodrigues & Coutinho, 2009), in which the director asks people to say what they do, but always starting with “us”, even if only that person itself does that activity. Its objective is to make people realize that they are part of a collective and also to densify the coconscious.

“Costumes in action” is another dramatic game widely used in RT: Depending on the proposed theme, the director chooses, together with the public, characters from the universe of those people. Each egoactor/actress is responsible for a character and is available to be dressed by two or three volunteers from the public, who also guide him/her in gestures and speeches characteristic of that group’s culture. To keep the audience that did not go on stage warm, the musicians play and the director warns that whoever stayed in the audience will have to be held responsible for the result. The purpose is to play with these characters and not to be realistic, so that they can have fun with the figure of the boss, or of the boring customer, or something abstract, such as the goal established by the company. At the end, each egoactor/actress presents his/her character standing still and moving/speaking. With that, a relaxed atmosphere is created, while being respectful. The objective of the “warm-up to bond” is to form a group (Rodrigues, 2016), to get to know the audience and map them so that they know themselves.

Then, “the dramaturgical warm-up of the audience” begins, which is the ritual of finding conflict common to the group, which is not necessarily the theme proposed by the contracting team or institution. Games (physical and mental triggers) are used to stimulate verbal and body expression, as well as storytelling, interactive scenes, and “fluid sculptures”. The latter introduces theatrical codes to the public as language mediators between staff and audience. That is, in “fluid sculpture”, one at a time, the public tells a real emotion for egoactor/actress and egomusicians to transform

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: There is a play on words here, since the Portuguese word “*nós*” can mean both “knots” and “us”.

into action. Egoactor/actress creates repetitive movements, one by one, that express the emotion given by the audience, at the same time, egomusicians complement with incidental sounds. At a certain moment, these actions stop in a sculpture full of movement, even if static. The set of body, sound, and final image is the creation, in scenic language, of the emotion given by a person in the audience. This proposal for sculptures is repeated until management understands that there is a connection between the team, the public, and the group as a whole. Usually, “fluid sculpture” is present in the works with RT and also contributes to create in the public the confidence to expose their personal scenes.

The stage ends with “directed fantasy”, in which the group is warm and more connected. At this moment, the audience is asked to close their eyes, concentrate on themselves, and recall lived scenes. To help with internal visualization, the director stimulates with speeches (ex.: let several scenes pass in your memory; when was it? Who was present?), which organize the construction of the script of the remembered scene. It is here that, if there is a previous theme, it is suggested in the visualization, reinforcing the choices of the activities performed in the “warm-up to bond”. The director then guides them so that, when they feel comfortable, they can open their eyes. Rodrigues (2016, p. 169, our translation) states that: “The important private scenes are remembered in a state of spontaneity triggered by the warming up and a multiplicity of factors”. From the beginning, the atmosphere is one of total coresponsibility.

On the RT stage, what matters in the narrated scenes is not only the events that actually occurred, such as those evoked by experiential memories, but also the imagination. Reñones (2000, p. 55, our translation) states: “memory builds its ways in unknown ways, and the organization of facts is, in fact, a new creation. It will always be connected with one event, but sometimes so far away that the event becomes another”. It can be said that the event revisited is the basis for the scenic dramaturgy of the RT.

Since the beginning of the work, it has been sought through spontaneous states to shape and densify the subjective contents of the coconscious and the counconscious. In the intervention, the team counconscious contributes to the construction of the group counconscious as a whole formed in that intervention (team plus participants), through a contagion. That is, the coexistence structure of the permanent team infects with existing themes/contents, in embryonic or developed form, the group of the intervention that was formed at that moment of the intervention in act (Rodrigues, 2016). At the end of “directed fantasy”, everyone had the opportunity to recall a lived scene.

The peak of the RT is the stage of “dramatic action”, when the audience is invited to “voluntarily” tell their scene, so that the team of egoactor/actress theatricalize it. In each invitation to tell the scene, a new choice is made together with the audience. A theme tends to delineate between the scenes and their evolution in this interethnic dialogue. So, it is possible to choose only one scene at a time.

After the audience chooses the scene, the narrator comes to the stage with the director to tell it. Then the team stands next to the audience to also watch the narrator, and the director helps him tell his scene, so that the team can put him on the scene.

Then, director and narrator sit in the audience, and the egomusicians occupy the downstage and play and sing songs related to the narrated scene, in order to maintain warmth. In the meantime, egoactor/actress combines the structure of the scene based on listening both psychologically and dramatically to the narrative. An aesthetic is proposed for the scene: realistic, symbolic, with or without speech, inverting the point of view, etc. Among the egoactor/actress, it is desirable to cast at least one professional who is experienced in psychological clinic and one in theatrical scenic direction. At the end of each scene, the director offers the narrator the possibility of a brief comment, always valuing the narrator's availability in having offered his scene to the group.

At the end of all the scenes, the generosity of the narrators for sharing their real scenes is again valued. In the "sharing and comments" stage, it opens so that people can briefly report their revisited scenes with their eyes closed or to share emotions and memories triggered from the whole experience.

The RT has specific characteristics that distinguish it from the classic sociopsychodrama, as the director role. There is a prepared team, and the director, for example, is very important in his role, but far from being the most important, because for him the scene is as much a surprise as for the narrator. Another specificity is that in the stage of "dramatic action", instead of "dramatization" the RT proposes a "theatricalization" or "staging", to achieve a certain change level of diving in the group issue (Rodrigues, 2008).

The RT also instigates and welcomes group themes and has improvisation as a strategy to stimulate the spontaneity of sensitive actors and musicians. Therefore, the auxiliary ego of the classic sociopsychodrama becomes egoactor/actress. The musician is called egomusician, because he does the work of listening to the narrators and converts his aesthetic resonance into songs, sounds, and arrangements. The term egoactor is a rescue from Moreno, who already used this term for when the protagonist did not want or could not enter the scene and, therefore, an auxiliary ego did for him (Moreno, 1987).

The RT generates creative power through a warm-up, which results in the building of a group and not a grouping of people. Therefore, "the warm-up", its leading scenes, its counconscious phenomena, in music and scenes, and its revitalized resentful memory, as well as laughter as an allegory, represent highlights of this method.

The apparent repetition of the scene, as it is in the narrator's already reframed memory, is often brought up as something resentful, shameful, angry, frightened, etc. The recreation of the scene on stage, without advice and reframed, leads to the possibility of subjectivity being seen by its narrator and the audience that witnessed his pain. With that, it promotes the life of that emotion and the natural transformation in the person of the narrator and in all the rides of the audience that watches and supports his hero. An example of this was, in a certain intervention, a gentleman who was told of his daughter dying in the hospital, and he, the father, was able to finally express out loud at the RT, a symbolic goodbye for her. Or a narrator, a black woman, watching herself small, as a maid, almost a slave, being beaten and working. She was supposed to be the adopted daughter, who imagined it when she was rescued from

the orphanage, but in fact she was “sold” by a priest (the audience wept and, like a Greek choir, absorbed their pain).

An example of transformation was in a shelter, which welcomes young people for having suffered domestic violence, who were rebelling against the coordinating team. After the intervention with RT, the young women started to look at the shelter team with different eyes, as partners, and to accept their welcoming. This happened with one of the authors when doing this work at Lisbon Holy House of Mercy, Portugal, where one of the teenagers, very aggressive, who was a leader who refused to do the job and who, little by little, was gaining confidence until she told a story scene. This only happened after the director was challenged to sing her Brazilian national anthem. In response, the director challenged the group to sing their Portuguese anthem, and there began the possibility that they would tell very difficult scenes of violence experienced at school and at home. A challenging and powerful warm-up generated a change in preventive attitude for the lives of a number of girls.

The RT uses a lot of sense of humor and the transformation of senses during work to talk about pain, without, however, belittling it. So it is, in very difficult scenes, made by an egoactor/actress who makes fun of difficulties, causing the narrator to laugh at himself. Or even in fluid sculpture when someone brings the emotion of relief, you can bring the scene of someone who has relieved himself in the bathroom, along with emotional relief. Or the scene told of a couple in fear of hornets being reversed, in which hornets are afraid of humans.

Sometimes there is an evolutionary path in the RT in which, for example, the first scene can be of a child, and the following scenes are of adolescent, adult, and elderly, respectively. Sometimes an initial tragedy told by the narrator, which discourages the group, provokes a reaction in the next scene that rescues the group’s power.

The group is often unaware that the scenes are related and is often surprised when the directors retell the path they took. Another phenomenon that constantly surprises is that if the group goes through a path of heavy and sad scenes, the untold scenes, which appear later in the sharing, have cheerful characteristics, as if they were not coconsciously authorized by the group. Or the opposite may occur, in groups that bring very funny scenes, the heavier contents tend not to appear, as if the group is consciously vetoing them.

In psychodrama, coincidences or synchronicities are common. However, in RT this is even more frequent. The egomusician may feel compelled to sing a song that apparently has nothing to do with the theme, and the narrator later mentions in his comment that it was the song that the mother sang for him. Just as egoactors put on the scene, many details not said by the narrator surprised everyone.

In addition to the full power of the sociopsychodrama methodology, RT adds the artistic of the scene as part of the work experience. The “spectacles are, therefore, triggers of analogies, resulting from the materiality of the scene and which allows the spectator to establish relations with his own experiences” (Carneiro, 2016, p. 42, our translation).

The online RT (Rodrigues et al., 2020) emerged as an alternative to a virtual meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak led to the adaptation of the RT format using technology as a means to bring people from all over the world together.

Despite social restrictions, physical isolation, it was possible to provide a playful environment, in which people could meet and open their pains, mourning, joys, achievements, challenges, etc. Using the online platform, the following adaptations were made to reduce the number of egoactors in fluid sculptures and in the scenes, so that the public could see all the egoactors at the same time on their cell phone (mobile device), while the musicians, in order to avoid overlapping sounds, sing one at a time, to the chapel or playing their own instrument. This meant that the method could be recycled and could affect as intensely as the face-to-face RT. It also emerged the figure of the egotechnician, who takes care of every part of the virtual platform, follows the chat communicating important information to the director and, eventually, to the egoactors/actress in addition to being able to replace the director if the Internet eventually disconnects.

Replay theater in Brazil has developed over the past 27 years and has opened space for many other troupes. The improvise group, which has part of its members as authors of this text, became a reference of this methodology within Brazilian psychodrama, being its oldest permanent group. This group has existed for 19 years and continues to create new ways of performing the RT, having even created an adaptation of the modality of Moreno (1987) magic shop following this methodology.

## Augusto Boal

Augusto Boal, an important Brazilian artist internationally recognized for his deep dedication to the art of allowing the voice of the people to emerge through dramatizing, was the creator of the famous method theater of the oppressed, which brings many similarities with the theater of spontaneity.

He was born in 1931 in Rio de Janeiro, and in 1952 he graduated as a chemical engineer. In 1953, he traveled to study theater at Columbia University (USA), in 1955 he started directing plays at the Teatro de Arena in São Paulo, Brazil, and so he won the world. During his engineering degree in Rio de Janeiro, he attended classes of the Stanislavski system at the National Theater Service, and, during theater training in New York, he attended the Actors Studio, despite not being enrolled in courses of both institutions.

In addition to being a director, he was an author, translator, reporter, and actor. He lived and worked in several countries and has also published in five continents, in more than 80 countries, including Argentina, Portugal, and France, where he taught at the Sorbonne University.

He was banned from Brazil during the persecution of artists, during the military dictatorship, which lasted a total of 21 years (1964–1985). His restlessness did not leave him silent, and, in 1970, he started a tour of his show *Arena Conta Zumbi* in the USA, going on to Mexico, denouncing the Brazilian military coup across America.

But the first ideas of the theater of the oppressed emerged in Brazil, more precisely in Santo André, SP, when Boal was giving a drama seminar for workers. From that meeting, “a strike” emerged, a text written by the students based on real facts, in

which only fictitious names replaced real names. But at the premiere, one of the workers recognized himself on the scene was outraged and took the stage, being accompanied by others. Boal, when faced with this attitude from the audience, said: “I will finish the play. If what the play says is true, you have to put up with it because he is telling the truth. If it’s a lie, then it’s not you”. The worker opposed Boal and he allowed the person in the audience to speak to the actor who represented him on the scene for the first time.

Boal (2005) believed in a “spect-actor”, when viewers are invited to enter the scene and, acting theatrically and not just using the word, reveal their thoughts, desires, and strategies that may suggest, to the group to which they belong, a range of possible alternatives invented by themselves: The theater must be a rehearsal for action in real life and not an end in itself.

That is, the audience that watches the play becomes an actor, protagonist, recreating and transforming not only the scene, but the society in which all of us are inserted and, in the case of Boal, oppressed by.

In Alcione Araujo’s article (2011, pp. 22–23, our translation), Boal says:

The theater of the oppressed is, above all, theater. The theater being, which is the human being, is the capacity that we have to observe ourselves in action that no animal has. This dichotomy is human. So, to be theater is to be human and to be human being is to be theater.

With the theater of the oppressed, the modalities that unfolded from it emerged, all with a clearly political objective, or better, of political education, such as newspaper theater, invisible theater (Buenos Aires), forum theater, legislative theater, the rainbow of desire and others, always allowing the public’s voice to emerge, transform, and recreate it.

I post messages on my website, like bottles overboard... I write books as if I wanted to reach someone I didn’t know, or someone whose face has dissolved in time... I want to see the face of those who, in my books, see mine. (Boal, 2000, p. 83, our translation)

## **Specificities of the Theater of the Oppressed of Boal and the RT**

Both theater of spontaneity and its RT modality, as well as the Boal’s theater of the oppressed, seek social changes and individual attitude. All of them open a fertile field for the spontaneity of individuals and their group as a society. All of them seek a utopia in which there is no exclusion of anyone and that everyone is politically equal and, at the same time, that people can manifest their differences without fear or embarrassment. Neither exclusion by skin color, nor by gender, nor by physical or mental characteristics, nor by socioeconomic level, nor by the location of your dwelling, nor by the type of work, nor the culture of scholarship. Both proposals seek ideals of a fairer and egalitarian society.

How do they differ then? The sociopsychodrama in general contained in the theater of spontaneity and the RT unveils oppressions of all kinds: political, family,

economic, institutional, corporate, etc. It provides the problematization of a situation experienced by that group, leading individuals to move within the truth of each one and changing what is possible to change. The theater of the oppressed presupposes that the group is oppressed and seeks to reveal this to them, proposing the transformation of the perspective of oppression to reach the current political system.

In a sociopsychodramatic event, although there is a preparation of the team and the director, and there is often a previous theme, everything can be abandoned at any time to address group truth. This truth comes from the direction, the team, the audience present, and all the conditions of that specific meeting. It is the coconscious and the counconscious that are established in the setting of the intervention. Even when sociopsychodrama is used to teach, any subject can be questioned: from whether God really exists, even if that known historical fact happened, and in the way it is being taught. There can be no manipulation for the hegemony of a truth. This would be authoritarianism unacceptable by Morenian and contemporary assumptions as well.

There are very commendable and admirable initiatives to bring education to the oppressed and destitute populations and that is the case of the theater of the oppressed of Boal. Although it starts from the previous truth of everyone being previously classified as oppressive or oppressed, the theater of the oppressed has its potency and validity, but it differs from the theater of spontaneity and RT that do not start from previous truths.

Both interventions have their locus and the degree of manipulation of a captive audience, when well warm-up and bonded to the direction. They seek spontaneous and creative actions to recreate potency and coconstructed propositions, through theater, the poetic, the body in action, and individual and group subjectivity.

In its 27 years of existence, RT has been fundamentally an axiodrama, seeking to work on the values of each group, without judgment. Thus, the improvise group, bringing magic, joy, delicacy, and gentleness in dealing when this is possible, has dedicated itself to doing:

- Ethics interventions in governmental education bodies;
- Search for healthier and more inclusive living in the corporate world;
- Preventing violence and seeking community action;
- Sharing social isolation in COVID-19 pandemic;
- Environmental awareness meetings;
- Sexually transmitted diseases prevention;
- Company values and requirements and what employees understand about what they are and are not following.

Theater as an art of revolutionary tradition par excellence has always served and will always serve to create the disruption of moral paradigms that point to empty and/or destructive cultural preserves.



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# Chapter 5

## Public Psychodrama: More Than a Century Valuing Groups



Terezinha Tomé Baptista

**Abstract** It is time to celebrate a century of the official nomination given by Moreno to his event open to the spontaneous public, in which he encouraged the participation of those who were present. But group meetings already characterized this master's usual practice years before that meeting. The official name of theater of spontaneity, in April 1921, proposed the stage as an instrument, dramatization as a strategy, the format that today we call public psychodrama (PP). In São Paulo (Brazil), they are characterized by special meetings, in open and democratic spaces, with a new director at every opportunity, which stimulates, in the participants, innovative, experimental, and disruptive manifestations for the issues that arise on the day. This practice has been running successfully for about 20 years in Brazil, sometimes in unusual places such as streets or urban squares. There are places where the frequency is weekly, bringing together audiences of different sizes. Among several exciting effects, an unexpected one: participants spontaneously become loyal to the sequence of encounters and experience a particular psychotherapeutic process; the constant frequency expands their social and affective environment, transforming their inner world. Excerpts from some meetings will be cited in this article, illustrating the inventiveness of diverse professionals and participants' healthy boldness with their surprising psychodramatic productions.

**Keywords** Public psychodrama · Online groups · Pandemic

### Introduction

A way of working with the group (and with people within the group) in a therapeutic, pedagogical, investigative way, which has three primary points of support: theater, psychology and sociology ... It is a theater, but in what it can have of most original: the text is created right on time, and the authors are at the same time authors of what they perform. Isn't that the way it is in life? (Davoli, 2006, p. 17)

The two or three times they opened for me

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The door to the hall where people stand  
 I entered, sad of myself, content—  
 And at the entrance, they always smiled at me...  
 —Mário de Sá-Carneiro, *Campainhada*

People are gradually approaching. Some already know the space and are at ease since their arrival. Whoever comes for the first time shyly approaches. There is already a circle of chairs waiting to be occupied. The coordinator or the coordinating team of the day's meeting is often present earlier to prepare the space, sound, stage materials, etc., and welcome those who arrive. There is no forecast of the number of participants who will make up a generally quite heterogeneous group on that day in terms of age, education, socioeconomic status, and expectations.

This movement is characteristic of one of the most popular and lasting public psychodramas (PPs) in the city of São Paulo/Brazil that has been going on for 17 years, every Saturday of the year with few exceptions (Christmas, New Year, or for some extraordinary occurrence). The citation on the epigraph of this article is an excerpt from the invitation addressed to a potential audience to participate in the PP at the Centro Cultural São Paulo in 2003, the year in which these meetings began, which continue until today, November 2020, in an online version from April of that same year. The event is currently well publicized and well known, and many people already know that they do not need to book or notify to participate: They only need to be present on the day and time that are always the same. What is new each week is the direction or functional unit—a professional team composed of a director and auxiliary ego(s)—who will coordinate the day's meeting with the people who attend there. Thus, the moment of arrival, the permanence or not, and the choice or need to leave before the end of the dynamics do not need to be explained: Each one does what they can or want on the day they attend. And the group is getting organized. It is unique because the meeting of that day does not imply continuity. The following week, another group will be present. Despite some people being assiduous, the group is open, so it is formed, configured, and disintegrated at each meeting. So, people warm up, identify with each other or with the theme of the day and create, represent, share, reflect, and experience the possibility of seeing their daily life transformed, even if they never return.

These PPs take place in an ample but closed space, it is free and entirely open to the general public, and you never know the number of participants for the day: between 15 and 100 people or more attend. The group's size varies from small to large, and the direction or functional unit responsible for coordinating the event must have the flexibility to deal with the unpredictable. The focus may be psychotherapeutic when issues of the private life of some protagonist(s) are privileged, or sociotherapeutic when the social, community, group, and human subjects are at the center of the day's manifestations, and the group is the protagonist. The director can choose the day's theme in advance or it can arise from the group at the time of the meeting. In the first case, it is called a "thematic encounter".

According to the categorization of Moreno (1974), the PP belongs to sociatry, one of the branches of sociometry, which uses psychodrama and sociodrama as

methods. As already mentioned above, the meeting of the day is characterized as psychodrama or sociodrama. Eventually, there may be an association between the two methods, which Brazilians have then named sociopsychodrama. The director is free to direct the work of the day according to his choice and planning and/or following the group's needs that arise at the time of the meeting. The stages of the meeting are the classic ones: warm-up, dramatization, and sharing. There is a fourth moment that is worth valuing: that of the comments. The warm-up phase will indicate the "entrance door" to which the director invites the participants and will facilitate the process according to the chosen method, but it should not lose sight of the singular occurrences requiring attention and eventually modifying the previous planning. It is also expected that the director will be able to dimension the counterpoints between individual protagonists and the audience present. Everyone must be included. Psychodrama happens when a protagonist presents questions from his/her private life, and the scenes represent characters from this subjective world. Sociodrama, where the protagonist is the group, is characterized by themes that involve and encourage the participation of all those present, and for that, the director must be clear and simple in his guidelines, in order to facilitate the understanding and promote spontaneous actions that help to build the group territory (Knobel, 2020). "Sociodrama also creates states of belonging by allowing the expression and shared acceptance of multiple ways of assuming existential situations" (Knobel & Alves, 2008, p. 70). In this case, the warm-up is dedicated to everyone's involvement to express themselves through characters in vignettes or representative scenes on the theme. Thus, the participants create plots, preferably based on what the subject awakens in their memories, experiences, and imagination, and perform them in the stage of dramatization. In the sequence, they share with each other, being supportive of each other, presenting points of identification and being empathetic with others' expressions. From then on, they reflect, express their ideas, question themselves about complex or everyday issues stamped by the scenes. Sociodrama, thematic or not, is undoubtedly the most frequent method in these PP events. Eventually, during sociodrama, an actor is powerfully touched by a subjective dynamic, and attention, and looks focus and value the notion that some particularity of his inner world is presented and represented in the dramatic context. A sociopsychodrama is characterized in which one does not lose sight of the fact that, even though it is a distinct feature, every protagonist is a representative of the group, and the dramatized personal theme is reflected in the other participants. The direction should contemplate group sharing, which expands the represented beyond the limits of a person: What this subject expressed in his private exhibition resonates in some way in the other participants, and it is desirable that the content stimulated in the audience can be divided with the protagonist and other partners of the meeting.

The fourth stage of a meeting, that of comments, favors the "practice of thinking and reflecting on the whole process, on the same day that it is experienced, and with the same people with whom it is created" (Baptista, 2014, p. 130, our translation). It is the stage of group thought and reflection, the expansion and generalization of what was lived in the theater of authorial scenes for everyday life. This "bridge" between the PP encounter with its productions and exchanges facilitates

self-perception, changes in automated reactions, freedom of experimentation and changes of opinion, and autonomy in the direction of life itself. Here is the being-related-to that is constituted by the environment in which he lives, but also interferes in it and must appropriate these conditions to abdicate the passive being and assume himself as the one who acts, not with automatisms or robotic repetitions, but with strength, power, authorship, and responsibility.

The typical instruments of socioeconomic meetings, director, auxiliary ego, protagonist, stage, and audience are always characterized in these events. The vast majority of those present act in the dramatizations and alternate between the role of auxiliary egos, actors on stage, and audience members who echo resonate, enrich, question, name, share, and contest, based on what is staged.

It is then expected from these meetings, as already reinforced before, that the participants leave with something transformed within themselves and/or in the perception of their daily reality, and that these acquisitions resonate and propagate them in their collective environments; that people exercise the discernment and appreciation of their desires and expectations concerning their life and their social surroundings and that they have opportunities to train, try, or test positions on their daily lives, their relationships, and their reality.

In the dramatic context, with its limits extended by the “reality” of “as if”, each character created and acted is an experiment of possibilities for action. Each plot represents some aspect of personal, group, community, or social reality. Each referral given for approaching, resolving conflicts, or expressing desires and possibilities expands the repertoire of possible actions or reactions to the environment in which these actors live. The sharing stage gives visibility and value to this expansion. In the social context, each participant’s interpersonal life, their affective, family, community relationships, and social networks can benefit from the intrapersonal transformations mediated by the experiences in the PPs.

It is as if they were in a laboratory, where the more unprecedented and uncensored the actions of the characters in the scenes that follow, the more the actor experiences himself as a unique person and citizen challenged, creative, courageous, questioned, or sustained by the reaction of his companions in the scene. New ways of being in the world, from experience in a low-tension environment offered by the dramatic context, favor experimentation, learning, discoveries, and transformations. In the context of that group, each one can feel strengthened and, in the social context, position themselves more actively, aware of their reality, less “object”, or victim and more as an agent subject in their community and/or collective insertions. Zampieri (2011, p. 45, our translation) defines with a mastery that: “Public psychodramas are the scenario for the empowerment and approximation of life through relationships”. And she adds: “In the different roles of public psychodramas we see, *in status nascendi*, the deconstruction of static truths for the construction of less polarized humanities and impeded from flexibility, spontaneity and creativity”.

PPs can be developed according to different modalities (Rodrigues, 2008). The main ones, as they are more accessed, are spontaneous theater (Aguiar, 2013), live newspaper (Costa & Baptista, 1998), dramatic multiplication (Mascarenhas, 1999), replay theater (Rodrigues, 2008), and debate theater (Freitas et al., 2017). From these

possibilities, the creativity of each coordinating team creates, modifies, or densifies these formats. And the traditional techniques of socomomy, soliloquy, double, role-playing, role reversal, mirror, freezing, and maximization<sup>1</sup> are widely used in the dramatic context, under the command of the direction of the meeting.

## A Little More of History

And so, past the four  
 Ages from the being who dreamed,  
 Earth will be theater  
 —Fernando Pessoa, *Mensagem*

As an illustration of how immense the creativity of the direction of the meeting can be, it is worth mentioning a very bold and exciting format, in addition to being unprecedented, proposed by a PP director, André Marcelo Dedomenico, who in 2014 invited several psychodramatists to exercise multiple directions in one of these meetings, under his coordination: Each of these colleagues directed a moment of that event. On that day, the 11th anniversary of the PP was celebrated at the cultural center in the city of São Paulo. Each professional's particular way was followed during the dramatization phase, always taking care to respect what the previous colleague had proposed. They could continue the scene started by the previous colleague, suggest a new way, or even offer a format that would involve the whole group. It was an inventive, innovative, and stimulating proposal. There were ten directors who succeeded in commanding the present group of approximately thirty people, in addition to André, who generated and managed the meeting. The contents of the scenes were very rich and profound, with the actors' involved participation. This format, which, as far as is known, had not been tested before, was successful, being the object of study and in-depth discussion at a later time among the professionals involved. This is a sample of the recommended use of creativity on the part of directors, who must dare and test new ways to bypass cultural preserves, which can hinder the freedom to create new forms in conducting socomomic works.

According to Costa (2016), the first PP held in Brazil dates from 1964, directed by Jaime Guilherme Rojas-Bermúdez, during the IV Congress of Psychiatry held in Porto Alegre, south of the country. Rojas-Bermúdez, a Colombian psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, approached psychodrama in a self-taught way before formalizing his psychodramatic training with Moreno himself. Between 1968 and 1970, he trained the first Brazilian psychodramatists. PPs at that time took place within congresses of psychodrama or group psychotherapy.

PPs in public spaces, closed or open, with large audiences, became established and popularized in Brazil from 1984, having as one of the greatest pioneers the psychodramatist Regina Monteiro. She comments (Monteiro & Baptista, 2010) that,

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions of concepts and practical applications in Giacomucci (2021).

in the beginning, she resented the lack of models for the direction of large groups. She reports that around 600 people attended one of the first she coordinated. Therefore, she was one of the pioneers and referred to the early experiences: “as I believe that the best way to learn psychodrama is to practice it, I was filled with courage, and there I went!” (Monteiro & Baptista, 2010, p. 109). And it marked the Brazilian history of the PPs, notably with large groups themed as “The Psychodrama of Diretas Já<sup>2</sup>”, “Mental health in times of unemployment”, among so many others, sociopolitical or institutional issues in force in the country at the time of each one of them. Some performed in very open environments, public squares. Monteiro (2004, as cited in Costa, 2016) records:

I highlight the first psychodrama performed on the street. ... In 1990. The theme: “The anti-asylum struggle”. On the wooden platform built in front of the Sé Cathedral (downtown São Paulo), psychodrama developed, mixing the people of the street—there were mentally ill and psychodramatists in the audience—to the auxiliary egos and directors of the action. (p. 29)

In March 2001, in a landmark event promoted by the local city hall, more than 150 simultaneous PPs were held in different neighborhoods in the city of São Paulo: The themes were of a social nature, linked to life in the town (Silva Filho, 2016) and chosen by the groups themselves. Until today, new spaces for group works have been created for weekly, biweekly, or monthly meetings, in the same city of São Paulo, in nearby municipalities and other Brazilian states.

It is interesting to highlight that although the great purpose of PPs is not necessarily psychotherapeutic, it is always therapeutic, and some regulars have become assiduous and individually carried out particular psychotherapeutic processes, often reporting their subjective changes, better understanding and acceptance of themselves, autonomy, self-confidence, more adequacy in some behaviors, and better insertion in their groups of belonging are more spontaneous in relationships. Those who become friends and somehow know each other more during the PP meetings are confirming to each other about significant changes that each one demonstrates in the coexistence.

## Some Testimonials and an Excerpt

It's no secret

We are made of dust, vanity,  
And a lot of fear.

—Millôr Fernandes, *A bíblia do caos*

The reference of those who participated directly in any of these meetings makes the possibilities of acquisitions and possible intra- and interpersonal perceptions more

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<sup>2</sup> Brazilian civil unrest movement of political nature that claims the right to elect the President of the Republic by direct vote.

visible, reliable, concrete, and accurate. The consequences mentioned are intrapsychic relief, personal self-worth, amplification of the world view, *being-in-the other*, and the perception of possibilities of *acting-on-the other*.

Vassimon and Malaquias (2014) produced an interesting article in which they transcribe testimonies from frequent visitors to these PPs. Here, some are highlighted that reveal the possibilities of reach that the participation involved can provide to people. On the feeling of inclusion, basic human need, from the discovery of points of identification with others:

The session I liked the most was my first... I thought it was really cool because I went through, like everyone else, some issues... that I thought were my own, but in fact, everyone who was there was experiencing the same type of problem. I felt included and that I could change that. (p. 20)

On the impression of being a loose, perhaps lonely, citizen in a huge city and the accurate perception of the possibility of linking and subjectivizing from the contacts and amplification of his social network in public meetings:

It is a life experience with socialization, with personal placements while we see other people... It is a vast possibility to see and live with people—including ourselves—within the city itself. With so much impersonality, we managed to have personal connections within a public space. (Vassimon & Malaquias, 2014, p. 20, our translation)

About feeling multiple, open to the other, receptive to the unexpected situations that life presents and flexible to experience the different human emotions, create innovative reactions, experience even the unbearable, which is possible when you are in a group, welcomed and welcoming, expressing yourself and empathizing with your peers:

There is always a surprise, and it excites me, motivates me to attend, mainly because the daily routine is repeated and exhausting. In this space, I feel at ease, free to create, share. There are moments of relaxation; others in which we are saddened, we face death, we talk about our problems. It is an exciting space, and in it, we can be authors, we can act. (Vassimon & Malaquias, 2014, p. 22, our translation)

Now, an excerpt from a PP directed by the author of this article illustrates the possibilities of multiple reflections from what is seen on the psychodramatic stage. There were three vignettes, created by three different subgroups, under the titles chosen by the scene's authors: "*Labirinto*" (Maze), "*Seita versus coisas-a-esconder*" (Sect versus things-to-hide), and "*Confinamento*" (Confinement). The account refers to the latter:

Several characters were defined as confined through: (a) hurry (without knowing why or for what); (b) attachment to the cell phone; (c) unreasonable deadline for the delivery of schoolwork; (d) a lot of work and waiting for the holidays; (e) mental prison. And these "prisons" were represented on the stage. The characters complained a lot about these situations and made little effort to get out of them. Some risked leaving, but soon returned to their "confinement", spontaneously.

On the sharing stage, from this representation in a dramatic context, some comments: "*Wow! I also get stuck in similar things!*" or "*There are many ways*



*for people to confine themselves in life; the cell phone is my executioner”; “Funny that we complain, but we don’t change, we just stay in place, it seems like a kind of emotional dependence”.* And entering the comments phase, some interesting and pertinent questions or reflections were verbalized by the audience, such as: (A) Would not this confinement be a production of the person themselves?; (B) Is the routine enslaving or organizing?; (C) Do pressures help or hinder?; (D) Can stay in this situation be a way of not feeling the emptiness?; (E) It is not advisable to judge by what you see: The important thing is the experience that the person has from his own experience.

It is evident the richness of intrapersonal and group content of these questions and considerations produced from the performance, and it is expected that they have caused effects on the subjectivity of each of the participants. It is not too much to conclude that there is an expansion of the repertoire of possible looks at life and relationships, for everyday situations, for subjective and interpersonal conflicts when people leave these meetings, reflecting on what they produced and how creative they were. It is also expected that they become aware of the depth and sensitivity of their questions and considerations and take ownership of the possibilities of personal transformations that these contents can promote.

## **Public Psychodramas in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

For man is inadvertently moving towards ever greater isolation due to the characteristics of the changes that have occurred—mainly in communication—and that will happen in the postmodern period. Changes are urgent, in the sense that man knows man, man shares with his group and the group with society. In this way, I believe that we will move towards new ways of meeting. (Silva Filho, 2016, p. 10, our translation)

At the beginning of 2020, more precisely in March, the rapid and worldwide spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which causes the COVID-19 syndrome, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Consequently, it was imposed in different countries, including Brazil, the process of physical distance between people: Events involving physical proximity were prohibited, be it work, entertainment, travel, business, etc. PP meetings were included in this condition. For some time, it was not known whether it would be possible to replace these events with virtual formats, given that the possibilities of an online psychodrama still seemed unfamiliar, notably group meetings. And the resources to make them viable were still scarce. Brazilian professional regulatory bodies had been allowing and regulating individual virtual psychological assistance since 2012, and scientific articles were beginning to reveal the validity, effectiveness, and ethics of this modality. From the diagnosis of the pandemic, the same regulatory bodies were more flexible and facilitators for the use of the online modality, providing for the democratization of these resources, and telemedicine, telepsychology, telepsychodrama, teleservices, in

general, were spreading, enabling health treatments not to be interrupted, or ceased to be initiated.

The World Health Organization constantly warns of the high probability of mental illness due to the pandemic and physical isolation and proposes some preventive measures, and recommends the use of social networks, always with care and criteria to maintain affective connections. It suggests the practice of solidarity: supporting the other in need is suitable for those who offer and those who receive it. It also advocates sharing good stories about yourself or other people. The value of social and affective relationships is implicit in these recommendations, and the PPs have facilitated the formation of an empathic and supportive group network. With adequate resources, now in telepresencial mode, it opens space, access, responsible freedom, and listens to anyone who wants to participate, even in times of physical isolation.

Platforms for virtual meetings with several people simultaneously (Zoom platform, Google Meet, etc.) became popular, and professionals became more familiar with their management. The regulars of the weekly PPs themselves, the most frequent at the Centro Cultural de São Paulo, suggested to the organizing committee that an attempt be made to make group meetings online possible, revealing the interest and need to maintain them. They were then cocreators of this format, albeit timidly and experimentally, demonstrating the group's strength in proposing new alternatives to overcome difficulties. And the face-to-face PPs were replaced by remote meetings, with a weekly frequency. The live and in situ cocreation, in the Morenian style of the here-and-now, has resulted from a unique and productive partnership between participants and directors of each meeting. This pulsating and active creativity is a precious characteristic of Morenian psychodrama, and cultural preserves have served as a stimulus and fertilization for new ways of following the stages, using instruments and techniques and highlighting the different socioeconomic contexts in a virtual environment. And today, seven months after the imposition of physical isolation, which can tragically turn into social isolation with harmful consequences for human beings' physical and mental health, these meetings have an average of 35 people per event. And those who participate can be in the most diverse places across the country, or even in other countries, which gives an interesting scope, making possible this unprecedented condition of live telepresencial connection with representatives from different parts of the world. Social and affective contacts expand and renew with multidimensions, including aspects of possible cultural exchanges, almost unlikely benefits in face-to-face events. It is worth mentioning that there are regular visitors to more than one PP on the same day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This behavior highlights the need for these people to feel within groups and reveals how much the virtual format involves, motivates, and fulfills wishes of belonging.

## Some Quick Thoughts

A retrospective look at both primitive and highly developed civilizations shows that age-old wisdom consists of attributing to the forces of the group a decisive role in structuring social life. (Moreno, 1974, p. 27)

In times of so much segregation, prejudice, stigmatization, exclusion, and lack of empathy, it is a gesture of justice to value group events where participants can reflect on this violence, revolt against them, and find new, appropriate, and creative responses to age-old problems of humanity that affects people in their daily lives. Wechsler (2011, p. 16, our translation) already advocated that through PPs “a fertile locus for collective health is offered, on the one hand... and on the other, a space of cultural resistance that allows coexistence in opposition to isolation, both compatible with an unalienated and unalienating posture”, which the vast current Brazilian experience confirms and demonstrates through several reflective reports on the practices and countless published scientific articles. Public psychodramas are present, with open doors and loving arms to receive and support anyone who wants or needs to express themselves. New bonds can enrich the social world of those who participate. Moreno’s son (Moreno, 2016, p. 274, our translation) reminds us: “J.L. believed that without their sociometric and psychodramatic interventions, the social systems that hinder human flourishing could even become oppressive”.

With the virtual format, new ways of linking are discovered, and each participant becomes an apprentice and creator of unprecedented models of contact in a propitious field for the exercise of creativity and expansion of spontaneity. Again, Moreno’s son recalls that: “J.L. believed that communication technologies presented the opportunity to organize and associate human beings for their capacity for creativity” (Moreno, 2016, p. 274, our translation). In times of COVID-19 and the necessary physical distance, this reminder about the visionary Morenian position regarding the possible scope of using information technologies is still a breath of fresh air. Rodrigues et al., (2020, p. 143, our translation), the team that develops and researches the replay theater, which “is characterized by putting on stage scenes lived by volunteer narrators who do not act on stage, ... but who have the opportunity to watch the recreated scene and resignedified by a permanent professional team, formed by egoactors and egomusicians”, published one of the first reports of online work with groups. And they stressed that they managed “even with the technological barriers and the lack of intimacy of some with this language, to reach an initiation ritual against the common conflict, similar to what we usually reach, as a team, in face-to-face interventions” (Rodrigues et al., 2020, p. 150, our translation).

A few months from the completion of a century of the first PP directed by JL Moreno in Europe in times of severe political crisis in Vienna, it is a source of pride for Brazilians that this practice is so present and potent in Brazil, reinventing itself in the face of the new and unexpected, or crises such as the pandemic. That sociopsychodramatic public practices expand to the continents of the planet Earth and that all human beings can benefit from them, including through the virtual communications adopted without naivety, with responsibility, acceptance, empathy, and creativity.

Would not this be a path in the direction of J.L. Moreno's dream that advocated: "A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less of an objective than the whole of mankind" (Moreno 1934, as cited in Moreno, 2016, our translation)? Crises unveil possibilities, and one of them may be that a utopia is not as impossible as it may have once seemed.

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# Chapter 6

## Training in Psychodrama: Democratic Project Under Construction



Leila Maria Vieira Kim and Marilia Josefina Marino

**Abstract** How has the formation of the psychodramatist in Brazil been shown? What is consolidated? What are its challenges? With these triggering questions, we address the commitment of the Brazilian psychodramatic movement for the qualification of the initial and continuing education of professionals, focused on working with the person and their relationships. The work of the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama is evident in the construction of formative parameters by learning to learn, from experiences, knowledge, and investigative practices. Methods and techniques used in the classroom and in supervision groups to assimilate concepts at the concrete, symbolic, and generalization levels and their praxis in different contexts, such as clinic, school, community, and organizations, are described. Scenes from group meetings are discussed, which reveal the difficulties and the facilities of the teaching–learning process in action to realize the Morenian Project of Education and Health. Psychodrama—an active methodology per excellence—is aligned with progressive and emancipatory approaches when facing the challenges of articulating the singular and the diverse, in the tension between the established and the instituted, for the construction of a more just, more humane society that cares for the planet.

**Keywords** Psychodrama · Formation · Democratic project · Active methodologies · Session fragments

### Introduction

The intentionality of this chapter deals with the commitment of the Brazilian psychodramatic movement for the qualification of initial formation and continuing education of the professional who seeks, in the sociopsychodramatic approach of J. L. Moreno and contemporary authors, conceptual, methodological, and technical

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tools for working with being human in its network of personal, group, and societal relationships. The vision of the human condition present in this training emphasizes rootedness in the sociohistorical context that, despite bringing determinants, opens the possibility that each one of us, in the eagerness to realize being, “in coexistence with the other”, assumes the protagonism of our history on the social stage, in the web of relationships in which we build ourselves, from the social groups in which we are inserted and also create.

Education as a social phenomenon in which generations take care of their continuity and survival is thus, in its formal, nonformal, or informal unfolding, a path to enter the human condition as unique beings and members of society. Besides being an inalienable right in civilization, an ongoing process enables self-knowledge and establishes healthy relationships (Marino, 2019). Thus, health and education are articulated as cultivation for a meaningful existence, joyfully lived in alliance with life, according to the epitaph suggested by Moreno (1975)—a worldview that has guided the training of psychodramatists in Brazil.

The Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama (Febrap), born from the first training centers of psychodramatists, brings together more than 30 training schools today. In the instances designed in its statute (revised over time), formed by different directorships and councils elected in general assembly, the Board of Education and Science (*Diretoria de Ensino e Ciência*, DEC), which is engaged in the construction of training parameters, advises the federates in the development of educational projects and gives the official seal of approval to the degrees awarded by them, stands out.

The democratic horizon of this collective work has maximum expression in the instance called management forum, composed of representatives of the federated schools, which is the *locus* of decision-making for the different areas of action of the boards, and will be highlighted in the section “educational project”. The movement between the instituted general normative principles for training and qualification in psychodrama (GNPTQP), according to Febrap<sup>1</sup> and the instituting—the creation and re-creation of the educational projects of the federated—originates a lively and constant reflection toward its improvement. In the section “psychodrama and active methodology”, the sociopsychodramatic pedagogy is made explicit and it is seen how it aligns with educational proposals aimed at meaningful learning in which the “learner” is the protagonist in coconstruction with his partners in the classroom—seen as a small social group, mobilizer of transformations. The section “scenes from the teaching–learning process” makes it possible to follow, in the context of basic formation and supervision for trained psychodramatic professionals, experiences that make explicit the places of the director-educator, the group members as auxiliary egos, and the audience. An appropriation of the Morenian project for health and education is in continuous motion. In the final considerations, the path is rescued, pointing out perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Parameters regarding the construction of the pedagogical project elaborated by the federates (Febrap, 2004).

## Educational Project

The educational project, or as we refer to it in Brazil, the political–pedagogical project (PPP), is a guideline for the joint actions of a collective. It is a *movement* articulating actions that unfold, as well as a *document* of what is already systematized in the face of consensus objectives. Facing the challenges for a twenty-first-century education, it is essential to keep in mind the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) guidelines in its reports, prepared by thinkers led by an eminent figure, in their reflections on challenges and paths for education. An indication is the report conducted by Delors (2003), which points to the four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be—unfolded by Morin (2000), in *Os Sete Saberes Necessários à Educação do Futuro*. Thus, it calls us to an anthropoetics in the face of an Earth homeland that gathers all humanity and calls for a planetary citizenship. The Morenian approach in education, which has in the pedagogy sociopsychodramatic its translation, contemplates the UNESCO guidelines and can consider Moreno as a precursor when he warns us that being and knowing are inseparable and calls us to our planetary responsibility. Therefore, counting on references for the construction of the educational project and, at the same time, paying attention to the singularity of the contexts where it will be developed is always a challenge to be faced in this democratic project under construction.

The psychodrama formation schools spread throughout Brazil in its diversity of contexts and protagonistic flights, as institutions that make partnership/agreements with universities (which include the norms of the legislation of the regular system of Higher Education in Brazil, set at 360 h); or as autonomous institutions that offer formations (according to the Febrap’s norms, set at a minimum of 420 h).

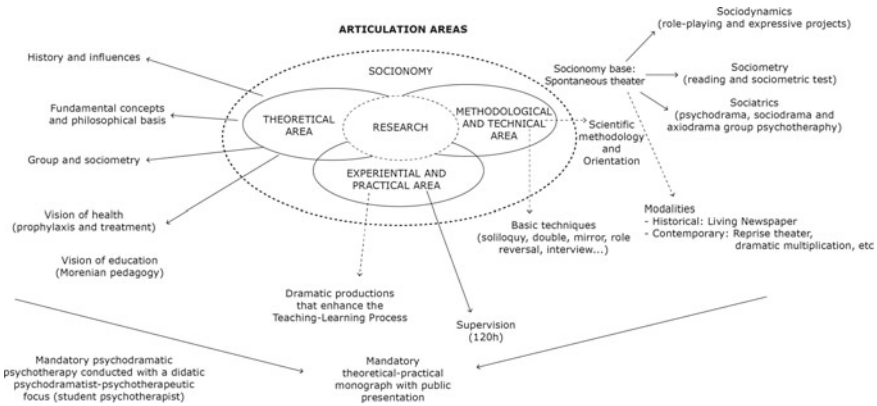
The GNPTQPs, according to Febrap/DEC, are consolidated in the following references:

- The continuing education of the psychodramatist articulates the curriculum in theoretical, methodological–technical, and experiential–practical. The areas refer to the perspective of investigation and research and are broken down into three integrated levels with their respective degrees and competencies: level I, level II, and level III.

Figure 6.1 is the diagram of the **educational project** (horizon shared among educators, students, and community to favor the training and continuing education of the psychodramatist); the **curriculum** (set of planned experiences favoring the teaching–learning process, articulated by the central axes of the educational project); and the thematic nuclei (disciplines articulated in areas that translate into concepts that compose the curricular matrix, with an explicit number of hours and responsible teachers).

The basic principles that guide the training of psychodramatists in Brazil consider it necessary that the level I psychodramatist reflects practices developed during the internship with mastery of the method and techniques, the level II didactic





**Fig. 6.1** Basic curriculum matrix of the educational project of Febrap. *Note* Adapted from Febrap/DEC (2004)

psychodramatist coconstructs the method in the classroom, and the level III supervising didactic psychodramatist is able to contribute to the methodological approach (Kim, 2009):

- It considers the types of contracts based on the anchor role (professional role obtained in an undergraduate course), which are established giving rise to the psychotherapeutic focus (for clinical psychologists and psychiatric physicians) and the socioeducational focus (for psychologists, teachers, managers, social workers, among others, who work in different organizational and community contexts).
- The curricular spaces of a theoretical and methodological nature should occur preferably congregating professionals from the two focuses, differentiating themselves in the supervision.
- Group formation developed by an articulated pedagogical team.
- Supervised practice focused on interpersonal, group–institutional relationships.
- Psychodramatic psychotherapy is mandatory at the level I and recommended at levels II and III.
- Research articulated to formation since every socionomic act is an investigation, which can have the character of systematic research.
- Monography that must be of a theoretical–practical nature.

Underlying it is the intentionality that we are all socionomists; that is, there is only one psychodrama seen as a theoretical–methodological approach in psychosocial sciences. Therefore, psychodrama is not “applied” as something ready-made, because the Morenian proposal is always coconstructed with the group, in perspective aimed at the democratic horizon of collective and joint construction—learning that is done while walking in this twenty-first century (Fava et al., 2005).

## Psychodrama and Active Methodology

To better understand the formation project of the psychodramatist in Brazil, it is necessary to understand the context in which it is inserted because pedagogical theories develop in parallel with political, economic, cultural, and social changes.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the foundations of the active methodology were implemented in Brazil by Anísio Teixeira in the education of health professionals (Teixeira, 1989). They relied on problem-based learning to control pandemics and the dissemination of hygiene habits, proposed at this time by Flexner, Dewey, and William James. Only in 1946, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned about the importance of teaching focused on humanities and sociopolitical and pedagogical determinations (WHO, 1946). But it was the specific movements for change in health training practices, organized during the Lula government, that created the Ordinance n. 198/GM/MS/2004 of the Brazilian Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2004), which determined the implementation of contemporary trends in all areas of knowledge through the adoption of active teaching–learning methodologies that make it possible to take the practices and problems of reality that:

strengthen meaningful learning by discovery, which stimulates creativity in the construction of solutions to problems in practice ... The student learns how to learn with autonomy and more significant insertion in social life, through the influence of the critical-reflexive (Freire 1996) and critical-social conceptions of the contents (Libâneo 1984) pedagogical conceptions, which allow the student to know, criticize and modify reality. (Kim, 2018, p. 34, our translation)

With this background, the disciplinary model of the 1930s (Foucault, 1987) and the critical pedagogy strengthened by Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s proposals influenced the beginning of the formation of psychodramatists in Brazil in the 1970s. But it was only in the 1980s, with the creation of the Unified Health System (UHS) and the constructivist pedagogy proposed by Emília Ferreiro, that research with groups began. In 1986, the socioeducational psychodramatist training was created at Febrap, with the inclusion of the proposed pedagogy of Alicia Romaña (2019), which recognizes the GNPTQPs. Romaña (2019) has manifested itself as a new way of working with content knowledge in the classroom, in the relationship between concrete and symbolic objects and their possibility of generalization, in the different areas of knowledge (see Table 6.1). This proposal to psychodramatist training schools in Brazil is made so far by the adaptation made by Romaña (2019) of the planning model proposed by Weinstein and Fantini, in the articulations with the ideas of the symbolic by Vygotsky and the need to observe ethical aspects present in the educator’s action, which reflect the evolution of his/her critical consciousness, as proposed by Paulo Freire, as well as Moreno’s concepts of spontaneity, creativity, roles, and sociometry.

In the 1990s, the Federal Education Council revised the concept of the minimum curriculum of Law No. 5.540 (Brazil, 1968), focusing on health and not a disease and

**Table 6.1** Repertoire of coconstruction of knowledge in the classroom

Types of realization	Programmatic contents	Levels of logical understanding
Real	Lived situations and concrete objects of reality	Analytical concepts
Symbolic	Feelings, sensations, expectations, etc.	Synthetic concepts
Imaginary	Feared situations, dreams, ideas, or projects	Generalization

*Note* Developed by the authors

valuing the student protagonist. Psychodrama, then considered an active methodology par excellence, started to be used as service-learning, in psychodrama internships, with groups in schools, companies, etc.

Since 2001, there is a perceived need for the culture of structural change in the more flexible national curriculum guidelines with the inclusion of continuing education—focused on learning with combating fragmented knowledge, and not on adjustment to the labor market—and the creation of environments of cooperative relationships between teaching, research, and the proposal of expanded clinical practice to the worker’s health (Brazil, 1996).

The formation of psychodramatists in Brazil at different levels (I, II, and III) and in continued education has allowed professionals from other areas of knowledge, as student protagonists, to develop a professional practice more adequate to the Brazilian reality. This process of transformation in the professional role is the result of the dramatic action used in the classroom, under the mediation of the psychodramatist-teacher, who “feels greater professional fulfillment with the knowledge constructed, with the socialization of the contents, and with the perception of the culture reflected in the experience of the students” (Kim, 2018, p. 32, our translation).

Moreno (1975) emphasized the importance of the psychodramatic proposal to the educational system, from kindergarten to university, as a laboratory that outlines guidelines for solving everyday educational and social problems. He suggested creating teaching techniques based on the principles of spontaneity appropriate to the expanded school curriculum and experienced concretely in the bond between the participating subjects. Similarly, Morin (2005) emphasized that in these experimentations, a “recursive self-organization” occurs, provoked in the intersubjective relationships between subjects, which retroact on them and interfere in the reorganization of their quality as human beings.

It is found that psychodramatic pedagogy, presented by Romaña in the years 1970–1986 in Brazil, is aligned with educational proposals aimed at meaningful learning, as we have emphasized.

The integration between theory and practice is done through theoretical processing at the end of each assignment in or out of the classroom. This proposal (Romaña, 2019) has advantages over traditional methods because:

- It has a consistent theory that supports the practice; that is, there is always a reason that justifies the activities.

- The didactic resources allow for the most varied educational actions and can be recombined with each other, which enables the creation of new responses to each interest, need, or preoccupation of the participating subjects.
- Given its breadth, psychodramatic pedagogy offers the possibility of articulating itself positively with other theories.
- As they participate in activities based on it, students educate their spontaneity and improve their experience of space–time.
- With its didactic resources, students can thoroughly investigate both the curricular contents and the situations they experience.

The inclusion of different theoretical approaches integrated into the psychodramatist’s work has had international repercussions and has favored the humanization of teaching, practice, and research published in the *Revista Brasileira de Psicodrama*. We have developed online psychodramas during the pandemic that have helped the population deal with distressing situations in different social environments. *Revista Viva* (Fleury & Kim, 2020) has allowed the dissemination of scientific papers to increase citations. Today, psychodrama and the active methodology are intertwined in the transformative evaluative practices of reality, with a dialogic vision (use of different multireferential, follow-up, and respect to the diversity of teamwork, and continuity of action in qualitative and quantitative character).

## Scenes from the Teaching–Learning Process

### *Basic Formation Level I—Direction: Marilia J. Marino*

#### **Role Diagram: From Class to on Stage**

**Context:** With 24 participants, the group meets at the psychodrama training course (level I) of a federation that has an agreement with a private community university with a public spirit. The course as a whole lasts two and a half years. The curricular space called “theory I—Morenian approach: man and his relations” involves professionals from the socioeducational and psychotherapeutic focuses. Participants also take the spontaneity–creativity workshop and role-playing I. The process that will be described took place in April 2010. The course started in March; thus, the construction of the learning group was in process, and the encounter with Moreno’s story and the first steps toward familiarization with the methodology and basic techniques of psychodrama had taken place.

**Teaching–learning proposal:** Foreseeing two consecutive weekly classes and with the general objective of enabling experience and reflection on the concepts of role and social atom perceived in the Morenian theory, focusing on modes of relationship before the complementary roles, the specific objectives involved experiencing the construction of an imaginary character and its network of roles, playing the actor’s roles in the psychodramatic context (character, didactic protagonist, auxiliary

ego), understanding the concepts involved, to appropriate the social (scripts/cultural scripts) and singular subjective (expression of the self) dimensions of the concept of role, according to Moreno's contribution—psychosomatic, social, and psychodramatic roles—to become sensitized to the impact of time on relationships, and to recover spontaneity—creativity and draw their own role diagram, thinking about what happens in light of their perspective and where it would be in the role diagram of one of the significant people in their network.

## Work Description

**Contract** (April 10): We open the work by rescuing the entry in the “roles” unit, according to the schedule. We announced the possibility of articulation with our congress and its theme/research, “time for time”, requesting everyone's authorization to use the data in publications and obtaining their agreement.

**Warm-up:** We invited the participants to think of an imaginary character, and it was someone we were getting in the third week of the course (mobilizing the imaginary). With our articulation, suggestions came in and features were built in a climate of great involvement and participation. The annotations were made on the flipchart, according to territories/fields:

- *Personal:* male, 33 years old, single, light brunette, tall with a goatee and good looking.
- *Education:* business administrator, graduate in educational psychology, interested in working with other dimensions of labor relations.
- *Family field:* His father was Minister of Environment in Lula's government, and his mother is a psychiatrist who attends private practice and hospital; in leisure, he invests in art and theater, and he is very cultured; his 27-year-old sister is a psychoanalyst and is single; his 38-year-old brother is married and has a couple of children (5-year-old boy and 7-year-old girl), has a compulsion for sex, and cheats on his sister-in-law.
- *Relationships:* has a good friend since high school who is a designer; has an ex-girlfriend who cannot accept the end of the relationship.
- *Professional:* an executive at board level, responsible for the HR area of a private company, focused on electric energy, has socioenvironmental responsibility projects, supports an NGO with projects of awareness to environmental causes, focused on the local community. He relates well to the team and has a best friend. He is responsible for the articulation of the NGO in the company.
- *Politics:* is nonpartisan, takes a critical view of the system, but does not get involved.
- *Religion:* catholic background, but spiritualist, with no defined religion.
- *Character's name:* Paulo Augusto (P.A.).

The student D. was willing to live as a “didactic protagonist”. She warms up. From the center of the stage, we asked that she visualizes the people who were part

of her life and brings them to the stage, marking their place of closest proximity or distance.

**Dramatic action:**

1. P.A. starts calling the group members to take on the “roles” in preparation for the dramatic play that will follow.

*Image:* P.A. (1), the father (2), and mother (3), very close, are placed at his back; the brother on the right (4), the sister-in-law (5) farther away; the nephew (6.1) and the niece (6.2) very close to the grandmother (3); the ex-girlfriend (7) is far away; in front, the best friend of the professional team (8); in front, further to the left, the best friend is close to the maternal/paternal nucleus (9); the NGO coordinator is in the middle distance further to the left (10); the sister is on the left side (11); the community member (12) is behind the coordinator. A drawing is formed, and it is possible to visualize as in a momentary photograph the “perceived social atom” of P.A. and their complementary roles.

2. *Personages express themselves in the “as if”:* We asked each to internalize the cues given earlier, to gather feelings from where they were positioned, to reposition themselves, if they wanted to, and to say something to P.A. The movement occurs in a getting closer to the protagonist. Here are the lines: Father: *I support you*; Mother: *I am by your side if you need*; Brother: *I am here*; Sister-in-law: *Be fairer*; Nephew: *I want lollipop*; Niece: *I want to live with you!*; Ex-girlfriend: *I’ll wait for you*; Best friend: *I’m with you in work and personal life*; Friend: *I’m your ear*; NGO coordinator: *We need you*; Sister: *You have to integrate work and family more*; Community member: *What does the NGO really want?*
3. P.A. takes the place of the complementary, in the sequence he wanted, makes a speech, listens to the auxiliary ego in his place, and says how he feels. Subjectivities are being drawn, P.A. dramas in their relationships. In this movement, it is worth noting the family members’ request that P.A. to get closer to the family, he claims lack of time, and he wants to live his life. The breakup with the ex-girlfriend is set up for good, the sister-in-law asks for solidarity, the brother charges for his comments with the sister-in-law when the compulsion problem is brought up, but ends up asking for help. The nephew insists that he wants a lollipop and sees that his uncle have no time to buy it. In the dialogue in which P.A. was in the niece’s place, he returns the request to move in with her uncle. The auxiliary ego insists. As P.A. says: *I don’t have time... I would have to talk to your parents...*, D.’s feelings as P.A. appear in the soliloquy: *I’m feeling like ice and very armed too!* As a best friend punctuates P.A.’s tension and reminds us that the psychodrama course is starting. The auxiliary ego, like P.A., says he is enjoying it, he has plenty of women. The feelings meant an “ice breaker”, and the friend showed interest. In the place of the NGO coordinator, the problem of questioning a community member was brought up. P.A. (auxiliary ego) schedules a meeting, but the coordinator (D) reminds him that on the day there will be a barbecue to celebrate his mother’s birthday. Finally, there is the dialogue with the community member, pointing out what the NGO has to offer, as there

is a lack of water, light, etc. The direction investigates the possibility of continuity and deepening with the protagonist and proposes the barbecue scene at her parents' house. Only the ex-girlfriend and the community resident are not going.

4. A *spontaneous theater* takes place: (first scene) party atmosphere. The pairs chat excitedly, and P.A. isolates himself. Faced with the soliloquy requested, comes P.A.'s line: *I feel very charged by everyone, especially by my father, I am smoking here to clear my mind.* Everyone is asked to soliloquize, and the uneasiness of the family manifests itself. It opens to audience participation, highlighting P.A.'s double: *I'm emotional, I do good, I like people, but I can't show it. How do I start?* Following the scene, drunk, P.A. seeks out his niece and asks her to move in with him. The direction freezes the scene. The barbecue context breaks down, and a family gathering is proposed. (Second scene) P.A. determines who will be in the scene: father, mother, brother, sister, sister-in-law. The other characters remain in the shadows. P.A. does not remember telling his niece to live with him, and he hears his sister-in-law's concern about his carelessness. He said it was her daughter who asked to move in with him. He complains that no one from his family visits him. The roles are then reversed between P.A. and the sister-in-law, but a wall is formed. The sister is taking the place of some articulation by asking everyone to stop looking only at their own navel, to assume their responsibilities. P.A. tries to protect his brother, saying that his wife is annoying. The sister again takes up the call for dialogue. P.A. comes to his senses and resumes: *I can't give you more time because I don't even have time for myself, but I'm trying to change, I've even started a psychodrama course, I'm doing therapy in this approach too.* The director points out that the end of the dramatization is coming and asks each character in the family to say goodbye. The lines: P.A.: *I'm doing my part, I'd like a little understanding from everyone;* Mother: *You have my support, son!;* Father: *I'll call you later!;* Sister: *I may have failed you, but I want to redeem our relationship;* Sister-in-law: *I will seek help for our daughter and we will have a definite conversation (addressing her husband);* Brother: *What is the name of the psychotherapist again?* (questions her sister and the chips start to fall).
5. The finalization of the work occurs with the request that the characters assume their previous positions in the P.A. role network, collect their experiences, and reposition themselves. The family unit is strengthened and supported. The children are taken in. Close friends and work-related characters are waiting.

In the **sharing**, the comments reveal the intensity of what was experienced in the dramatic action. D., who lived P.A., says she deeply embodied the role and felt anger and sadness. *When we create the character, I didn't imagine she would turn into what she turned into.* Other lines: *P.A. hides behind lack of time; The family projects all its anguish onto the P.A. who, in turn, feels guilty for the frequent absence and ends up taking on more than is actually his; The sister was the character who managed to give the final salute.* R., who lived her sister's life, says that she identified in a certain way, was bothered by the attacks, and charged everyone with their responsibilities.

L., who experienced her mother, says: *I lost my ground...* The group finds that there is a long distance between the fantasy of an idealized P.A. and the manifestations of life, the way he lived his roles. Its human condition, the subjectivity of those involved, the intersubjectivity, appeared. *The direction leaves the P.A. in us for reflection:* the privilege, in the dramatic context, of being able to live the complementary roles, to explore our social atom. We bid farewell with the task of each person bringing to the next class the drawing of their role diagram—the perceived social atom. Dealing with colors, symbols, expressing not only who is part of your social role network, but how relationships occur in the various existential territories. The commitment to readings was also established.

**Continuity of the process:** The class on April 17 began with exchanging the drawings in pairs, trios. We had collages, expressions of various shapes and sizes, a mark of the uniqueness of each professional student. They witnessed how much building the P.A. made it possible to dive into one's own world, producing self-knowledge and becoming aware of little invested territories, roles requiring more time to be cultivated. This was followed by the systematization of concepts: role.<sup>2</sup> The Morenian theory and that of some contemporaries can be studied from the experience that brings the complexity of the human condition. The closing of the proposal occurred with the request for a reflection on the accomplishment of all the work. The opening of space for continuing the studies in theory I, focusing on the articulation of the notions of roles and identity matrix—a call to look at the relational development of being human—gives rise to the resources for the performance of the sociopsychodramatic direction, through the soliloquy, double, mirror, and role reversal techniques.

The activity was cited as one of the richest in the entire theory I course and an example of articulation between theory and practice that triggers meaningful learning in the course evaluation and self-evaluation statements by most students at the end of the semester: *Learning psychodrama through psychodrama and the sociopsychodramatic pedagogy in action bringing inexhaustible personal–professional growth*<sup>3</sup>!

### ***Continued Education in Supervision with Leila Kim***

In August 2020, one of the authors of this chapter began a year-long weekly experimental project of online group supervision with the live patient, which is ongoing.

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<sup>2</sup> Role: way of being, conduct founded on actions that reflect the culture of a time and a space and brings a *social dimension* as expected scripts, *ready scripts* of which we hold expectations and the *dimension of uniqueness* as an expression of *self*; the articulation between the dimensions, points to the rescue of our spontaneity–creativity and to the “social atom” as the network of roles we play together with the significant people in our lives.

<sup>3</sup> We thank the students Suzi Meire P. Ferreira and Úrsula Longo for registering the work that made possible the presentation in the “On Stage” of the X Congresso Brasileiro de Psicodrama held in 2010.



Its objective is to complement the training of five-level I psychodramatists, coming from different psychodramatist training schools in Brazil, who have incorporated theoretical and practical contents necessary, but not sufficient, for the exercise of the profession of a psychotherapist. The initial interest of the participating therapists was to conduct brief individual and group psychodramatic interventions online with their patients during and after the pandemic. To carry it out, the level I psychodramatists and the patients adhered to the project, by signing the free and informed consent form, which includes the permission to publish the vignettes<sup>4</sup> of the sessions in chapters and scientific articles. This project is mirrored in psychology courses of the 1970s, in which the participating students and the supervisor would watch their colleague's intervention work behind a one-way mirror. In the same way and in an ethical way, the psychodramatic therapists supervising students and the supervising author participate in the colleague's work with the camera off, being able to turn it on when requested by the supervisor, the intervening therapist or the patient, to participate as an auxiliary ego or cotherapist during the service.

Phase I of this project, lasting two months, includes conducting the role-play of the self-directed group psychotherapist role, with a review of the application of the method and psychodramatic techniques in the roles of director and auxiliary ego, before they begin patient care.

Phase II, lasting ten months, includes learning theory (Cardoso Junior, 2021; Fleury, 2020; Kim, 2008; Vidal & Castro, 2020) and the use of technologies in online brief psychodramatic psychotherapy. This is where online supervision of patients who come to the clinic occurs in an open science setting (the five participants see the patient in the live supervision group), where professional confidentiality is respected. The procedure follows the following steps: (a) 20-min meeting before the start of the session to become aware of the data obtained in a social atom interview conducted by one of the participating therapists; (b) start of the 50-min session of the individual patient, couple, or themed group; (c) theoretical processing of the session conducted in 20 min by the supervising author (without the presence of the patient).

The following is the vignette of an individual session and the summary of its processing. The patient is a 62-year-old man who separated from his wife a month ago after 30 years of marriage and moved in with his 84-year-old mother. He chose the oldest psychodramatist therapist in the group to direct the session (the other therapists participating, after introducing themselves to the patient, remained with the camera closed until the directing therapist requested that they act as an auxiliary ego in the role-play).

### **Nonspecific Warm-Up**

*Patient: I am communicating more with my son and I realize that my ex-wife Y is not my enemy. I am doing better in my relationships with the women in my life. I will find*

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<sup>4</sup> Vignette: A short, compact description of a situation, real or fictional, used to attract attention, convey a message, produce sensations, and detect behavior, attitude, and knowledge.

*a place to put my bicycle, in my mother's garage, because I need to exercise to quit smoking and drinking. I have been drinking a bottle of wine a night and smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.*

He looks at the therapist and comments that he spent the weekend at his girlfriend X's house, but that he had a "retreat" on Saturday: He had insomnia and went into the living room, where he cried from "missing home" while drinking a bottle of wine. His eyes filled with tears as he said he felt "very guilty about the betrayal".

### Specific Warm-Up

Therapist: *Have you and X had a sexual relationship?*

Patient: *Yes, on Saturday and Sunday... but I think it's not about sex, but about affection. I like X. I think I married by convenience to a virgin woman, Y. Before, I had sex without commitment with several women.*

Therapist: *Virgin Mary to have an immaculate child and a whore to fuck.*

Patient: *I am the one to blame, because Y would seek me out, but I pretended it wasn't with me... the more she sought me out, the more I ran away. We had sex for the first few months and didn't have sex again until 10 years later, on a trip abroad, where she became pregnant with our son. And we continued without sex after the trip until today. I don't have a hard-on for Y, but I do for X. It started with no commitment, but now I am feeling affection for X, but I don't want to get married so as not to repeat the failure!*

Therapist (double technique): *Marriage is like an investment that does not pay off.*

Patient: *Yeah, it makes sense... I don't like to take risks in financial investments, because I don't like to lose.*

### Dramatization

Therapist: *Choose three therapists to represent three women in your life and tell them what you are feeling right now.*

Patient: *My mother, Y and X.*

*Mom, only now, after you have become old, I realize that you are not a saint. You stayed faithful to daddy until you were widowed and then you had several boyfriends; if I had known that, it wouldn't have taken me 30 years to separate from Y.*

*Y, I'm sorry, living together has made me realize that we are very different, but these petty squabbles are of minor importance, I should have accepted your sexual advances, but I guess it's too late now.*

*X, I don't want to get married yet, but I want to learn how to link love with sex, are you in?*

Therapist reverses roles and X replies: *I am in.*

Therapist (soliloquy technique): *What are you feeling, thinking, and perceiving at this moment?* (looking at the patient, after the reinversion of roles).

Patient: *Less confused, I realize I want to have control over everything, but I am slow to make a decision. I don't choose, because I never want to lose anything.*

## Sharing

Therapist: *Maybe now you know better what you want... You know where you want to put your bike* (smiles). *Observe your dreams during this week.*

Patient (smiles): *Yes, my mother was the first love of my life!*

As the *processing* began, the psychodramatist therapist asked permission to go to the bathroom quickly. Upon her return, she commented that she felt pain in her bladder when she was full and stomach pain at the end of the session, with diarrhea. It was based on the patient's issues with possible holes in the psychosomatic role of urinator (Rojas-Bermúdez, 1978): He has developed very strong muscle loops in his abdomen and constriction of the striated muscles, which leave him tense and under pressure, having no time for the pleasure he so desires. The therapist's diarrhea indicated in the countertransference the presence of unconscious primitive mnemonic levels (Freud, 1895/1996), which emerged in the patient's dreams during the week. The group was to review the core theory of self for the next weekly meeting. The only male therapist commented: *he should masturbate, if he stops drinking and smoking, until he resolves these internal issues... I was curious to know about his father. But today was the day of women* (smiles). The group felt safe, well nurtured, and wanted to dig deeper into the cases. One of the therapists commented: *we need to train a lot and study the theory more deeply to be good therapists.* And another answered: *and remain steadfast in our own therapies, for our greatest limit of work is ourselves!* Then we said goodbye.

## Final Considerations

In reviewing the path, we are faced with indicatives that make possible the perspective of consolidating a sociopsychodramatic pedagogy committed in its aesthetic, ethical, scientific, and political dimensions, to contribute to the continued education of psychodramatists who are sensitive, spontaneous, and creative citizens. A challenge for all of us as the Brazilian psychodramatic movement in its instituting actions, in the search for the cocreation assured by the management forums, education meetings and congresses—democratic spaces of exchange, in the commitment of opening to the new. Thus, Moreno's invitation remains alive.

There is a way, plain and simple, in which man can fight, not for destruction nor as part of the social machinery, but as a creative individual, or as an association of creators. He has to find a strategy of creation that escapes the betrayal of conservation

and the competition of the robot, and this strategy is the practice of the creative act, man as an instrument of creation that continuously changes his products. Here, Moreno (1975) and Freire (1991) join hands!

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**Part II**  
**Clinical Acts: Psychodrama,  
Psychotherapy, Human Development**

# Chapter 7

## Psychodrama with Children in Brazil



Rosalba Filipini, Rosana Rebouças, Maria Luiza Vieira Santos,  
and Vanessa Ramalho Ferreira Strauch

**Abstract** The complexity of childhood and all that surrounds it allows the possibility of entering a universe of mysteries, challenges, and sometimes mismatched sensations. Psychodrama is a psychotherapeutic modality that will enable children to act on the psychodramatic stage. The coauthors Filipini, Santos, Rebouças, and Strauch value play and symbolic action with an active posture of the client in the cocreation of their treatment. The psychodramatic clinic with children is based on sociometry, which underpins fundamental pillars for understanding this specific clientele: role theory, the identity matrix, sociometry, theory of spontaneity and creativity. In Brazil, the entire national territory is taken by the Morenian theory and practice with children that, sometimes, are potentiated by the interface with other theories that complement the clinical look on several aspects of child development, of psychodiagnosis, or even of the psychotherapeutic process. One is the psychodramatic sandplay, and theories of psychocorporal psychotherapy elucidate the child's muscular development and energetic potency. Psychodrama is also an efficient way to care for children with neuropsychological disorders, chromosomal syndromes, and other forms of disabilities.

**Keywords** Psychodrama with children · Psychodramatic psychotherapy · Psychodramatic sandplay · Psychocorporal psychotherapy · Inclusion and psychodrama

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## Introduction

The professional who works with children enters a universe of mysteries and sensations that are sometimes mismatched, which shows the complexity of childhood and all that surrounds it. In this chapter, psychodramatic authors will present the peculiar way they develop and base their work with children, bringing fragments of sessions that reflect the demands of a geographically large and diverse country but that carry important heritages that resonate throughout its territory.

Starting in the twentieth century, psychotherapy undergoes changes, evolving from the concentration of knowledge in the physician or psychotherapist to the sharing of knowledge with the client, who takes a more active stance in his treatment (Filipini, 2014). This modification is essential for the advent of psychodramatic psychotherapy. It meets the Morenian proposal and that of Paulo Freire (1974/2013), an important Brazilian educator who considers that knowledge is constructed.

In the history of child psychotherapy, we recognize the appreciation of play and symbolic action, as well as the social–historical view of man. The Brazilian literature on psychodrama with children began practically in the 1980s, and its production has remained creative. The psychodramatic clinic with children is based on sociometry and underpins fundamental pillars for its understanding: role theory, the identity matrix, sociometry, supplemental reality, theory of spontaneity, and creativity.

## Psychodrama Fundamentals

For Moreno (1975), spontaneity and creativity are innate resources of the individual. The interpersonal relationships constitute the self: from the social roles played and their complementary roles occur its development and identity base. The identity matrix is the environment, place, and affective climate in which the child is born and is made up of social, material, and psychological factors. The most significant family nucleus will form the subject's social atom configuration, which will intersect with other sociometric networks in lived experiences. There is unanimity among the authors that working with children means working with the whole family context; that is, the family and or those responsible for the child are part of the psychotherapeutic work.

According to Gonçalves (1988):

Psychodrama helps children overcome obstacles to their emotional development through what no one can take away from them—their imagination. Through spontaneously created games, play, and stories, children try to deal with the world we provide for them. (p. 11, our translation)

It is also possible to make use of many other resources, such as: decks (of emotions and the throw), children's books, story cubes, different intermediate objects (puppets, masks, fabrics, miniatures, pillows), the conversation wheel with problematization



for the warm-up of the scenic work, rule games, board games, graphic materials, sandbox game (psychodramatic sandplay), and toys in general.

Usually, the work with children begins with the family and/or those responsible for them. Some professionals perform a psychological evaluation process to get an expanded view of the child, its psychodynamics, and the dynamics of the family system. Interviews with parents, sociodrama with the family and/or parental couple, child's social atom, toys, graphic materials, graphic psychological house-tree-person (HTP) tests (Buck, 2003), and Trinca's (2013) drawing-history procedures can be used, among others.

In psychodramatic psychotherapy, action and role-play (the "make-believe") is a priority, yet some children have difficulty doing this right away. To this end, toys and games, such as those already mentioned, are exciting resources for the work. The child's age is a benchmark for psychodramatic practice, and we notice that there are differences in the abilities to play and reverse roles. Preschoolers naturally have an easier time with make-believe games but lack the cognitive capacity for role reversal. The school children need more warming up to enter psychodramatic roles because their interests are initially in the more structured games. Regardless of these characteristics, role-playing games are essential mediators of emotional learning about themselves and the world. Psychodramatic psychotherapy with children will always respect the characteristics, limitations, and singularities of each individual.

The role-play and counter roles are coconstructed by child and psychotherapist and will reflect the conflicts and contradictions that permeate everyone's ordinary life, except that they were constructed based on the child's suffering. Conflict is related to how relationships are structured within the collectivity, and the therapeutic effect of this is linked to the manifestation of the counconscious,<sup>1</sup> that is, the experience lived and shared through creation (Filipini, 2014). In light of this, role-playing is constructing a supplemental reality (Moreno et al., 2001), a dive into the child's subjectivity, and a dramatic project built and executed between child and psychotherapist.

The sharing stage is often diluted in the context of the session or happens at the end, briefly, more clearly defined depending on what was explored and the theme experienced. Sometimes, this step can occur as a relaxation for the closing of the activity.

## **Psychodrama with Children: The Diversity of Experiences in Brazil**

Children in contemporary times are inserted in a context that demands a plasticity of relational combinations never before experienced, a quick receptivity of information

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<sup>1</sup> "The concept of counconscious refers to experiences, feelings, desires and even fantasies that are common to two or more people, and that takes place in an 'unconscious state'" (Gonçalves et al., 1988, p. 56, our translation).

and actions, inequalities, and flexibility. The new family models in the middle layers of the population and their diversity are stimuli for a functional family (Filipini, 2005a; b). The availability and creativity of the parental couple, as well as other caregivers, have been important factors in fulfilling their roles, favoring the child's well-being.

In the psychotherapy clinic, Filipini considers that it has been frequent to seek psychotherapeutic help at the stage of family life in transition, especially as a result of parental divorce. The focus of the work is on the relationship, for that is where everyone, especially the children, is sustained. Parent counseling and fraternal unit attachment therapy are common interventions with positive experiences. The report of a fragment of a session where the parental couple is in the process of legal separation exemplifies this issue. In this situation, the conflict between the couple is enormous, the father has already left home, but the children still experience very aggressive situations:

Two boys arrive for psychotherapy. Their parents are in the process of separating. The younger brother wants to draw, and the therapist suggests that he draws a picture of the family before and after the separation. He does so and puts more positive aspects on the parental couple when they were still together; the older brother watches and gradually draws together and brings up scenes of conflict. They both dialogue about how hard it was before their parents split up and created the drawings together. They draw the two boys watching everything that goes on between the couple: fighting, shouting, and almost physical violence. I ask them to give voice to the characters, and little by little, they relate the feelings of sadness and anger that took over everyone. Fear also sets in: what will happen now? Will they get through it all? The older brother is very hurt, the younger one, scared. We talked about these feelings. A new story of family life is beginning.

Attachment psychotherapy helps children identify their feelings, recognize and develop resources, allow the siblings to support each other, and search together for a better way to deal with the demands of this new daily life. Playfully, difficulties are brought up and confronted, showing the importance of fraternal cocreation in resolving conflicts.

Besides the diversity of family models and, consequently, of care alternatives, children and adolescents grow up in a world where other issues are significant, such as social inequality, violence, and technology. Added to these issues, we have the pandemic of COVID-19, and they all foster increased anxiety and fear. These feelings are natural and expected in human beings. Still, when fear becomes uncontrollable and phobias start to hinder the healthy development of a child, this situation generates discomfort and anguish for everyone. Bittencourt (2007) discusses the so-called culture of fear when analyzing the content daily disseminated by the media. In Brazil, there is a tendency to highlight issues related to urban violence and insecurity, which causes everyone to feel increasingly afraid. These issues raise the incidence of anxiety, and research (Fernandes et al., 2014; Vianna et al., 2009) points out that 10% of children and adolescents suffer from some type of anxiety disorder. Concerning the International Code of Diseases (ICD-10) (WHO, 1993), three anxiety disorders specific to childhood are described: separation anxiety disorder in childhood, a phobic anxiety disorder in childhood, and social anxiety disorder in childhood.

Filipini, based on her clinical experience, states that the creation of spontaneous games by the child is an effective strategy in working with anxiety disorder. She states that the child is the author in the creation of spontaneous games and, therefore, dictates the rules and the development of the game. What is implicit in the game and in playing this role is the child's control and knowledge, which offers them security. This security is the fruit of the rescue of their spontaneity and allows them to playfully face the losses that their own creation gives them: They lose, repeat the same process over and over again, and try to improve themselves more and more. In other words, the child experiences that, no matter how much control they have over something (ideas conserved in our society), they do not have it completely, but they can strive harder and harder to reach their goal. The state of security, spontaneity, and sense of well-being is essential in the game's development, and the therapist makes observations of this process with other situations that life offers.

Here is a case of a child with an anxiety disorder; she cries very often and is afraid of separation, vomiting, and illness in general:

Gabi, an 8-year-old girl, holds a small rubber doll in her hands as she enters the room, almost like a good luck charm. The therapist starts a dialogue with the doll, bringing it to life, and the child looks at her with a certain astonishment and disinterest, throwing the doll on the floor. Quickly, the therapist picks it up and throws it to the child, stepping into the role of the doll: "Hey, you dropped me!" The child smiles and suggests a game: "Let's toss it to each other and count!" The game starts and the initial rule was that the doll could not fall on the ground. Both players work hard to keep the doll from falling, but this is difficult. The child creates other rules in the course of the game and the players engage and play with excitement, trying to improve their movements and plays. Eventually, the doll had voice through the therapist: "Wow, you brought me with you and we are playing together"; "I love playing with you"; "Hey, now it hurts... It seems that sometimes you are mad at me"; "Oh, what a delightful game you invented with me! I was going to be alone at home and you brought me. I'm thrilled"; "Sometimes I'm afraid to be alone, my stomach even hurts"; "Ohhhhhhh... I've done so many somersaults that I'm dizzy, but I'm not going to throw up". The players also talk about the surprises: "How did it fall?"; "How much was this move worth?"; "Wow, we made it to 15"; "Gee, we've been losing for five moves, this way doesn't work, let's change it"; "It's different each time. How nice!" And so on...

The game brought the idea that we never know precisely how the doll would fall, and this surprise was met with joy. Likewise, we never know about many things, even when we or someone else will vomit, get sick, and so many other things that may not be pleasant. The creation and authorship of the game were important for the child because she recognized their knowledge in the process.

Games of rules and chance also offer the possibility for the child to experience their capabilities and at the same time encounter the improbable, the undesirable, without losing hope for better situations/moments. When we are playing with the child, we have the possibility of using the technique of the double, as occurred with the therapist giving voice to the doll and most of the times we use the technique of the double mirror (Filipini, 2014); that is, we assume a role similar to theirs, which enables thoughts, sensations, and behaviors that are not conscious to the child. The therapist should also work with feared scenes that can be dramatized and drawings of loss situations accompanied by reflection and dramatization.

Another experience with children was achieved by the coauthor Strauch, who makes use of the sandbox play in the clinical context. According to Weinrib (1993), the sandplay or sandbox play is a therapeutic method based on Jung's psychological concepts, a path to self-knowledge and transformation, developed by Dora Kalff in Switzerland. The method consists of using a rectangular box containing sand, with specific measurements within the customer's field of view ( $72 \times 50 \times 7.5$  cm) in which miniatures can be placed, creating scenarios within that space. Kalff recognized, in agreement with Ammann (2002), that series of scenes and images are frozen, photographed, and stored because they represent a dialogue in the psyche between conscious and unconscious, analyzed throughout the process. The more the miniatures, the greater the opportunities to express what comes to your mind. It is a nonverbal, symbolic, and imagery methodology used with any age group.

Studying approximations between psychodrama and analytical psychology, Ramalho (2010a, b; 2007) developed psychodramatic sandplay, which starts from the construction of free or thematic image with miniatures in the sandbox, and then the client is asked to create a story and a title. The psychodramatic techniques are applied, moving and interacting the pieces, and may even rebuild the scenario in the psychodramatic "as if". Strauch (as cited in Ramalho 2010b) works mainly with role interviews (who are each of the characters), role-playing (dialogues between the characters playing their roles), confrontations, double mirror, role reversal, soliloquy, maximization, concretization, presentation, interpolation of resistances, psychodramatic extension of the scene, temporal projection (of past, present, and/or future), including inviting parents/guardians to bring in the box the representation of when they were the same age as the child, photography of positive and negative scenes, etc. Examples of theme boxes with children are: "who am I", social-family atom, specific fears, bullying scenes, grief, "separation day", dreams and nightmares, etc. The following is a case to illustrate the work:

In a psychodrama bipersonal service with Mary, a 7-year-old girl, starting from the demand of separation from her parents and suffering from bullying in school relationships, we proposed a warm-up with internalized dramatization. She would imagine a positive and a negative scene experienced with her class. Next, we used the method of psychodramatic sandplay. The child would choose miniatures to represent in the thematic sandbox both scenes freely (see Fig. 7.1). With her hand, she divided the sand into the boys' "B" (bad) side on the left and the girls' "G" (good) side on the right. We begin with the general introduction of the characters in the story. These were interviewed, starting with the positive scene in which her colleagues played soccer and praised the client, represented by miniature princesses (she was Belle). "Step into the shoes of each character... what would they say to Belle?" Then the characters would say to her, "how good you are!"; "you are amazing!"; "you can do it!"; "congratulations Belle!"

As for the other side, with miniatures of the Smurfs (she was Smurfette) and Dragon Ball, the boys were disturbing her. "Step into the shoes of each character... What would they say to Smurfette?" They said, "you are ugly"; "how silly you are"; "you can't play or run properly" and "you don't know how to play, get out of here". And if she could answer something, what would it be? The client states, "I reply, 'I am the best in women's soccer!' I turn my back and they all leave!" The discomfort continues, the confrontation was partial. After they argued, everyone would run away from the fight and leave, unresolved. The conflict would boil down to talking, running away, and oppressing oneself? Outside the box, she had left

**Fig. 7.1** Using psychodramatic sandplay with Mary, age 7. *Note* Theme sandbox: “bullying in school”



the first miniatures chosen to be boy John and girl Mary. Continuing in the interpolation of resistances, the therapist included in the scenario these two characters represented by Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, saying, “Then suddenly Mary and John started talking!” Symbolically she had them fighting, hitting each other, running around the box for a while. A new dialogue emerged, a different reaction from running away, killing or burying characters. She would say, “Do you want to play with me?” He would say, “I don’t want to play, you’re silly, you can’t catch or play right”. She replied, “I told you I’m the best at the girls’ soccer game!” He: “Oh, really? I doubt you can catch me!” Then they started to play tag. The therapist asked, “And the ending, will they be happily ever after, quarreling or different?” until the apology appeared between both parties and the client realized that the boys liked to play, tease and troll the girls. Other figures, such as “Papa Smurf”, also appeared in the story, he was watching her somewhat distantly. Their initial feeling of tension/sadness changed to relief/joy.

In the box, each child’s limits are managed and extended; we help them deal with unexpected situations, where fantasy and reality visit each other in cocreation. As Moreno et al. (2001) would say, a symbolic and supplementary reality is posited, representative. Each symbol chosen and assembled in the box and in the story is like a part of a dream, that is, an enigma to be discovered in the here and now—the experience of experimentation. The continent and affective-creative limitation of the box bring security to the child in real/social life.

The psychodramatic sandplay can also be used in feedback sessions, and joint and attachment sessions for parents or guardians. As for a face-to-face therapeutic group from 6 to 9 years old, Strauch follows the warm-up procedures with initiator techniques or the conversation wheel with Freirean problematization (Freire, 1974/2013), in which positive or negative situations, dreams or nightmares, concrete or imagined scenes are raised. Then, the action starts from the problem situations searching for resolute cocreation, moving on to role-plays or other actions with various artistic resources. In group dramatization, the psychodramatic sandplay can be used with the adaptation of some rules such as: First, everyone will be their own character(s); then, they can switch and move/enter in place of the others’ miniatures (there is

tension relief when this consignment is given beforehand); point out the importance of preparing the end of the story; and provide the title collectively (protagonist synthesis).

The director of the psychodramatic sandplay respects the child's "inner creative healing self" (Strauch, 2020), a spontaneous-creative self that seeks, in ludic play, healthier outlets for its conflicts. Jung spoke of the archetype of the healer; Moreno spoke of the human being as a genius who is the creator of its history. Based on Widlöcher's (1970) view of psychodrama, coauthor Strauch realizes that, as a diagnostic method, the psychodramatic sandplay contributes to the direct observation of behavior, witnessing real feelings and conduct, the exploration of the imaginary, and the development of role aptitude.

The coauthor Rebouças bases her work on the theories of J. L. Moreno and Rojas-Bermúdez, and the technical and theoretical resources available in both approaches are fundamental contributions that support their understanding of the child, the family, and also clinical intervention.

The challenges of clinical practice with children can lead one to look beyond the boundaries of Morenian theory and seek complementary knowledge to enrich clinical practice and understand child development. The psychocorporal approaches *Bodydynamic Analysis*<sup>2</sup> and the psychocorporal psychotherapy with children and adolescents<sup>3</sup> are examples of this knowledge.

The *Bodydynamic* is a body therapy system created in Denmark by Lisbeth Marcher in the 1970s. It is based on Danish relaxation therapy, humanistic psychology, bioenergetic analysis by Lowen (1982) and energy therapists of neo-Reichian approach. This system of body psychotherapy offers subsidies to understand in a detailed way the motor development integrated with the psychic and social development of the fetus and child in its various phases of child development (Marcher & Olars, 1997).

The psychocorporal psychotherapy with children and adolescents is a method created by psychologist Rocha (2010), based on bioenergetics. It proposes the toy as a means of interpretation and/or intervention in the child's psychic and corporal process; that is, in the clinical practice, it offers specific toys (in a directive way) that favor the unblocking of aspects that hinder the free flow of the spontaneous-creative potential.

In this approach, the psychotherapist should lead the child to play where they have not yet played, always considering the energetic potency of the child's body. The toy helps to express the body tensions; through playing, the child enters a tension-charge, discharge-relaxation flow and, using specific toys, the therapist intervenes intending to mobilize blocked body energies, allowing the free flow and facilitating both the child's spontaneous-creative process and the rescue of the energetic pulsation, thus giving way to feelings, reflection, and elaboration.

To exemplify, Rebouças brings the case of an eight-year-old girl, Joana, who came to psychotherapy with depression and anxiety brought on by her parents. She was shy with her peers, had difficulty getting into groups, and was not very available

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bodydynamicbrasil.com/home/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.brasildarocha.com.br/en/>.

to play. Her skinny, devitalized-looking body caught the eye, her leg muscles were poorly toned, and she could not coordinate movements in games like jumping rope or hopscotch, according to her, she had never made an attempt to learn to ride a bicycle, nor did she enjoy playing games like running, for example.

The following is a fragment of a session with Joana:

I suggested the game of hopscotch as a means of intervening and helping her to notice her body and her body base (feet, legs), working with her on grounding, which, according to Alexander Lowen, means getting in touch with the ground, feeling the feet and legs so that the person becomes aware of her grounding and feels her rootedness of the living body “with her feet on the ground”. I encouraged her to play with me and jump, feeling the soles of her feet and her legs. I encouraged her by saying:

—Jump with the sole of your foot firmly on the ground!

—Jump by feeling your legs!

As she gained strength, I encouraged her.

And that’s how the hopscotch play mediated the work of *grounding* or rooting, helping the patient realize the strength of her base, capable of sustaining her living, vibrant body in the world. Little by little, she brought the related content to be elaborated. She was learning about herself and her creative power was expanding her possibilities to play in a group with her colleagues at school, in the condominium, etc.

This game was repeated many times, as well as others with the same objective, such as jumping on one foot, jumping like a frog, jumping rope, always encouraging her to feel the soles of her feet and legs; after the game, we would talk about that body experience and also about other themes related to the pleasure of playing, self-confidence, shyness, etc. Joana began to develop self-confidence and learned to ride a bicycle.

In addition to the psychocorporal approaches, Rebouças highlights the importance of the intermediate object in working with children, a term enshrined by Rojas-Bermúdez (1997). The author employed the term intermediate object (IO, from Latin *objectus*) in the sense of a tangible thing, outside the subject, real, concrete, and material that, when instrumentalized in an appropriate context, serves as mediation for communication between two people.

In psychotic children, the IO, a puppet, for example, can be used, because in this type of disorder, natural communication (facial microexpressions, other facial expressions, smile, tone of voice, etc.), postural forms that escape egocentric control and that are proper of the species and necessary for life in society produce states of alarm in patients with this type of disorder. The natural communication emitted by the other creates suffering since it is perceived in a distorted and extravagant way, the result of pathological decoding (Rojas-Bermúdez, 1997). A puppet (IO) is an inert face that can mediate, facilitating communication between the child and their therapist.

Chapter 8 of the book *Psicodrama e Neurociência: Contribuições para a Mudança Terapêutica* features an experience report by the author on IO and intra-intermediate object (IIO) (Rebouças, 2008). Here is a summary of the experience:

The author attended an 8-year-old child, psychotic, with poor social skills and unable to establish bonds with people other than the closest family members (father,

mother, siblings, and grandparents). In the waiting room, the therapist welcomed her by greeting her through a puppet (a female figure with a neutral physiognomy). The child stared at him and went into the consulting room, where remained until the end of the session. So, they continued (psychotherapist and patient) for many sessions, in which she dialogued with the puppet that was under the therapist's control.

In another session, a second puppet was offered so that the patient could communicate with the therapist's puppet. She accepted and then talked about herself and her fears (fear of clowns, movies, birthday parties) through this puppet (a girl). The puppet chosen by the patient came to function as IIO, defined by Rojas-Bermúdez (1985) as an "egoic catalyst" that makes room for the appearance of the patient's blocked material.

For a few sessions, play with the puppets continued until the child and therapist were slowly removing the puppets. They met face to face playing roles and creating various scenes, including themes linked to situations that caused her panic, such as going to the movies. The author reported a significant improvement in the way the patient related to her social roles, going to the movies with her school class, and celebrating her birthday with tranquility, among other gains.

In this case, both the IO and IIO roles were intended to enable/facilitate communication through the concealment of natural forms, with the IO concealing the psychotherapist's natural forms. The IIO concealed the patient's own natural forms, encouraging communication, role-play, and the development of creative spontaneity.

Puppets used as IOs and IIOs are important resources for intervening with children in situations they cannot talk about or dramatize, for example, frightening dreams, bullying situations, feared scenes, etc.

The possibilities within the psychodramatic approach with children are diverse, and the works developed have unique adaptations. Still, all of them are based on sociometry and are based on a dramatic project coconstructed between psychotherapist and child.

## **Psychodrama and Inclusion**

Brazilian psychodrama is also inclusive and has reached a population that sometimes had its attention restricted to medical care. It was believed that children with intellectual and mental disabilities would not have the same benefits as others concerning psychotherapy. Thus, the previous option was to assess the child, limit counseling care to the parents, and, in some cases, offer only supportive therapy (Buscaglia, 1993). In coauthor Santos' professional psychodramatic practice with children, it has been observed that the search for services for children with chromosomal syndromes, neuropsychological disorders, and other forms of disabilities has been increasing over the last few years.

The question arises whether, by following the model described by Buscaglia, we would not be trapping ourselves in a cultural conservatism. The challenge of offering these children the possibility to experience, live, and elaborate their conflicts



through psychodramatic psychotherapy has been confirmed as an efficient way to improve the communication and expression of the children's inner world and for parents to understand the uniqueness of their children, favoring telic relationships and improving the relational quality of families. Inclusion is not only possible but necessary. Considering the Morenian idea that the self is structured and organized based on interacting roles (Moreno, 1975), and knowing that segregation causes deficits in several areas of development, whether language, affectivity, or cognition, it is increasingly believed that, individually or in groups, both neurotypical children and those with some form of disability can overcome their pain and emotional conflicts through psychodramatic psychotherapy.

Santos (1984) shares that her initial experiences in assisting children with disabilities happened in the context of a children's hospital, working as a psychologist in a project of preparing for surgery through psychodrama. The preparation for cardiac surgery for children with Down syndrome was developed through play and handling of hospital supplies, role-playing, games, puppet theater, storytelling, and graphing techniques (Chiattono, 1984). Featuring in scenes of surgeries and dressings, playing make-believe with the equipment, experiencing roles of doctors, nurses, and family members (role-playing), the patients could be welcomed to manifest and share fears, uncertainties, insecurities, and fantasies. The preparation for surgery, done individually or in groups, results in better conditions in the postoperative period, shorter recovery time, children and parents emotionally more stable, minimizing the trauma that a surgical intervention usually brings.

The hospital experience also brought belonging to a multiprofessional team, significant exchanges, and the opening and perspectives of care for other types of disabilities. Thus, the clinical work has expanded to care for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Currently, the prevalence rate of this disorder is increasing, not so much because of the quantity, but because of the efficiency with which the diagnoses are being made (Lisa et al., 2018). In the proposal to assist children with disabilities through psychodrama, an important point is how the issue of diagnosis is considered. More than a label that categorizes and limits, the focus of care is on uniqueness. The look is for the child and their possibilities, the diagnosis being illuminated by the process, constantly evaluating and relativizing.

During the evaluation of a child with ASD, it is important to identify priorities in treatment so that important periods of neuroplasticity are not lost in interventions (Wolkmar & Wiesner, 2019). It is now known that the brain can create new connections throughout life, but it is in childhood that precious opportunities for developing various skills occur (Grandin, 2015). Clinical practice has shown favorable results of psychodramatic psychotherapy with patients with autism levels 1 and 2 (mild and moderate). Psychodramatic care is also practical because it uses concrete reasoning in practice, without requiring verbalizations or theorizations. Thus, both children at an earlier age and those who have not yet developed abstract reasoning can benefit from this form of care.

The theory is confirmed in the office, as can be seen in the following report:

A five-year-old child with autism had started care three months before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time of face-to-face care, the child never spoke spontaneously during the sessions. With insistence in the farewell formally said: “See you soon”. The parents had decided to discontinue care, maintaining orientation sessions. Because of the difficulties in social interaction and the tendency to isolate, it was feared that, removed from social and family ties, even more significant developmental challenges would arise. At the age of two the child showed regression during school vacations. It was decided to try the online service and the big surprise has been the child’s positive response. Besides a better quality in playing, the child started to communicate with the psychotherapist and other professionals who also followed this modality, indicating that the security provided by the environment, added to the closer contact with the parents, is bringing benefits. The protected, relaxed, and safe environment got possibilities for spontaneous expression, creative experiences, and new play: conversations with puppets, hamburger parties, storytelling, birthdays, musical performances, and cooking activities. I think she will soon start talking about feelings as well.

The experience of inclusion and diversity has shown positive results in the various age groups and group work. The insertion of children in the groups happens after a period of individual care in psychotherapy or psychopedagogy. Usually what guides the formation of groups is the child’s ability to establish shared relationships. In the sessions, the warm-up stage is followed by the “novelty time”, which includes positive and negative facts of the week, requests for help, and definition of the activity, game, or scene to be dramatized. Cognitive functions such as attention, memory, resources for organization in daily activities and school tasks are also included (Santos, 2015). The experience has been an ongoing challenge and has brought much growth and learning for children, parents, and professionals and relational and affective gains and lessons in humanity for all.

## Online Psychodrama with Children

The COVID-19 pandemic brought us home, and the digital environment became our medium for social interaction; home-offices connected us with our patients on stages that extended from one home to another.

Online psychotherapy, regulated in Brazil since November 2018, has become a possible intervention. Therapists and children have lost the physical/presential space of the consulting rooms, having to find new possibilities for the manifestations of the inner world in the virtual area.

Working with less material, getting out of the cultural preservation and recreating new ways of attending has been a permanent challenge. Introducing every corner of the house, sharing musical instruments, showing collections, the landscape from the window, or playing hide-and-seek in the closet while taking the therapist along on a video call, the session is happening and teaching that we are capable of new answers.

Coauthor Rebouças relates an experience with a child who invites her to play “neighbors” who talk through the window—the tablet screen:

Lia: Hello neighbor, today my daughter is going to school and I am preparing her lunchbox, what about you? Are you doing this too?

Therapist: Yes, I am doing it.

Lia and I took the kids to school, returned home, and were taking care of the household routine when she gets a call from the teacher:

Lia: What? My son went to the hospital?

Lia comes to the window crying.

Lia (pretending to cry): Neighbor, neighbor, my son was sick at school and is in the Hospital Aliança with COVID-19.

The scene now is not at the window, but at the hospital where her son died of COVID-19 and she returns to the neighbor's window to let her know what happened and the scene closes probably because of the anxiogenic content, the real fear of an inescapable threat experienced by humanity: COVID-19.

After this scene, she could talk about the fear of death, the fear of losing her parents, fear of getting sick, she talked about the sadness of not being able to go to school, to the outside area of the condominium, the loss of contact with her grandparents.

Over many sessions my little patient and I connected by the bond of therapeutic love through a "window" in cyberspace constructed the elaborative scenes of a moment of pain, hers and mine too, fear for the real threat of the virus was the protagonist theme of each session.

After some time, death from the virus no longer appeared, but the possibility of getting sick and being cured, of protecting oneself and one's family to live, and so we went on.

Coauthor Filipini, meanwhile, takes up the case of the girl who created games in her office and keeps it up in online care:

Gabi turns her room into a laboratory and she becomes the "mad scientist"! The therapist becomes a kind of hostess while the scientist goes about preparing her magic potion.

—Ladies and gentlemen, look what our mad scientist is picking up now, it's a white, gooey liquid, what will happen? Now we have another one, let's see the color... It's blue!!!! She will mix it up!!! Oh! What will happen!!!! Get ready! [and so, the narrative of the mad scientist's spectacle continues, until the slime is ready].

Upon finishing it, the child, still in the role of the "mad scientist", handles the slime with great dexterity, making precise, daring movements and proudly displaying his almost magical achievement! When the story ends and we leave the psychodramatic role, we can talk about her abilities and the difficulties she still has to face.

We enter the intimacy of the houses. Parents, siblings, and pets became our auxiliary egos, and we had to reinvent ourselves and discover new possibilities of intervention. We were learning with the children to explore the digital platforms and suggesting other possibilities in the online modality, such as using hand sculptures, *emojis* and figures to represent conflict situations, joint digital drawings, games, sharing videos, images and digital stories, among others. Strauch also suggests the method of psychodramatic sandplay in digital tools, such as *onlinesandtray*, *doll-houses*, *onlinepuppets.com*, and *jamboard*. Psychodramatic psychotherapy keeps happening to the extent that there is accurate availability to be and play together.

## Conclusion

Psychodramatic psychotherapy with children has achieved a solid place in psychological science in Brazil. It started with contributions from psychoanalysis, was strengthened by publications that grounded it through sociometry, and currently adds methodologies and theories without fear.

The importance of rescuing spontaneity and creativity for resolving intra- and interpsychic conflicts is present in diverse clinical practices. It is crucial that psychodramatists favor the creation of a drama project with the children at each meeting and that psychodramatic roles can be played or other ways of accessing them can be developed. For this, we have the resources of the OIs that facilitate the relationship and the sandbox game, or the psychodramatic sandplay, developed and used in working with children. The body has always had an important consideration in Morenian theory, and the psychocorporal approaches come to add to and assist psychodramatists in their clinical practice.

In psychotherapy with children in Brazil, we have the important reach of psychodrama in chromosomal syndromes, neuropsychological disorders, and other forms of disabilities. Sociometry is the methodology that enables the identification and place that individuals occupy in society. To work inclusively is to favor a healthier place and healthier relationships through the construction of shared knowledge.

Children bring us unexpected situations where fantasy and reality visit each other. Play and the symbolic become a reality in psychodrama, and this experimentation, a cocreation in the here and now, brings the possibility of transformation. Whether in the in-person or online modality, psychodramatists continue to believe in the potential of creation and recreate themselves in their interventions.

The contributions of psychodrama in serving the child population are growing. There is much to be created in a country like Brazil, with its vastness and diversity of territory, culture, and people. But for their survival, the Brazilian people need a lot of creativity and collective strength. This is why we have enshrined the importance of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who taught us, like Moreno, to believe that we can, that we know, and that we build a transformation together.

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# Chapter 8

## Who Am I? Psychodrama and Its Possibilities for the Recognition of the Self in Teenagers



Amanda Castro and Gisela M. Pires Castanho

**Abstract** This chapter aims to present psychodramatic techniques that enable the *recognition of the self* of teenagers. Initially, adolescence is defined as a phase of the life cycle instead of the conception of transition to adulthood. In sequence, the authors reflect on the use of intermediary objects, characters, online games, and relaxation and self-perception strategies so that the adolescent can securely talk about himself and recognize his changing body. The paradox of the idealization of adolescence in Brazil is discussed, where there is an ideal of consumption on one side, and on the other, a context of social inequality that prevents the acquisition of goods. Given the use of online games in Brazil, applying role-playing games for social role training and skill development in a ludic context is presented. One way of recognizing the self in adolescence happens via symbiosis, and in this sense, it is suggested that the characteristics of the I and the you can be concretized in objects that, separated in the scenic space, allow a gradual separation of identity. In addition, the devaluation of parental figures becomes relevant to the acceptance of one's imperfections, which can be opportune through role-playing. Games of individual and group application, internal psychodrama, and guided fantasies are cited as possibilities for identifying the adolescent as a being in himself, not as the child he once was or the adult he will be.

**Keywords** Adolescents · Psychodrama · Identity · Self

### Introduction

Adolescence as a stage in the life cycle is characterized by the paradox of not being a child and not being an adult, having responsibilities but not yet being considered responsible. It is the moment of the changing body's strangeness, the emotions that

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become amplified, and the relationships that become more empowering or destructive to the *self* because of the fragile identity. The adolescent asks himself: “*What am I?*”.

In the Brazilian context, this questioning arises within social inequality and hyperpolarization of body aesthetics, where many young people flaunt brands of clothes and accessories. In contrast, others are instigated to desire the same objects without the possibility of obtaining them. The image of adolescence is disseminated by the national media and especially by lyrics of songs focused on “ostentation”, which circumscribe what should be desired, what to wear, how the hair should be worn, so that the adolescent in a situation of identity crisis amplifies, even more, the feeling of not belonging, moving away from the normative aesthetic standard.

Through a national program, Brazilian teenagers can work from the age of 14 so that concerns about subsistence and professional choice can precede the completion of their studies. Dreams and desires present at this stage can give way to a preoccupation with the immediate need to satisfy everyday needs.

On the other hand, middle-class and upper-middle-class adolescents may worry about their careers from the time they enter a university so that the transition to adulthood can often be postponed due to the lack of need to maintain their own expenses.

This is a stage of life made up of dreams and uncertainties. Because of this, it is essential to conceive adolescence not as a preparatory stage but as a phase of human development in itself. If adolescence is conceived as a process of preparation for adulthood, it is as if the individual is nowhere, amplifying the sense of absence of belonging and place.

Once, a 15-year-old teenager said, “I have no home, no family, they are all strangers to me”. Speeches like this, echoed in the therapy setting, reflect the importance of exploring identification models for the adolescent to recognize himself. The younger the adolescents, the more they need movement, the less they explain what they feel, the more they need intermediary objects to express their intrapsychic universe. Some only talk about themselves while playing or manipulating an object in the session. The use of intermediate objects provides that the approach to the topic occurs in a relaxed field (Castanho, 1995). The term “intermediate object” was introduced into psychodramatic theory and practice by Rojas-Bermúdez (1970/2016). According to the author, alarm states keep the “self” expanded, and undeveloped roles cannot be played. As the intermediate object is used, the individual enters into a relaxed field of conduct and anxiety is reduced, allowing for undeveloped role-play.

This approach can be made through puppets representing characters that the teenager identifies with, be it from games, movies, or series. The character created has a metaphorical relationship with some aspect of the internal dynamics of the individual. They are handy in psychotherapy because they help the patient perceive his defensive behaviors and question whether they help or hinder his life. Thus, the role-taking experienced in the dramatized scenes can shed light on conscious or unconscious aspects of the protagonist’s story through the stage expression of their fantasies (Wolff et al., 2016).



The role-playing games (RPG) reflect imaginary locations that project the players' inner world. Many adolescents use RPG as a form of interaction and social role training. In short, the game takes place through the speech and imagination of its players. The game is made through a story created by one of the players, called the master, who dictates the plot, describes the scenarios, and controls the enemies that other players face. To do this, teens fill out forms containing all of their character's characteristics, attributes, skills, and items. The choice of character type (wizard, barbarian, dwarf, elf, necromancer, etc.) and the distribution of characteristics can influence the resolution of quests (Carvalho & Melo, 2017). When teenagers play an online RPG, it is possible to ask them in the therapy session to take the role and present their characters speaking in first person, talking about their difficulties and qualities to face the missions.

Once in an online psychodrama session via screen sharing, a 16-year-old adolescent said, showing his character: "I am a magician, and I make sure that they do not die, but then nobody values me, and I die alone". Then, the therapist speaks in the first person, as if she were the teenager, making use of the double technique: "I need to recognize myself in the missions, I want to be seen". The teenager started to verbalize, during the game, his successes. During the sharing, he reflected that he makes himself invisible in friendship relationships but desires recognition, and in the following sessions reported his slight change in the social world, placing himself more visibly with family members.

Another form of RPG use concerns the creation of stories and characters in the session with the aid of a character sheet, as in the example in Chart 8.1.

As a warm-up, the psychodramatist encourages the adolescent to create the context of the story, the secondary characters, the "bosses", with the help of the character sheet. After creating the character sheet and with the help of the psychodramatist as "master" (the one who narrates the plot), the story is built. At each session, it is possible to define missions with the teenager in advance as a warm-up strategy.

In a psychodrama session with a 16-year-old adolescent, the following assignment took place: "Now you need to decide whether to go to the blacksmith to remake your weapon or go back to the kingdom and seek reinforcements". The teenager, in the role of the barbarian, says: "Never go back, I can't, what will the king think? I need to keep going". The story unfolds, and alone he cannot defeat his opponent, so he tells the director, "I will have to go back, I am all mangled, and the king will have to understand". This teenager had many conflicts with his father and avoided talking to him, even though they lived in the same house. They usually only talked in conflict situations. In the game, the director says in the role of the king, "I get you, and I am worried", and the teenager affirms. "I tried alone, but I couldn't, I need you now". This speech updated a scene worked on earlier, in which the adolescent brought up that his father treated him like a child. In this way, the director intervened as a double during the RPG: "I need to try myself, but I want to know that I can count on you when I need you".

In the following sessions, the adolescent brought up his need to experience life alone to recognize himself, but that it was essential to know that his father would be there if he needed him. To act with spontaneity is to be able to act with freedom;

Chart 8.1 Character sheet

CHARACTER SHEET
NAME:
TYPE OF CREATURE:
MISSION (What does he want?):
OPPONENT (who is he fighting against?):
Basic characteristics:
Emotional and psychological characteristics:
What motivates him:
What is he afraid of:
The three things he values most (object, person, way of life, etc.):
Other important features:
Describe your character with a phrase or word:
Distribute 10 points among the following attributes
<i>Communication:</i>
<i>Agility:</i>
<i>Strength:</i>
<i>Intelligence:</i>

however, for the development of spontaneity, it is necessary to face some ambivalent feelings and move from the state of anxiety to the creative state (Guimarães, 2011). In this way, through electronic or “tabletop” RPG, the adolescent can externalize his affective ambivalence, recognize himself, and securely train his responses.

When adolescents do not know themselves, they may look for someone to guide them, to help them recognize themselves. He will look for his peers, which are people who wear the same clothes, the same hairstyles, the same characters in games, in other words, someone who gives him a sense of existence since he is not a child, but not an adult either. It is a time when adolescents stay with people who share the same tastes, searching for coherence with what they consider to be their identity. When the symbiosis<sup>1</sup> occurs with a person he falls in love with, we see teenagers

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<sup>1</sup> Fonseca (2018) systematized each phase of the identity matrix (the child’s social placenta) given the two universes proposed by Moreno, detailing it in ten stages. (1) undifferentiation: the individual still does not separate the “self” from the “you”; (2) symbiosis: the individual begins to identify the other, but not entirely, and there is a strong bond between the mother and the child; (3) recognition of the “self”: at this stage, the individual discovers his own identity and perceives himself as separate from the mother, from other people, and from objects; (4) recognition of the you: the individual

drastically changing their appearance, tastes, to gain an identification, blending into the other. When it derives from the family relationship, a pattern of social withdrawal and difficulty in dealing with frustration is observed, which materializes separation anxiety.

At this moment, the psychodramatist must be attentive to carry out this self-you separation, considering that, if the therapeutic management is directive, it may cause alarm reactions, and the adolescent may break with psychotherapy in order not to lose the symbiotic function that, for him, gives him his identity. Therefore, it is necessary to use intermediate objects that can represent the particularities of each one in the relationship. Thus, for example, the characteristics of the self and the you can be concretized in objects, which can be separated in the scenic space. Each characteristic of the self can be interviewed, so that one knows how it was born, where it shows itself most broadly, at what moment that characteristic hides, leading the adolescent to the *recognition of the self*. In the role of the self: “I am Augusto’s (fictitious name) anger, who punches the closet, I was born with him to defend him”. In the role of the you: “I am Bia’s (fictitious name) anger and I help her scream, even with Augusto... I want to be heard”. In double form, the director states: “My anger explodes in action and needs to defend itself, Bia’s anger explodes in communication and needs to speak”. In this case, during the sharing, the adolescent realizes the symbiotic function with Bia: He wanted to talk too, an aspect worked on in the following sessions.

To get out of the symbiosis process and into the *recognition of the self*, the adolescent starts to confront what he is and what are characteristics of others. This also occurs through the possibilities of experimentation when the adolescent allows himself the reality tests: new hair colors, new clothes, new slang, discovering your new body, new tastes, and new possibilities of being in the world and being with others. In this delicate moment, the adolescent runs the risk of experiencing sex prematurely or even entering the realm of virtual sex through the exchange of naked body images, the famous “nudes”.

Relaxation, so common as a warm-up for self-perception games, is a unique technique that should be practiced a lot so that the adolescent learns to deal with his body, his tensions, his “sensory-age”: “Relax and tense your feet, your calf...”, “I cannot tense it seems like it is already tense... All tense”. In this way, the relaxation process makes room for the “autotele”, the possibility of recognizing oneself (Castanho, 1995).

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at this stage is in the process of perceiving the other and establishing contact with the world; (5) relations in corridor: the individual differentiates fantasy from reality and separates the self from the rest of the world; (6) preinversion: at this stage, the process of role reversal begins, in which it is possible for him to play with his role in the world, although he still cannot bear to see the you in his place; (7) triangulation: the child understands that he is not unique to his you and that there is a he in relation to his you; (8) circularization: here, the child begins the process of socialization; (9) role reversal: at this stage, the child is already able to reverse roles, to put himself in the place of the other; (10) encounter: the culmination of this stage consists in the ability to establish telic relationships.

Moreover, the games of self-perception, therefore of internalization, allow access to the self-image and the possibility of redesigning for oneself. In this sense, it is possible to favor mirroring: With a wool yarn ball or a thick yarn, draw on the floor the outline of the body. Evaluate, looking from the outside, and correct if necessary. Lie down on the drawing and, with help, evaluate the distortions: how much bigger or smaller it is. In individual or group psychotherapy, it is possible to work on the meaning of the parts where there was the most distortion.

From the representation, it is still possible to focus on the symbolic content that this body evokes: Draw on a huge sheet of paper the actual outline of the body and fill in the outlined body, coloring it with representations of how the teenager feels (tensions, pains, relaxation, armor, emptiness). Through this body and its representations, it is possible to make a pictodrama,<sup>2</sup> asking the legs, for example, where they want to go, the arms which movement they want to make, making possible a self-recognition and a symbolization of their desires, being possible to clarify these desires through doubles: “My legs ask me to run, but my arms are outstretched seeking shelter”.

The double facilitates the expression of feelings that are often frightening or unpleasant for the protagonist. This can leave the teenager in a vulnerable situation, so delicate handling is required. Gradually, it becomes easier for him to express his most conflicting feelings (Castanho, 2005).

Many times, the adolescent seeks in the psychodramatist the answer to his identity doubts. In this sense, it becomes relevant that the adolescent makes an “encounter” with himself. In group psychodrama or the individual context, it is possible to propose an inner psychodrama: weaving in imagination a magic carpet that will take you to a faraway place. There he meets a wise person and asks something important that he wants to know. The director requests the role exchange internally until the conversation is over. After saying goodbye and returning from the experience, it is possible to propose sharing the experience if the adolescent wishes.

In the experience of internal psychodrama or guided fantasy, the adolescent has to recognize his needs to ask the question to the wisdom figure, and by identifying this sage within himself, he internalizes a sense of autonomy. The idea is that the adolescent recognizes this tool of supplemental reality as part of who he is, that he appropriates this “inner wisdom” to help himself. With this, the adolescent becomes aware of the tools of imagination, expanding his inner world to deal with his own ghosts, dangers, and fears. After the adolescent provides answers to himself and validates himself, he develops a kind of inner therapist, who brings him a lot of confidence (Castanho, 2005).

The psychodramatist can offer in the supplementary reality.<sup>3</sup> The possibility for this adolescent to experiment and train new roles, face feared scenes, which favors so that experimentations outside the therapeutic *setting* occur safely. It is possible to

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<sup>2</sup> Developed from the technique of image construction, it consists of making drawings and/or collages from a demand of the protagonist for later taking roles of the elements present in the artistic production (Czarnobai & Bernardes, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> It is a dimension beyond subjective and objective reality that enables the protagonist to experience what was impossible for him in concrete reality (Moreno et al., 2001).

build your own page on the psychodramatic social network by asking teenagers to be their own profile on their favorite social network. In this role are relevant questions: “What information from so-and-so do you show? Which ones do you hide? Who could look at you more and does not? Pick a photograph that could be posted there that represents so-and-so, and tell me about the caption”. You can still review the photographs and captions by re-enacting them and putting various “you” to react to it via role reversal.

On one occasion, one of the teenagers assisted, who was 15 years old, in the role of her profile on the social network said, “Here I show what I want people to see of her”. When asked to give examples of those people she would like to be seen and “liked” by, she reflects, “That they see her, that she is interesting, it cannot be just any picture, I want her to be seen by her friends maybe”. Throughout the sessions, the teenager took on the role of her friends to react to the photographs that were left out of the social network, realizing in her uniqueness something that makes her interesting.

Psychodrama anchors the adolescent’s actions and reflections in the confrontation between the ideal and the real. For the *recognition of the self*, the separation between the real self and the ideal self is essential, and this confrontation, in supplemental reality, can question cultural conservations about a self-constructed to be attractive to another.

During this confrontation, the adolescent may feel uncomfortable talking directly about his fears, as if by talking about his fears, these fears are potentialized. One of the alternatives for psychodramatic work would be the containment of this fear via supplementary reality, as in the following case: the director asks the 11-year-old teenager to close his eyes and trap his fear in a room reinforced with lead, steel, and titanium walls. He builds the room in his imagination and says that fear is already inside. The principal proposes putting the room with the fear in a rocket and sending it into space. He tries, goes from crying to laughing, jokes that the rocket might get stuck spinning in orbit around the Earth. To keep the rocket from getting stuck in the orbit of his thoughts, the principal encourages him to throw it far into space, and the teenager claims that the rocket has gone to disintegrate in the sun.

After a few sessions, the director asks how to help another teenager who is afraid since the patient claims to be calmer. The teenager says: “What you need is to give him the freedom to imagine and dream. As if there is a dark side which is that of fear, and the other side which is the side of fun, which should always be stronger than the dark”.

Imagination games are relevant because they introduce the teenager to the “game” of role-playing. They aim to develop creativity (a strong side) to deal with what is difficult (the dark side). They make it possible to resignify the symptom, making it a resource to imagine funny scenes, using humor as a form of catharsis (Castanho, 2005).

In addition to imagination games, the adolescent’s *recognition of the self* stems from the recognition of the you. The adolescent looks to the counter role to validate himself, and when he does not find it, he recognizes this you via opposition. When the you comes from an asymmetrical relationship, recognition can be via

opposition, especially in the family group. In this sense, it becomes relevant that the psychodramatist revisits his or her “adolescent self”, which, especially the initial sessions, takes place in a balanced way, using sharing as a crucial stage of the session. Thus, the psychodramatist can propose as a warm-up a game of filling in the gaps: “if I were a ‘longing’ I would be..., if I were a color, an animal, a song...”. So that both the principal and the teen can respond to the requested information. The same game can be proposed between parents and teenagers, preceding the role reversal. In this context, to know oneself, it is also necessary to identify the role of the other, whether in symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships (Cunha & Bertussi, 2010).

Parental guidance becomes a must, given the need to negotiate levels of privacy. Parents are unsure about what is up to them to impose and what is up to their children to choose. This creates children and adolescents who are anxious, fragile, and sometimes tyrannical. The symptoms of a lack of proper authority and space will show up in insecurity, arrogance, insomnia, separation anxiety, and motor agitation, for example.

You can do the practical exercise of setting limits by asking the teenager to walk step by step toward the parents, stopping at the distance he/she considers comfortable. Subsequently, invite parents to talk about how they feel about this distance and enable role reversal so that parents and adolescents understand that privacy does not mean an absence of rules or loss of affection and that the search for closeness can be verbalized so as not to be coded as an invasion.

To define their identity, the adolescent needs to separate emotionally from their parents, who were very close to them in childhood. To do so, they distance themselves emotionally from their parents to demythologize them, devalue them, so that differentiation occurs—who am I, who are they—being a moment of gradual distancing and ruptures to define their own identity. The adolescent needs to devalue their parents (the you and them of childhood) to equally devalue the self. At this point, they seek recognition of their differences to accept their imperfections, capabilities, and powers, and working with the real/ideal me/you/them becomes important.

In a clinical appointment, a teenage girl is asked to draw freely, and this one exposes the perfect vacation, the perfect friends, the perfect mother, and tells a beautiful story about the drawing. The psychodramatist can place the adolescent in the role of the ideal you/he and the real you/he, proposing a dialogue between the two. The dialogue can revolve around the recognition and acceptance of this real you/he: “What does the real father want? What does the real teenager want? What does the real father feel about the teenager? What does the real teenager feel? What are the imperfections of the real me/you/him? What to do with these imperfections?” It is essential to realize whether the adolescent rejects the imperfections or accepts them so that it is possible to highlight that what “I do not accept in the you and the him, I do not agree with, in myself either”.

In psychodrama, the subject is constituted from his or her relationships through the performance of roles. During adolescence, new roles come forward through the reconfiguration of relationships and devaluations of childhood counter roles, usually of parents and counter roles in love relationships. In this sense, psychodrama work with adolescents must consider the ambivalences and anguishes experienced in this

stage of life, taking into account the new models that appear in the adolescent's world, valuing their creative potential so that they find possibilities to face life grounded in self-reflection (Cunha & Bertussi, 2010).

Among peers, adolescents generally find opportunities to legitimize their feelings and worldviews, guided by intense identification, understanding, and acceptance by the group (Marques, 1996). The teenager generally prefers to relate to one person at a time to avoid confrontation because then the young person does not have to "negotiate the self". Psychodrama makes it possible to experience the dreaded "negotiation of the self". The psychodramatist can ask the adolescent to be an intermediary object to represent each characteristic of his self, and then try to make a negotiation, proposing exchanges of characteristics: "How about you give me this dare? You do not need it, it gets in your way, it makes you fight with too many people. In return, I give you the calm". Via interpolation of resistance, this technique enables the adolescent to defend the characteristics of the roles played so that they do not respond with defensive anger when they have to deal with more than one you at a time.

Another possibility for intervention would be via a "swap market", a version of Moreno's magic store. In this game, one searches for what the teenager has among his or her personal characteristics that are available to be "donated" (something that is no longer needed or leftover). Then, you search for something missing in you (something you want to develop or even learn). The teenager is encouraged to choose an object to represent what one has to trade. Then, the negotiations begin, which can occur in a group with other adolescents, or individually, between the adolescent and the psychodramatist. In the end, if they have done good business, they should close their eyes and commit to themselves to take good care of the new acquisition, trying to develop it within themselves.

The *recognition of adolescents' self* can also take place via a group process, through mirroring provided by another adolescent. In this context, it is possible to propose the shoe game. When starting the warm-up, the teens are asked to take off their shoes but are not told that the game will be played with shoes. The group walks, jumps, breaks the ice. Next, each person is asked to take any pair of shoes they find around the room and place them in the center. The director mixes all the shoes and asks each teenager to choose a pair that catches his eye and hold it in his hands (he cannot choose his own pair of shoes). If two people each have one foot, they must negotiate so that each participant gets a complete pair. It is asked to look at the shoe, create a story about it, name it, and create a character which is its owner. Next, the owner of the shoe is sought. When the owner is found, he listens to the story created for his shoe, puts it on, and assumes, if he wishes, the character created for him. If he does not want to take over, he creates, from the story told, a character that suits him. Then, the interaction of these characters is proposed. In the end, the director asks: "what have you learned about yourself from experiencing this character?" During the sharing may occur the *recognition of the self and the you*, aspects identified in the self and transferred to the other, and aspects of the other that can be attributed to the self (Brown, 1995).

However, not every teenager can get into a group because they idealize meeting too much. This other can be seen as too communicative, too intelligent, or too aggressive,

making the relationship impossible. Attempts to meet based on transferences relate to the internalized you, the ghosts of their fantasy worlds, and not to the real and true you. Thus, at the same time that there is a desire for the encounter, there is also a fear, precisely because of the unpreparedness for this climax (Fonseca, 2008).

Something similar was identified during the care of Allan (fictitious name), 16 years old. Allan is talkative and communicative with people he already knows but is shy and insecure with girls. He gets very insecure and locked in when interacting with girls considered very interesting or very beautiful.

In the first moment, the adolescent is invited to dramatize the situation exaggeratedly and put the issue outside of him. Dramatizing the exaggerated problem and finding ways out makes him feel strong because it brings perspective on the real size of what is troubling him, as he sees it from the outside, from afar, in a relaxed field.

Thus, for example, in the dramatization when Allan takes the role of a timid boy and arrives speaking very quietly, the psychodramatist in the role of a 16-year-old girl does not listen to him and thinks aloud (soliloquy): “what does this guy want by speaking so quietly?” Then, Allan laughs and starts again by speaking louder. The idea is that the adolescent recognizes the resources he has and uses them without focusing on those he has not yet developed.

It is possible to explore how the teenager sabotages himself to escape from the idealized encounter in a second moment. For example, by not looking at her, not continuing the conversation, responding with monosyllables. In the role of the affective peer, the adolescent can explore his conserved actions and choose another, more spontaneous way to react to and experience the situation.

All people are afraid of what they feel is a failure, and therefore lose their spontaneity through lack of warm-up, training, or wisdom. Moreno, the creator of psychodrama, said that spontaneity could be trained. In this way, small everyday actions decrease the risk, bringing less fear of failure. Allan elects a small daily action “smile more at people, I do not dare to talk to the pretty girl, but I can look and smile at all of them”. It is important to have this daily infusion of spontaneity and creativity to make life fresh and pleasant to live, which gives the person the feeling of being free to act according to the situation (Moreno et al., 2001).

These small everyday actions done or neglected by the teenager during the week can be dramatized in the following sessions. Allan realizes that it is easier to risk talking or dancing with unknown girls at the end of a session than with the one he meets during the week at school. “If nobody knows me, I can be ridiculous and walk away”; he elects this strategy as one of the steps in his program to combat shyness.

The adolescent can gradually dose how much tension he or she bears in the new interaction. Not too much to block spontaneity, and not too little to leave everything as it was. Thus, in the therapeutic space, adolescents relive limitations very similar to those faced in school, family, and other social environments (Maçaneiro & Almeida, 2019). In this context, psychodrama shows itself as a self-knowledge tool for adolescents. It provides the strengthening and security in the relationships established with their peers and contributes to identifying the self-you in relationships (Castro & Almeida, 2017).



Recognition of the self leads to the ability to reverse roles and increase existential understanding of whom the other is, broadening empathy. This leads him to feel a being in himself in the here and now. Not a project for the future, nor someone who needs to neglect the child who was. Thus, in this process, the adolescent reconciles with the child he or she once was and understood that he or she could revisit it whenever he or she wishes; the adolescent is a person who allows himself or herself to experience what he or she is today, his or her various phases and roles in the here and now, accepting who he or she is, who he or she was, and who he or she could be.

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# Chapter 9

## Psychodrama with Older Adults



Algaides de Marco Rodrigues and Darlise dos Passos Gomes

**Abstract** In countries that experience a rapid and intense population aging process, such as Brazil, public policies and specific protection and care actions for this group need to be promoted to allow a healthy aging process for everyone. This work presents the systematization of activities developed with groups of older adults in the university context, highlighting how the group experience contributes to the reeducation of aging and how it collaborates in the organization of the older people as an emancipatory conception/practice. The phenomenological existential method was used as a reference to the work of Jacob Levy Moreno, post-Morenian author Paulo Freire and researchers of aging. The older people stressed that they found in the groups the space for participation necessary to redesign their lives, another view of aging, and their partners' existential confirmation. The moments considered most significant were those in which they were the protagonists of an action. The study highlights the groups as a privileged space for rescuing the health of the older people and exercising their citizenship.

**Keywords** Health of the older people · Groups · Aging · Psychodrama

### Introduction

The world population is aging at a faster rate than in the past. It is estimated that by the year 2050, there will be around two billion people aged 60 and, over globally, most of them living in low and middle-income countries (WHO, 2011). This high growth will have consequences for society and older people. It is necessary to determine these people's health and living conditions and understand the multiple specificities that involve the aging process and old age (Papaléo Netto, 2016).

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Today we speak of the “fourth age” (Silva & Brasil, 2016), we live with people who have exceeded one hundred years, and there are professionals who have the privilege of working with groups of centenarians. A challenge that increases as it is not enough just to live more years is essential that longevity is accompanied by health conditions, in the broad sense of the term, for all people. The definition of healthy aging adopted by WHO (2015) highlights the functional capacity to be achieved by public policies. It can be understood as developing physical and cognitive tasks necessary for the individual’s independence and adaptation to the environment (physical and social) (Brazil, 2018; Tager et al., 1998).

Throughout life, people often spend little time thinking about aging. The idea of growing old is associated with the fear of depending on other people, of feeling useless, sick, and lonely. It is a matter of machinic subjectivity. This type of subjectivity is produced in a society that privileges only adults who can exercise physical and mental work during most of the day, thus generating profit (Rodrigues, 2003).

There is no denying that the person makes changes in the direction of their life with aging. These changes are not part of an isolated process because the person is not isolated: They participate in a network of social relationships that produce meanings. This network of relationships has strong points that permeate the aging self and rituals that mark the beginning of old age (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

Moreno contributed an essential legacy in applying group psychodrama with functions of recovery and social reintegration. His group work, from the reenactment of children’s stories in the gardens of Vienna to work with prostitutes, war refugees, and young people with social difficulties, highlights a significant contribution to be followed and expanded with a view to insertion and effective participation in the group life (Gonçalves et al., 1988).

This work presents the systematization of activities developed with groups of older adults in the context of the Universidade Aberta à Terceira Idade<sup>1</sup> (University Open to the Third Age, UNATI) highlighting how the group experience contributes to the reeducation of aging and how it collaborates in the organization of the participants (as an emancipatory conception/practice). The existential–phenomenological method was used as a reference to the work of Jacob Levy Moreno (1978, 1983, 1992), post-Morenian authors Paulo Freire (1999, 2006), Horton and Freire (2003), and researchers of the aging process. Throughout the text, clippings of the participation of the members in the groups will be presented.

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<sup>1</sup> Universities Open to the Third Age constitute one of the main public policies for the promotion and defense of the fundamental human right of the older people to education and have favored their inclusion in society by providing them with an education geared to their conditions, in addition to living with other people, seeking to fill the scarcity of denser and more comprehensive social and educational projects for this age group. Brazilian UNATIs were influenced by their European counterparts, which emerged in France in the late 1960s, by Professor Pierre Vellas, and currently, private higher education institutions are the ones that have invested the most in this area, followed by state and federal ones (Inouye et al., 2018).

## Most Significant Changes in the Aging Process

The perception that you have aged often comes through others when, for example, a stranger identifies you as an older person. In addition, society's understanding of old age influences the person experiencing their recognition of the aging self. The older person, therefore, has a perception of the reactions of the external world that add up to all fantasies, information about old age, and memories of the experiences he maintained during his life with other people, as well as the mere observation of the other "yous" who grow old by your side (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

Even knowing that aging can be experienced healthily, it is undeniable that "it is a difficult period to be faced, as it triggers changes and anxieties linked to fear of loss, loneliness, dependence, feeling of incapacity and concern for the future" (Kim, 2016, p. 79).

Throughout life, a person is expected to play several social roles<sup>2</sup>: children, grandchildren, siblings, student, professional, friend, among others. Through these, their interaction with others and the fulfillment of their desires take place. Their subjectivity is expressed through the varied range of roles that they play, allowing them to interact with others around them in a wide variety of counterparts. For example, to develop his role as a grandfather, a man needs to have grandchildren in the counterpart.

Some roles are chosen voluntarily by the subject, and others are imposed. Some are more developed throughout life, and others remain small. Many roles are modified, abandoned, or lost, and new ones can come into existence throughout existence. The older person, having already lived for many years, had numerous opportunities to play different roles. Furthermore, with the arrival of aging, several roles need to be modified, abandoned, and/or created. For example, while working, a person meets friends at the company and is often invited to parties and meetings outside the work environment. With the arrival of retirement, there is a change in the social role of the worker that can extend reflexes in the role of a friend, generating distance in the friendships built in the work environment. In the role of parents, changes also occur and will depend on the type of affinity that was established during the years of common coexistence for the continuation or not of a good relationship; in addition, contemporary society includes many changes of location due to study and/or work that installs changes in the interaction between families.

The changes in social roles and their consequent changes in relations with others with whom they live require a redesign of the older person to avoid isolation, loss of identity, assist in the search for creative responses to the new moment, and, thus, rescue his recognition and that of others as a subject of rights and participant. The

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<sup>2</sup> For Moreno (1978), "the role is the form of functioning that the individual assumes at the specific moment when he reacts to a specific situation, in which other people or objects are involved" (p. 27). The author states (Moreno, 1983) that for each role played, there is a counterpart complemented by the people with whom he relates: "every person, just as they are the focus of numerous attractions and repulsions, also appears as the focus of numerous roles, related to other people's roles" (p. 23). For someone to play the role of a grandfather, they have to relate to their grandchildren, who, in turn, will experience the counterpart.

experience that motivates a reassessment of existence can open up the possibility of saving essential aspects to be recovered and redesigning the time remaining with another dimension. It is spontaneity in all people looking for new and adequate answers to the changes demanded by the new existential moment or recreating old solutions to satisfy the creative self. However, difficulties can arise in a society that has not yet transformed itself to accommodate the significant increase in the more aging population. Kim (2016) highlights a characteristic of the current society that can go against the creative self:

In contemporary societies, people have been objectified, and things are being personalized. The new is valued as a consumer good, which needs to be constantly renewed. The human being alienates itself from itself to the extent that it “spends” its lifetime as a workforce. Therefore, in the hegemonic perspective, retirement is a sign of old age characterized by subjects who do not produce and are discriminated against as a social burden. (p. 78).

When a person’s daily experience is based on the reproduction of cultural conserves,<sup>3</sup> there is a dullness of spontaneity and, consequently, an illness. Every society creates its nosological pictures, typical of the behaviors they stimulate. We talk a lot in our contemporary society about depression, and among older people, it is undoubtedly widespread. We ask: How will older people not be depressed if their ability to express themselves is curtailed? Cut the throbbing sap of desire that vitalizes everyday life? Prevented the constant creation and recreation of life? Behave suffocated by the standards of what is said to be “fit for an older person”? Just remember the countless jokes about the decline of the older adult body, especially concerning sexuality, to understand the psychological process. The joke generates laughter, and the consequent relaxed atmosphere minimizes the space for reflection on what is being said. It is precisely in this mood of humor that we do not perceive the subjectivity that we ingest and reproduce: By ridiculing sexuality in old age, society represses the elderly.

The reflections that we have made from the observations emerging from work with aging and from research that we carry out indicate that there is, concerning aging, the creation of a subjectivity received and consumed from an early age, despite the outstanding achievements that have already been achieved in the recognition and engagement of older people.

In a situation of the dullness of the elderly person’s spontaneity, we can observe that “to avoid suffering, the human being defends himself, repressing his desires and, consequently, loses the ability to respond satisfactorily to different situations” (Silva & Jerônimo, 2016, p. 112, our translation). Testimonials similar to this are frequent: “When I retired, the days started to be the same. Without realizing it, I closed myself off. It was not long before I lost the meaning of my life. I was so active, I started to get depressed”. We also identified in the speech of another lady: “when my husband was alive, we went to dances, we lived 52 years of walks, trips

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<sup>3</sup> Moreno (1978) called cultural conserve “a successful mixture of spontaneous and creative material, molded into a permanent form” (p. 159). Gonçalves et al. (1988) state that “they are material objects (including works of art), behaviors, uses and customs, which remain identical, in a given culture” (p. 48).

and parties. We had a group of friends, and we were invited to all this. I was widowed, and the situation changed: the family said clearly that it does not suit me to go out now, and I did not allow myself to live”.

It is essential to consider that the elderly women participating in the groups “were born and married when women had little expression in society. They were, in general, more submissive and, as a consequence, left dreams and desires behind, fulfilling the expected dependent/obedient role” (Barbosa & Rodrigues, 2016, p. 106, our translation).

For the spontaneity that all cultural conserves have blocked to emerge, it is crucial to work in groups favoring a climate of welcome and acceptance, providing meetings in an open field. The experienced games favor that people who are closed in on themselves can relax enough to get in touch with others. Boal (1999) conceived the game as a form of dialogue in which interlocutions occur, as it is a form of extroversion. There is expressiveness between the various bodies that make up the group as they act as senders and receivers of messages. The stimulation produced by games makes it possible to transcend oneself, freeing oneself to enter the new and risky group environment.

As the tension decreases and the group climate grows in trust and cooperation, the issues discussed and the experiences shared among the members gain intimacy, for example, one of the themes that emerge for discussion is sexuality. The group members can talk about their sexuality with a naturalness that they did not have before. The space constitutes the opportunity to share their stories, often full of taboos, due to the rigorous education they received.

In one group, one participant stated that he was impotent. A great silence ensued after that statement. He realized the sense of the impact that his revelation had made on the group and added: “Yes, I am an old man. I am 83 years old. I need to take medication for chronic health problems that result in impotence. But my sex life, despite that, is very pleasant”. The group remained silent. I can say with certainty that a strong bond united them at that moment, an atmosphere of deep richness hung in the group. Given the naturalness that group member spoke of his sexuality, the participants might be relieved of the burden of considering their sex life to be a closed tomb. At the end of that meeting, participants asked us to continue talking about sexuality the following week.

So, during three consecutive meetings, they asked to talk and share their life stories about sexuality. Several women spoke of their misinformation in their education, of the frustration and fears that they silently stifled. The men shared about the times of the party of the youth, about the courtships and affirmed that they often felt pressured to show a sexual performance that was not always natural and easy to them. At a given moment, Diogo (fictitious name) verbalized: “longing for lost youth. Ah! I miss it!”.

The director proposes: We can call the youth here and now and talk to them. In this group, a member called the experiences of psychodrama “moment of imagination”. He stood up and said, “I want to go to the moment of imagination today!”.

The director, in the psychodramatic context, through the warm-up,<sup>4</sup> made it easier for Diogo to talk to the youth (role reversal technique<sup>5</sup>):

Diogo: I miss you very much. I never really thought I was going to lose you. Today I recognize your value more than I did then.

Diogo (as the youth): You enjoyed me so well! You went to parties, talked to friends, lots of laughs, the beaches... Remember?

Diogo: I remember it very much today. These days I found pictures in a drawer of all these things that I did... It was a Saturday night when I saw the pictures. I cried. What do I have left now? The memories?! This is not enough to fill the years from now on...

Diogo (as the youth—when reversing, looks at Diogo and smiles). I am glad you did all that! This is alive inside you; it is not just in the photos! Don't you think?

Diogo: It is true. There you go (turns to the group). We are together here, firmly meeting every week, right?!

The group applauds. They start to get up and, standing up, obeying Iara's (fictitious name) invitation, they sing the chorus of the song *Amigos Para Siempre (Friends for Life)*<sup>6</sup>:

Amigos para siempre  
Means you'll always be my friend  
Amics per sempre  
Means a love that cannot end  
Friends for life  
Not just a summer or a spring  
Amigos para siempre.

In this small part of the group's experience, we can perceive the importance of expressing the strangeness and the feeling of loss in the face of the changes caused by aging and the value of the group, confirming that the changes exist. However, the coexistence of the group members makes it easier for everyone to recognize and enrich themselves in the group experience.

## The Group as a Facilitator in the Aging Process

The group experience favors opportunities for encounters to happen, both at the level of coexistence that already breaks loneliness, especially for older people who live

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<sup>4</sup> The psychodrama session can be divided into three stages: warm-up—it is the moment when the protagonist is chosen, and the preparation for the dramatization takes place; dramatization—it is at this stage that the dramatic action itself takes place, and the protagonist, in the dramatic context, represents the figures of their inner world; share—at this stage, each member of the group can express what touched and moved them in the dramatization, the feelings aroused in them, and also their own experience of similar conflicts (Gonçalves et al., 1988).

<sup>5</sup> In the role reversal technique, the patient is asked to take the place of the other initially, that is, to represent the role of someone, about whom they are talking, instead of just talking about that person. The therapist helps the patient through the interview technique to compose this character and empathize, little by little, with their perceptions, emotions, and opinions (Cukier, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> A song written and composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Don Black, respectively.

alone, as it opens up possibilities for deep and genuine encounters of the type *Me and You* (Fonseca, 2008). Sharing experiences of aging favor a climate of familiarity, present in testimonies similar to that of a member of a group (aged 65): “I thought that this strangeness of old age only happened to me! After I joined the group, then I listen to you and think: Wow! I feel it too. It seems that my thoughts have been translated into words”.

To illustrate, I present the work done with psychodrama in a group of 35 people: 32 women and three men. Each group member was asked to answer the question: What is old age for me in a word? A silence hung over the group. Some members looked at each other, smiled, and looked down. The silence remained for a few moments—the director, using the doubling technique,<sup>7</sup> walks around the group and verbalizes:

Director (doubling): we are thinking/feeling... looking for words that express our experience...

This intervention made it easier for the first responses to appear and to be noted on a board. After everyone had verbalized, we repeated each word and asked them to raise their hands when identified with the said word. Two words brought together the most significant number of people: pain and freedom. Moreover, two women emerged from the group, each representing pain and freedom (here with fictitious names): Ruth, aged 76, and Vera, aged 69.

Ruth: In old age, there are no more dreams. Now we have to go on with our lives until God calls us. It is pain here, and it is pain there. Pilgrimage by doctors, taking a cocktail of medicines. Old age is missing you. Old age is loneliness.

Vera: I see it differently, I felt that old age came to me when I retired. I used to have a repetitive dream in which I was late to get to class and woke up scared when I was teaching. Then, in the first days of retirement, I had this dream, and it was different: I turned to the other side and thought, “I can lie down a little longer, I have the time just for me... This is a dream come true!” For me, old age is freedom, it is finding new meanings, it is liking myself more.

The director requested two auxiliary egos enter the scene, which reproduced the body posture and dialogue experienced by Ruth and Vera as faithfully as possible. The protagonists watched from a distance. Ruth starts to cry silently as she keeps her eyes fixed on the scene.

The director asks for a soliloquy.<sup>8</sup> From Ruth: “Say out loud what you are feeling/thinking”.

Ruth: I was always sad and the saddest I was when my husband died. Then I felt that it would not be necessary to anyone else.

Tania, until that moment in the audience, interrupts the scene and says:

Tania: Ruth, you are very important to us!

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<sup>7</sup> According to Cukier (1992), “the doubling technique aims to get in touch with the patient’s nonverbalized, and sometimes even unconscious, emotion to help them express it” (p. 40). In this example of the group situation, the director captures what the group was not verbalizing and becomes the group’s voice, expressing the possible feelings and thoughts present in the group members.

<sup>8</sup> The soliloquy technique “consists of asking the patient to think aloud” (Cukier, 1992, p. 47) what he is feeling, thinking, or perceiving and has not yet verbalized.



Ruth looks at Tania. Furthermore, Tania continues: You are the sincere voice of the group, with your quiet way, you know how to listen to us, full of affection.

Sandra adds: the group is not the same when you are not coming. You lead the group that goes out for coffee, and we like it so much!

Ruth smiles.

Director: How are you, Ruth? Do you want to say something now?

Ruth: I am glad to hear what you guys are saying. I am relieved.

Tania gets up, approaches Ruth and the two embrace.

In relationships with others in the elderly groups, there must be availability for dialogue in perspective presented by Freire (2006). The dialogue involves tensions, conflicts, and disagreements, but always preserves, as fundamental elements, respect, and loyalty, without distorting what the other said or did. Moreover, when group situations emerge impregnated with transference content, it is the moment when we work on such experiences so that communication becomes a telic relationship between the members.

The group experience facilitates situations of deep and accurate communication. The more the communication between the participants of the groups is established healthily, the greater is the possibility that the present spontaneity–creativity will be released in the act of mutual surrender, which is the Me and You encounter. In these opportunities, which represent a moment of “health” in the Me and You relationship, the people involved in the relational short circuit, for a moment, leaving their personal, temporal, and spatial identities, merge momentarily and return strengthened, revitalized in their own identities, the self will be more me and the you more you. This is the experience of the encounter, a fleeting but unforgettable moment of communicative ecstasy (Fonseca, 2008).

Whoever subjectively agrees with the transformations of the life cycle can adapt, come into harmony with nature, and preserve their health. In assessing existence, you can gain the possibility of rescuing important aspects to be recovered, redesigning the time that remains with another dimension. Just as the arrival of old age calls for **new meaning in relationships**, it stimulates new bonds. It is possible to recreate a relationship that lasts throughout the years of existence and be open to meeting and connecting with new people that make it possible to meet in life’s trajectory. In this sense, groups are a fertile space for new relationships. It is common for groups of elderly people to “discover” new and creative responses inspired by the experiences of other participants. Thus, games activities and group experience have a sociotherapeutic objective. This finding is in line with what Antoniassi Junior et al. (2020) concluded with the experience in a group of older people:

It was noticed that the interventions promoted in the group the ability to react to old situations, rescuing in each older person their creativity and spontaneity, strengthening in the participants the possibility of knowing how to deal with the new and the different. It was possible to show the engagement with the roles represented in the different social contexts among the members in building new ways of existing and continuing their stories. (p. 76)

Several environments are possibilities for meetings, both in the public and private spheres, in universities, community spaces, health environments, sports, and leisure centers, among others (Rodrigues et al., 2019). We realized then that when joining the groups, “the desire for change, linked to the opportunity to experience moments of social interaction and joy, rescues the spontaneous ability to be in the world,

promoting well-being and quality of life ... In these meetings, the psychodramatized experiences allow the individual to leave the position of victim and become the protagonist of their history, returning to the meaning and quality of life and self-esteem for future experiences” (Silva & Jerônimo, 2016, pp. 113 and 72, our translation).

One of the possible resources for older people to deal with existential changes and make new meanings in their lives is spirituality. It strengthens principles, as well as making it possible to find new meanings of life. The word spirituality in this study can be defined as a human propensity to seek meaning for life, to seek meanings of connection with something greater than oneself. Furthermore, it may or may not be linked to a religious experience.

Etymologically, spirituality comes from the Latin “*spiritus*”, meaning “breath” or “breathing”, but it can also be referring to “courage” and “vigor” (Terra et al., 2016). The relationship between spirituality and old age is due to the ability to withstand limitations, difficulties, and losses inherent to the aging process. Spirituality is also experienced in old age through continuity. Often, the production achieved by the older person is a legacy of theirs to society that helps them deal with the finitude of life, transmit their knowledge to others, transcend through their works, and influence the growth process of other people. “What is my legacy to others?” From the great creations, we participate in, such as children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, productions at work, to small legacies such as recipes for a tasty dish, a smile, a kindness.

The importance of spirituality can be known when answering existential questions: Who am I and/or for what? It may be that, when answering this question, the person finds his life mission with other people, maybe just one, or even can say: “I exist to take care of myself”. As stated by Luft (2003, p. 155, our translation): “The world itself is meaningless without our gaze that gives it identity, without our thinking that gives it some order... To live, as perhaps to die, is to recreate each moment”. It is also possible that the answer to the question of the meanings of life may arise in the mission to exist for some cause: to collaborate in social, religious, sports projects, among others. To create and recreate itself continuously, this project preserves health throughout our existence, as already mentioned by Moreno (1978). Our experience in working with groups of older people corroborates the statement made by Barbosa and Rodrigues (2016) in their work with older women:

Spontaneity does not decrease with age; it just goes out of use as the use of cultural conserves increases. It occurs in the present moment and then disappears, but it will never end because it is created instantly for each circumstance. (p. 106)

In the perspective of continually recreating our life project, Horton and Freire (2003) explain that assuming the incompleteness and inserting themselves in the search process contribute to having curiosity as a driver of life. The authors point out:

I think that one of the best ways for us to work as human beings is not only to know that we are incomplete but also to assume that incompleteness. There is little difference between knowing intellectually that we are incomplete and assuming the nature of being incomplete.

We are not complete. We have to be part of a permanent search process. Without that, we would die in life. This means that maintaining curiosity is indispensable for us to continue to be or to become. (p. 43)

We believe that to create is to imprint the mark of being an author, it is the expression of oneself, it is the bridge that unites the singular universe of oneself with the collective universe of others, and it is to expand the limits of individuality. Reframing can make life lighter. In a way, it brings hope. We understand by hope, not as if it came from waiting,<sup>9</sup> in the sense of passivity. We agree with Freire (1999, p. 11) that hope originates from the verb to hope. In this sense, the elderly can hope to constantly find a stimulus and a privileged space to recreate in the groups.

We reaffirm the groups as a powerful space for promoting health education, facilitating the exercise of citizenship, through community projects, in addition to recreational, cultural, or care activities with the body and mind. This coexistence is of great importance, since loneliness is a frequent complaint among older adults. (Garcia et al., 2006, p. 181).

It is stimulating to believe that we can develop a new subjectivity around aging that is sustained on the condition that everyone of all ages can interact, be respected in their differences, and contribute to their peculiarity. We corroborate Vieira's statement that the collective sum of actions in favor of this new vision of aging face necessary as "We know how we, "multipliers", can always create a wave of sensitization, on the one hand in the social structure and on the other hand in the elderly, because they passively accept this relationship" (Vieira, 2004, p. 1, our translation).

Even though we know that there is some hopelessness in human relationships concerning collective construction, we continue to believe in the importance of cultivating solidary relationships and encouraging their growth. Disbelief in relationships reinforces the crisis in them and diminishes the creative capacity valuable in group action. We agree with Freire (1999) when stating that "hopelessness immobilizes us and makes us succumb to fatalism where it is not possible to join the forces that are indispensable to the recreational struggle of the world" (p. 10, our translation). Thus, we consider the value of group relations as an essential element in human coexistence, especially in collective work (Rodrigues, 2011).

## Final Considerations

With the evident increase in the population of older people, we realize that there is much to be done so that a dignified and healthy experience can be available to everyone. From the point of view of those who age, there is the challenge of deconstructing the assimilated representations concerning old age and reconstructing the experience of aging by participating and recreating each day in the context in which it is inserted. It is up to society and political managers to capture this new creative movement of the older people and renew their representations of what it means to

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<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese, the word "esperança" (hope) comes from the verb "esperar" (to wait).

grow old, in addition to providing conditions for inclusion and satisfaction of their needs.

The group members stressed that they found in the group experience space for participation necessary to redesign their lives and another view of aging and the existential confirmation of their partners. The moments considered most significant were those in which they were the protagonists of an action. We emphasize that the groups are privileged spaces for rescuing the health of the older people and exercising citizenship.

It is up to professionals to continuously train themselves to work with aging, to create spaces where the older people can live together, listen to them attentively, and respect their emerging desires and needs. Among the challenges that Moreno left us is the provocation that calls us to contribute to recreating the whole and not only our individuality, that we can transform cultural conserves into new creations and, in the case of this study, modify archaic conceptions about aging in visions. In the words of Moreno (1992): “If there is a responsibility, it must necessarily go beyond mere responsibility for personal existence. It must be a responsibility to the Whole” (p. 11). It is precise because we believe that we are committed to contributing to the whole of a healthier old age experience that we continue to study and research on the subject.

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# Chapter 10

## Relationship Psychotherapy: A Minimalist Psychodrama



José Fonseca

**Abstract** Psychodrama is contemporary with German expressionism, an artistic movement born in Germany, characterized by art manifested with rapture. Relationship psychotherapy, on the other hand, is a minimalist version of psychodrama. Minimalism means simplifying and reducing the constituent elements of something. The origin of relationship psychotherapy represented the adaptation of group psychodramatic techniques to individual psychotherapy. In this proposal, there is the reduction from a two-hour session to a fifty-minute session and the unification of director and auxiliary ego roles. The dramatic action of relationship psychotherapy constitutes rapid onslaughts in the verbal context, while the dramatization of classical psychodrama means the culmination of the session. In dramatic action, there is no chronological time limitation, everything is present. There is no marking or editing of scenes; there is no spatial movement, not even in the role reversals. The relationship therapist is a mix of psychodramatic director and auxiliary ego. Most commonly used techniques: role-playing, role reversal, double-mirror (synthesis of the double and the mirror), role interview, videotape (visual re-living of scenes), internal psychodrama (internal visualization of spontaneous images: a waking dream).

**Keywords** Relationship psychotherapy · Psychotherapy · Psychodrama

### Introduction

I return to the topic of relationship psychotherapy, a technique developed by this author and covered previously (Fonseca, 1990, 2004, 2009). Inspired by the possibility of creating a technique derived from classical psychodrama for individual psychotherapy, it has also been used in group psychotherapy. Other Brazilian authors have also developed bipersonal psychodrama techniques, among them Guerra (1980), Silva (1981), Bonetti (1986), Kaufman (1978), Cukier (1992) and Dias (1996).

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I now include some historical elements to contextualize the transition from classical psychodrama to relationship psychotherapy—this being minimalist psychodrama. Let's see.

Psychodrama is contemporary from German expressionism. Expressionism was an artistic movement born in the Germanic world, especially after World War I (1914–1918), a period Moreno gives as the origin of psychodrama (1921). Expressionism was characterized by an intuitive art that manifested itself with freedom and rapture. Its content demonstrated the metaphysical, existential, and spiritualist yearning of German culture. Its colors were intense, vibrant, and distorted. Its influence crossed Germanic borders and spread to other countries.

Relationship psychotherapy is a minimalist version of psychodrama. It is understood *minimalism* as a tendency to simplify and reduce the constituent elements of something. He takes into account the “median, inner, or creative emptiness” of Chinese philosophy. I remind you that the philosophical basis of the concept of minimalism goes back to this primordial unity that can also be understood as a cosmic essence that manifests itself in all things. Thus, the void would not be a literally neutral or properly “empty” space. It would be “a dynamic entity in itself” (Cheng, 2016, p. 167, our translation).

The valorization of emptiness leads to a minimalist attitude toward the world, according to which the extra becomes dispensable. The emptiness in music means the silence between musical notes, without which the melodic structure would not be possible. In painting, emptiness is revealed by the blank spaces that dialogue with the colored elements. Chinese art—poetry, music, and painting—reflects this orientation. Chinese philosophy has influenced Japanese culture. Japanese minimalism also presents emptiness (*hara*: vital, spiritual, or energetic center) as a central component and promotes the notion of beauty-simplicity. Japanese design and architecture reflect this aspect. Gardens, for example, are made up of large spaces that highlight the elements present. The interior of the homes follows the same model: the presence of only the furniture essential for use. The Japanese flag is an example of minimalism: white with a red disk in the center (representing the sun).

Minimalism in the West was an artistic movement that began in the second half of the last century and influenced this day music, the visual arts, dance, and literature—and, why not, psychotherapy.

The origin of relationship psychotherapy goes back to the concerns about how to adapt the classic group psychodramatic techniques to individual psychotherapy. It arose, therefore, from reducing a group psychodrama session of about two hours to an individual psychotherapy session of fifty minutes and unifying the roles of psychodramatic director and auxiliary ego. In classical psychodrama, the roles of director (therapist) and auxiliary ego are played by different people. However, these facts do not prevent relationship psychotherapy from being used in groups as well.

## ***Relational Philosophy***

Relational psychotherapy, as already stated, emphasizes a relational philosophy in therapeutic work. Relational philosophy is understood as inspired by the work of Jacob Levy Moreno and philosopher Martin Buber. Add a dynamic psychosocial view of the Morenian concept of an identity matrix. The next topic mentions details of this concept.

On the one hand, relationship psychotherapy privileges the work on the relationships of the patient's inner world, and on the other hand, the work on the patient–therapist relationship. In other words, the proposal is a pragmatic action in the understanding of the relational phenomenon.

The relational dimension mirrors the universal conception, in which relationships govern everything. Inserted in this context, the human being influences the universe and is affected by it. Ecology (ecology: *oikos* [home] + *logos* [study]) studies the relationships of living things to each other and their environment. Man, thus, belongs to a universal relational network that has continuity with his social and family network.

## ***Relational Psychology and Identity Matrix***

The foundation psychosocial dynamic of relational psychology is the concept of the identity matrix<sup>1</sup>—relational wrapping of the child during the constitution of his personality. Biological, psychological and sociocultural factors interact in the formation of the new being. The identity matrix represents the child's emotional learning based on his interaction with his primary reference group. The matrix's interpersonal (external) relationships—relationships with father, mother, siblings, grandparents, and caregivers—are internalized according to an elaboration of their own. The internal dynamic constitutes the translation that the subject has made of its primary external relational dynamic. This external-internal process results in the composition of psychological and psychopathological clinical structures.

## ***The Study of Relationships: Comprehension and Explanation***

The study of the relational phenomenon follows, in the first place, a comprehensive attitude, according to the proposal of existential phenomenology,<sup>2</sup> in the sense of observing and interacting as it presents itself at the moment. This attitude mainly highlights the questions *of what* and *how* (it happens). In parallel, there underlie the questions *why* and *why not* (which function as stimuli for continuing relational action).

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<sup>1</sup> For other references to the identity matrix, see Moreno (1991).

<sup>2</sup> About existential phenomenology in psychodrama, I suggest consulting Almeida (1988).



Therefore, the comprehensive method proposes the experiential capture of the moment without the use of a priori explanations. The causal-explanatory method, on the other hand, is concerned with the *why*. It is a reference to the physical-natural sciences, referring to the causes of the phenomena. The psychological why goes back to the past, and its overemphasis can lead to intellectualization. The obsessive explanations of the past obey the same dubious logic as the predictions of the future. The why may be a consequence of the therapeutic action, but not its first search. Realization precedes explanation. In the realm of psychotherapies, Moreno (1991) criticizes the exaggeration of psychological determinism, “the desire to find determinants for each and every experience, and for these determinants other determinants, and for these other, still more remote determinants, and so on, leads to an endless pursuit of causes” (p. 154, our translation).

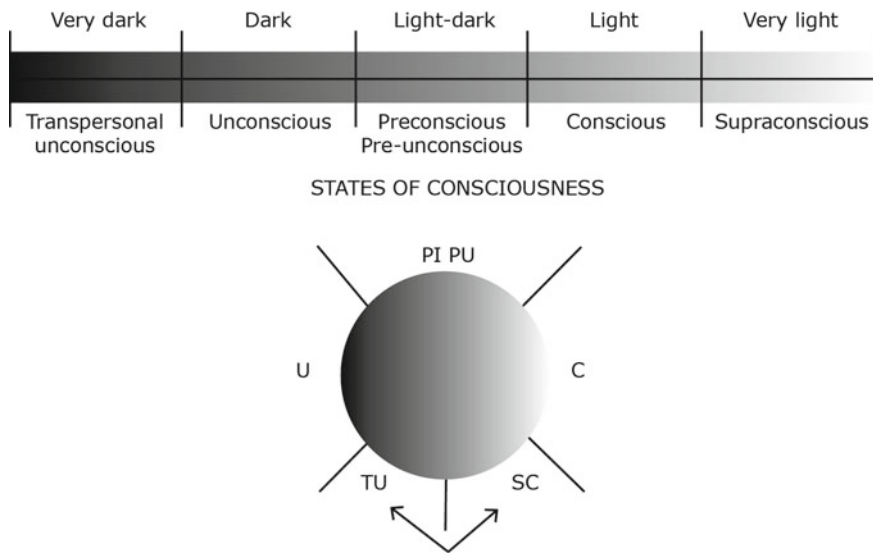
Buber (1976) says that relationships have two poles: relation and distance. At the moment of the relationship, there is surrender, and there is no room for distance. The second pole—distance—constitutes the space of reflection of the relationship, propitiating its analysis. The inversion of positions leads to the distortion of the relational process. In relationship reigns understanding—the what and the how—in distance reigns explanation—the why. The two poles integrate.

### *Psychology of Consciousness*

According to his or her degree of consciousness, the psychology of consciousness focuses on the subject at a given moment in life. By simply closing our eyes and putting our attention on our bodies, we have a different degree of awareness than the moment before. During the visualizations in the internal psychodrama technique, which we will see later, the person is in a state of consciousness different from everyday life. The modified states of consciousness provide new apprehensions of the self.

Sleep has different degrees of depth, which are distributed into five stages, four called non-REM and a fifth, REM (“rapid eye movements”), in which most dreams occur. Wakefulness also presents a gradation of waking states. The lower limits of consciousness represent the automated state in which we live our daily lives. Expanded states of consciousness correspond to “waking up” to new realities.

I use an analogy between consciousness and light to illustrate the variation in states of consciousness. The two extremes are represented by a very dark and a very light dot. Between them, there is a variable zone of light–dark. To the light–dark corresponds the preconscious (PC) and the preunconscious (PU); to the dark, the unconscious (U); and to the very dark, the transpersonal unconscious (TU)—as, for example, Jung’s (1972) collective unconscious. The clear zone refers to the conscious (C) and the very clear to the supraconscious (SC). This corresponds to the expanded states of consciousness experienced outside of everyday life.



**Fig. 10.1** States of consciousness-unconsciousness. *Note.* Retrieved from *Essência e personalidade* (p. 254, our translation), by Fonseca (2018), São Paulo: Ágora. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission

Figure 10.1<sup>3</sup> shows the gradation of consciousness in a horizontal and circular line. In the latter, one observes that the extremes are close: the PC and the PU are together; the TU and the SC are side by side.

This placement puts aside the notion of superficiality and depth (“personality basement”) of the conscious/unconscious, for both are situated on the same plane, distinguished by the fact that they are visible (illuminated) or invisible (dark). So, the *insight* represents when a flash happens, and the person can see what they could not see before.

### *The Gallery of I*

The term *I* is employed here in the sense of personality, persona, or ego.

The child develops a discriminatory activity in the construction of his identity. Through sensations, feelings and thoughts, she distinguishes between the inside (her) and the outside (her), the good and the bad, fantasy and reality, the partial and the total. The primary relationships internalize themselves so that they always represent partial apprehensions of the whole. First, the whole is a utopian or idealized measure, and second because the child still lives a neuropsychological immaturity whose perceptual processes are rudimentary.

<sup>3</sup> All graphs in this version are also found in Fonseca (2018).

We then speak of internal partial selves, which arise from successive partial internalizations of primary relationships. Thus, in an A–B relationship, the inner partial Self will have A, B, and AB characteristics.

If we imagine that primordial relations are internalized as positive, negative and neutral, we will conclude that there are also partial positive, negative and neutral selves. The child internalizes duos, trios, quartets etc., in which maternal, paternal, fraternal, family, and social roles are included. Clusters of internal partial selves, when dedicated to a common goal, gain the status of constellations—for example, the constellation of the self-censors (Fonseca, 2018). The most activated constellations mark out furrows in the personality in formation—the primary and secondary traits—that will constitute the psychological structures.

Some internal partial selves group together into protective cores against the suffering of separation-loss-absence. These cores remain latent and may manifest themselves teletransferentially in future situations. The teletransferential system governs all relationships according to whether they are predominantly telic or transferential. It, therefore, regulates both “healthy” and “pathological” relationships in and out of the therapeutic context. It oscillates in time and space—sometimes the relationship is more telic and less transferential, sometimes more transferential and less telic. The transferential culmination constitutes the delusion-hallucination. An example of the irruption of the transferential core happens in the passages to the act of crimes of passion and family crimes. Their counterpoint is the telic nuclei, generators of spontaneity-creativity, which appear to save function in moments of life-threatening danger. The descriptions of these episodes are often accompanied by expressions such as “it was a miracle”, “I received a light”, “it was God,” etc.

The global self, then, is made up of many internal partial selves that aspire to be revealed through role-playing, a meaningful way to leave latency and gain freedom. The psychodramatic context offers the possibility for difficult or impossible roles to be played in the social context: role of God, of Martian, of a murderer, etc.

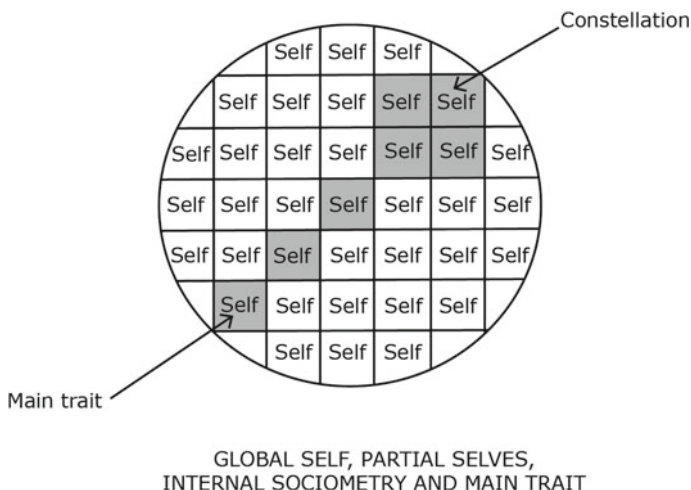
The internal partial selves expressed in dream characters can be relived through role-playing during dramatic action. In it, the performance of the oneiric characters allows the re-elaboration of their psychodynamic contents.

We talk about the multitude of *selves* that inhabit us, something that the genius of the poet Fernando Pessoa (1982/2009) sums up in a few lines:

Each of us is several, is many, is a prolixity of self. So, he who despises the environment is not the same as he who rejoices or suffers from it. In the vast colony of our being, there are people of many species, thinking and feeling differently. (p. 364, our translation)

### ***Partial Selves and Internal Sociometry***

Moreno (1974) proposes studying the interrelationship of group participants by sociometry—the science of measuring human relationships—and by sociodynamics—the science of the structure and dynamics of social groups. Transposing the



**Fig. 10.2** Global self, partial selves, a constellation of selves, and main trait. *Note.* Retrieved from *Essência e personalidade* (p. 256, our translation), by Fonseca (2018), São Paulo: Ágora. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission

proposal to the internal partial selves, we would have internal sociometry and socio-dynamics. The global self-expresses the relational dynamics of the Internal partial Selves that constitute it. This internal dynamic presents harmonic or disharmonic relations, which are reflected in the global Self.

Human beings live in groups, carrying an inner group within themselves. In this conception, the intrapsychic is an interrelationship of internal partial selves. So, the intrapsychic is also an “inter” (Fig. 10.2).

## Practice

### Session

The relationship psychotherapy session can be in the *there and then* or in the *here and now*. In the first possibility, the patient’s relationships in his or her life outside are analyzed; in the second, the relationship with the therapist inside. From an existential point of view, the *here and now* always underlies the account of the *there and then*. The therapist, therefore, has one “eye” *there* and another *here*.

When a person remembers a dream, it has a first meaning. When she tells her dream, it takes on a second meaning, now relational. Thus, the dream narrated in the therapy session also has some address to the therapist.

The work of the therapeutic relationship in the *here and now* is inspired by the fact that the patient repeats old relational patterns within the *therapeutic* setting,

thus opening up the possibility of working on them live, with the therapist as a participant-observer.

The session develops through verbal interaction (conversations, notes, observations, and interpretations) and dramatic actions. These represent the performance of roles from the patient's inner world, acted out by the patient and the therapist.

### ***Dramatic Action***

I distinguish (Fonseca, 2010, 2018) the dramatic action of relationship psychotherapy and the dramatization of classical psychodrama. The first constitutes a quick and eventual dramatic onslaught in the verbal context, while the second represents the culmination of the classic psychodramatic session.

The dramatic action deals with a past or current relationship of the protagonist. There is no chronological time delimitation: everything is present. There is no marking or editing of scenes; there is no spatial movement, not even in the role reversals, with some exceptions. Patient and therapist, seated, dialogue in their own roles or in the performance of internalized roles of the former. The relationship therapist is a mix of psychodramatic director and auxiliary ego. It is both a verbal therapist and a therapeutic actor. Moreno (1991), describing the action of the auxiliary ego, consequently also explains the function of the relationship therapist (which I have introduced in square brackets in the quote):

The auxiliary egos [relationship therapists] are actors who represent absent people, as they appear in the patient's private world. As the auxiliary egos [relationship therapists] task is to represent the patients' perceptions of the internal roles or figures that dominate their world, the more adequately they present them, the greater the effect on the patient. Instead of "talking" to the patient about his internal experiences, the auxiliary egos [relationship therapists] portray them and make it possible for the patient to find his own internal figures on the outside. Such encounters go beyond verbal communication and help the patient strengthen his vague internal perceptions, which he can relate to without outside help. These symbolic figures of his inner life are not mere phantoms; they are, however, therapeutic actors endowed with a real-life of their own. (p. 43, our translation)

Relationship psychotherapy uses a flexible technical instrument that allows rapid, dramatic incursions to resolve conflicts. The dramatic action has three segments: introduction, development and resolution. This is followed by a return to the verbal context for the elaboration of the psychodynamic content raised.

### ***Role-Playing and the Creative Space***

Human beings discover in childhood the pleasure of playing imaginary roles in their games. Primitive people in their totemic rituals of incorporation also experience this sensation. The insane play delusional roles. The actors in the classical theater

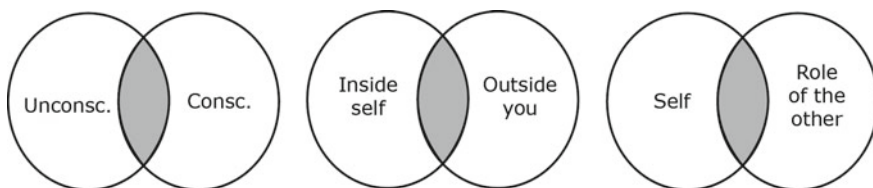
experience similar feelings but are prisoners of the roles created by the dramaturg. Spontaneous theater, psychodrama, and relationship psychotherapy give the actor the freedom to express himself without the constraints of authorial preserves. The spontaneous actor manages to be at the same time “childish”, “primitive” and “crazy”.

Experiences outside the day-to-day can promote modified states of consciousness. Giving up, at least partially, of your identity, *receiving* another identity, and finally returning to your own develops a subtle modification of consciousness. The German expression *das Ding ausser sich* that Moreno used to describe dramatic action is worth: the thing outside of itself. It can also mean a subject outside of himself—in the protagonist’s case, one who has lost control, healthily, in the psychodramatic scenario. Would there be an internal drug mobilization there? Yes, that’s why Moreno called spontaneity a “miracle drug”.

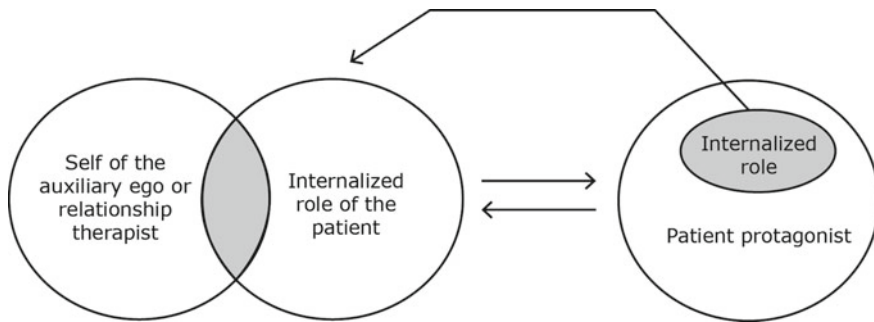
After a role-play in dramatic action, the therapist is often surprised by what he knew about the patient and did not know he knew. For example, by performing a double-mirror, the therapist becomes aware of the psychological contents of the protagonist, previously unknown, a true *insight* concerning the psychodynamics of the patient. This process facilitates coconscious and counconscious communication between both of them.

The child, after birth, is fused to the maternal function. Little by little, it is emerging from this fusion and making room for its own identity. There is, therefore, in this trajectory an intermediate space between inside and outside, between internal and external reality; a transitional space that was consecrated by Winnicott (1975) when describing the place of the “phenomenon” and the “transitional object”. This is the space that institutes the possibility of the exercise of “make-believe”, of “as if”; in short, of playing. The child invests in an object (a cloth, a pillow), the substitute and symbolic representation of the maternal absence, and then, in the act of playing, expresses the innumerable projections of his psychic world. Figure 10.3 shows the intermediate or creative space under various relational conditions.

The performance of an internalized role, either someone else’s or one’s own, triggers this intermediate space. That is, we are again talking about the median void or creative void (*self-cosmic*), as commented at the beginning of the text, through which spontaneity-creativity flows. Human beings learn to play in childhood. The psychodramatic techniques give him back the possibility of playing again as an adult. Next, schematically, follow what happens in relationship psychotherapy when the



**Fig. 10.3** The creative space (coconscious and counconscious) between therapist and patient. *Note.* Retrieved from *Essência e personalidade* (p. 260, our translation), by J. Fonseca (2018), São Paulo: Ágora. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission



**Fig. 10.4** Therapist performing an internalized role of the patient. *Note.* Retrieved from *Essência e personalidade* (p. 260, our translation), by J. Fonseca (2018), São Paulo: Ágora. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission

therapist plays an internalized role of the patient (Fig. 10.4). Remember that the patient, in other circumstances, also plays his or her own internalized role.

Thus, role-playing in psychodrama and relationship psychotherapy is therapeutic and allows the work to reach the conflicts addressed more appropriately and in a playful way through various techniques that we will see below.

## Techniques

### *Performance and Role Reversal*

Role-playing and role reversal are the most commonly used techniques in psychodrama and relationship psychotherapy. The therapist assumes an internalized role of the patient, previously played by him, or plays it directly, shaping himself according to the dialogic interaction. Of course, the second possibility requires practice. For example: “I am your father, talk to me”. In a second time: “You are your father, and I am you”.

### *Double-Mirror*

The double-mirror synthesizes the double and mirror techniques of classical psychodrama. The therapist is face to face (mirror) with the patient, dubbing him or her. It is the conversation of the self with another self of the patient, played by the therapist. In this way, the interpretations of the psychodynamic contents occur playfully in the course of the role-play. Let’s say a supposed patient, Julia (fictitious name), has the characteristic of placing the responsibility for her failures on others;

the therapist proposes a dialogue of Julia with Julia, one of them being played by him. Initially, the dubbed Julia maximizes the suffering of her “victimhood”, then questions her irreducibility, and finally exposes the “advantages”—torment and pleasure (“enjoyment”)—of not taking responsibility for her life and leaving it at the mercy of the other. The double-mirror, therefore, presents three moments: the dubbed repetition of the complaint, the questioning of it, and the acting interpretation of the underlying conflict.

### ***Role Interview***

In the role interview, the therapist interviews an internal character embodied by the patient. For example, the therapist interviews the father of the patient played by the patient: “I asked you to come here to find out some data about your son, my patient X”. And so, a strategy is established in which new psychodynamic contributions are brought to the case.

### ***Internal Visualization Techniques: Videotape and Internal Psychodrama***

Classical psychodrama is to theater as internal visualization techniques are to film. The visualizations hold correlations with meditative techniques. Both work in the realm of not thinking. Considering, metaphorically, a train in motion, we have two types of observation: either we observe the wagons or observe the wagons’ gap. In this comparison, the wagons would constitute a succession of thoughts, an association of ideas that, according to psychoanalysis, would lead to the unconscious. However, the observation of the emptiness between the wagons also leads to the unconscious. Meditation and internal psychodrama work with the second possibility.

One often confuses daydreaming—the automatic imagination of everyday life—with visualization, but they are opposites. Visualization is achieved by deliberate, conscious attention to achieve it. Daydreaming, on the other hand, is the result of distraction and inattention. While in visualization, the practitioner is active, in daydreaming, he is passive.

Some people can play roles internally more easily than in classical psychodrama. In this, there is a need for movement and body contact with the auxiliary egos. It is different to physically assault in the “as if” of a classic psychodrama scene and to assault, eventually, with refinement, through internal visual imagery. For this reason, perhaps, shy patients prefer internal visualization techniques.

Let’s look at how videotaping and internal psychodrama techniques work in relationship psychotherapy.



### *Videotape*

The videotape technique constitutes the revival of something in the remote or recent past through an internal visualization. This is a presentification<sup>4</sup> with eyes closed. It can be centered or mirrored. In the first case, the person is in the scene and reports from that place. In the second, the subject sees himself in the scene and reports from the outside. This double angular possibility makes the continuity of the scene flexible.

The dream is a “cinematographic” work unique to the dreamer. We are natural filmmakers. Internal visual images belong to the same “family” as dreams and hallucinations. In work with dreams, using the videotape technique, the patient takes over a dreamed scene in which the feelings are made present with the therapist’s help. For example:

T: *Close your eyes, visualize the scene, and describe it in the present.*

P: I’m in a strange place.

T: *What is this place like?*

P: It’s an old room, with curtains and carpets. It looks like the 1970s.

T: *Are there people?*

P: Yes, in the background, I see an ex-girlfriend.

T: *How do you feel?*

P: I feel a slight apprehension.

T: *Observe your body and locate that feeling.*

Or:

T: *Observe yourself from the outside and see your way there in the scene.*

And so on.

### *Internal psychodrama*<sup>5</sup>

I distinguish videotaping from internal psychodrama. The first is used when working with dreams or scenes from everyday life, and the second is performed when there is no specific working material. The person undertakes an internal visual journey as he observes the succession of spontaneous images that occur within himself: a daydream.

The patient keeps his eyes closed, turning his attention to the bodily sensations present, letting thoughts enter “on one side” and leave “on the other”—thoughts are deprived, and physical sensations and visual images (shapes, colors, and scenes) are privileged. The person is encouraged to let his inner film flow and see his “inner eye”. The protagonist goes ahead, the therapist follows him as a traveling companion. Often suggests cinematic techniques: *closes*, *zooms* and panoramas.

In an internal psychodrama, the visualization of shapes and colors preceded the feeling that the protagonist was flying. He would walk through clouds and catch glimpses of the elements below, very small. He then saw himself sitting on a bench

<sup>4</sup> In presentification, a technique originating from Gestalt therapy, the patient reports a fact that has happened with the verb in the present tense. With this, you also achieve the emotional presentification of the event. For example, instead of saying “I was afraid”, he will say “I am afraid”.

<sup>5</sup> Dias (1996), a Brazilian psychodramatist, also developed internal psychodrama techniques.

in an unsheltered place. He felt lonely and was moved by it. Gradually, he had the impression of feeling a “presence” in the scene. After a few moments, the presence personified itself as a loved one he had lost. Farewell, and the rescue of feelings contained in the relationship followed.

## Finalizing

The action of relationship psychotherapy encompasses both the verbal and the dramatic dimensions. As for the verbal part, it relies on the actions common to psychodynamic psychotherapies. This happens in the verbal context of the session itself or after a dramatic action.

Dramatic action leads to the *dramatic* insight or the *catharsis* of integration. The first means the illumination of a previously obscure psychological content. The second means a dramatic process that includes the disorganization of a conflict with its consequent reorganization so that the subject glimpses a new perspective on the addressed relationship.

Relational psychotherapy seeks to create a playful working space that corresponds to the intermediate zone between the outside and the inside, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the spontaneous-creative space of the coconscious and that of the Morenian relational counconscious. The dramatic action is reminiscent of play therapy: “playing” deals with “serious” things. If Klein (1997) had proposed play therapy also for adults and not only for children, she would have shared the creation of psychodrama with Moreno.

I hope that relationship psychotherapy is thus contextualized as a minimalist psychodrama that uses simple psychodramatic techniques, such as role-playing, role reversal, role interviewing, and modified psychodramatic techniques, double-mirroring videotaping, and internal psychodrama.

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# Chapter 11

## Symbolic Images in Individual Psychodrama and the Intermediate Object



Leonídia Alfredo Guimarães

**Abstract** In psychotherapy, we deal with internal realities mixed with fantasies, whose logic usually transcends the understanding of the observed phenomena. Psychodrama proposes using active methods to vent to these phenomena, amplifying objective reality to provide them with form and content, producing new meanings identified by the patient in the psychodramatic context. This chapter highlights the work with the construction of images in individual psychodrama through the use of another person's body as a mirror and auxiliary objects that shape the mental images that the protagonist has of his or her relationships, emotions, and lived situations. It brings in some illustrations of the practice of psychodramatic imagery with people, fabrics, cushions, and puppets, describing procedures and theoretical foundations. Next, it talks about the origins of the intermediate object (IO) concept, its psychodynamic characteristics, and clinical applications, referenced by Rojas-Bermúdez to re-establish interrupted communication in chronic psychotics. This technique was later extended to child and adolescent psychotherapy and finally to cases of severe neuroses and transient alarm states. It concludes this reflection by highlighting the generalization of using the term IO for psychodramatic practice, suggested by J.L. Moreno in the introduction to the previous work, as a mediation for the warming up process and the actualization of conflicts.

**Keywords** Symbolic image · Individual psychodrama · Intermediate object · Imagodrama

### Introduction

Before developing the above topics, I need to situate the reader as to my place of speech from when Jacob Levy Moreno postulated the psychodramatic method and its basic principles for group works. Moreno felt the need to do therapeutic work

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with people who lived on society's margins, work in the streets with children and prostitutes, and the concentration camps with refugees and prisoners. He started to work in a consulting room only later, always privileging the group framework (Moreno, 1974, 1978, 1983).

I think it fell to Rojas-Bermúdez (1970) to begin the systematization and adaptation of clinical psychodrama as practiced in Brazil. However, there are different theoretical strands not aligned to the core theory of the self. As a pioneer in disseminating psychodrama in Latin America, Rojas-Bermúdez preserved the psychodramatic method created by J.L. Moreno in Vienna, Austria (1921). Methodologically, psychodrama makes use of five fundamental instruments: stage, protagonist, director, auxiliary egos, and group; the development of the session is carried out in three stages: warm-up, role-playing, and sharing and the three contexts involved in the process: social, group, and dramatic.

The emphasis on the importance of considering the development of the sessions according to the three contexts establishes a systemic vision that makes it possible to understand better that, in individual psychodrama, the patient brings to the session the social groups to which they belong. This aspect broadens the clinical approach of psychodrama beyond the dual relationship, including the various relationship networks and bonds formed in family, kinship, friendship, and workgroups.

In individual psychodrama, we also follow the general principles established by J.L. Moreno concerning his existential–phenomenological philosophy, among which are as follows: concretization through psychodramatic action; the therapeutic value of experiencing for conflict elaboration; the intersubjectivity involved in the process; the catharsis of psychodramatic integration through comprehensive and gradual insights; and the Morenian concepts of *encounter*, *tele*, and *role reversal*.

Two-way tele, as an accurate perception of the other in their individuality and concrete existence, contributes to the perception of the therapist–patient roles and ensures the existential validation of the individual. Role reversal management makes it possible to see the other with their own eyes. The role theory and the identity matrix are basic theoretical references allied to the principle of supplementary reality as the maximum power for the training of spontaneity–creativity and role development. All these aspects close the dialogic circle of psychodramatic praxis.

## Specific Theoretical Reference

I add to my clinical practice the theoretical–practical concepts introduced by the Rojas-Bermúdez School, built from the identity matrix theory and role theory, plus contributions from other areas of knowledge, such as psychoanalysis, evolutionary psychology, ethology, and behavioral neuroscience, brought together by the author in the core theory of self-role scheme (Rojas-Bermúdez, 1997).

Starting from the theoretical–scientific assumption that there is a *nucleus of the self* of neurophysiological and structural basis in the human psyche, Rojas-Bermúdez

developed a clinical model that uses the technique of psychodramatic image construction in the psychotherapeutic context, aimed at stimulating hemispheric connections. The work with the construction of symbolic, real, and imaginary images is also called the psychodramatic method with form and content.

In semiotics and philosophy of language, the word *form* breeds upon the notion of the *content* that makes up the sign in its entirety. In this sense, form and content correspond to the signifier and its signified. In this way, by taking the form as the signifier of the contents and identifying their symbolic meanings through the image–act–word, we elucidate the roles and affections contained in the image as they appear. The patient himself interprets the meanings.

In image making, the form attributed to the image by bringing the concealed contents into synthetic form produces comprehensive insights regarding the investigated material, illuminating the therapeutic field beyond the mimeses (shadows of the self).

According to Rojas-Bermúdez's (1978) core theory of the self, the shadows of the self (mimeses) are archaic projections of the development of the first psychosomatic roles, experienced in complementarity during the first three phases of the identity matrix (Moreno, 1978). Characterized as *syncretic possessions*, peculiar to a partially differentiated life stage in which the child does not fully discriminate the self-you and behaves similarly in relation to his belongings is termed by Rojas-Bermúdez as syncretic possessions. For the child, "everything is mine", mommy, daddy, toys, siblings, house, etc. There is no such thing as "mine" and "the other's".

The work with psychodramatic images produces the stimulation of the brain's right hemisphere, which is neurologically articulated to the production of mental images, favoring the concrete and abstract apprehension of the meaning of emotions that cross the subjectivity of each individual by attributing meanings to fantasies and articulating the imagistic world to the symbolic world. The experience of the image produces new ways of perceiving experiences and expands the consciousness concerning what J.L. Moreno denominated the role cluster (Guimarães, 2012).

## Preliminary Interviews

The preliminary psychotherapy interviews consist of five to eight diagnostic sessions (Rojas-Bermúdez, 1984), covering two months:

- (1) Initial contact: welcoming of the demand for therapy and exchange of information, including the reason for the consultation, whether there was a professional indication, the availability of schedules, clarifications regarding fees, forms of payment, and the characteristics of psychodramatic work.
- (2) Open interview: detailed listening of the complaint and beginning the bond's construction (Pichón-Rivière, 1980). In this session, I usually use, whenever possible, the dramatization stage to ask the patient to build an image of the complaint brought or the current situation as an initial record.

- (3) Biopathographical interview (anamnesis): recording of the life history, from pregnancy to the present moment, correlating the history to eventual diseases, changes, and traumatic events that have occurred in the timeline, such as diseases, deaths, births, accidents, and moves to another city. For better visualization, Rojas-Bermúdez (1984) recommends that the therapist uses a blank sheet of paper divided into two columns and leaves a space in the middle to write down the corresponding ages.
- (4) Psychodramatic session: In this session, the patient must tell the same life story only with the body, without using words. The warm-up begins with the patient walking around the stage's edges, imagining the upper left point as his birth and the right point as death. In this first course, the patient will try to adapt to the space available on the board or mat; in the second course, the patient will be asked to remember the most important moments of the story said, like a videotape; the third course will be done with stops in the main moments to express it with the body itself, in a static position—we ask what age the patient is, and we register, preferably with photos.

Then, the therapist or auxiliary ego mirrors each body image. The patient observes from the outside to then enter each image expressed with the body and perform the corresponding soliloquy at each moment. Therefore, taking pictures of each moment helps to mirror each constructed image more accurately, creates a precious archive for later studies, and follows the psychotherapy evolution. In the sharing stage, we talk about the cross sections and the need for deepening in the short, medium, and long term.

- (5) Construction of the family atom: This is the sociometric configuration of interpersonal relationships (Bustos, 1999). The patient is represented in the center and asked to place the people in his or her family around them according to the degree of proximity–distance, subsequently investigating interpersonal relationships through introductions of each member and the soliloquies corresponding to each person represented. We observe the soliloquies unfolding in a double direction, with positive, negative, and neutral signs. In the preliminary sessions, the social and family atoms can be built with pillows, dolls, cloth, or other available objects, such as rocks, chess pieces, things in the room, and virtual applications.
- (6) Construction of the social atom: the same previous procedure extended to survey the quality of friendship ties, interpersonal and professional relationships, role performance, and sociometric position in the various networks of belonging.
- (7) Final debriefing: sharing of the previous sessions, discussing the indications for the beginning of psychotherapy and the most suitable setting—individual, group, couple, or family. The work contract is verbal, choosing the periodicity, the importance of assiduity and persistence, the responsibility for schedules and fees, the possibilities of replacement, vacation periods, and notice in case of interruption or termination of work.

These preliminary interviews can be characterized as diagnostic sessions only for evaluation or as part of the initial interviews with the parents of children and preadolescents. Often, after these sessions, the family tension disperses, and the demand becomes for couple or family therapy. In other cases, child psychotherapy is indicated because the child already has structured symptoms that will hinder their development and social insertion.

In the case of adults, depression, grief, and anxiety conditions require more individual attention. Structures with more schizoid and obsessive traits also require more time and attention until we can make a move to the group. A roughly precise parameter for the indication to be made has been the patient's sociability and affective expansiveness. The indication must not be tied to the therapist's preferred modality of care or some institutional requirement; we must adapt to the patient's needs.

People with more histrionic traits, ease of communication, good interpersonal and bonding skills usually easily accept the transition to a group. However, the patient may prefer the individual frame for being more discreet and introspective or preserving their intimacy for different reasons.

In my practice, it has been advantageous to use as a reference the classification of communicational styles corresponding to the clinical structures described by Liberman (1982), as they are well articulated to the psychopathologies of the nucleus of the self-described by Rojas-Bermúdez (1997). The communicational styles described by Liberman are as follows:

1. Theatrical person: conversion hysteria, a patient who dramatizes and creates aesthetic impact, synchronizing well the thinking–feeling–acting.
2. Frightened and elusive person: anguish hysteria, phobia, a patient who dramatizes resorting to unknowns and demonstrates anxiety in thinking–feeling–acting, without creating suspense.
3. Logical person: obsessive neurosis, narrative patient with difficulty making decisions, exhibiting repetitive behaviors in cycles that resist elaboration and entry into new cycles.
4. Action person: acting personality, sociopsychopathic, epic character patient who acts without thinking and creates confusions related to their actions in the environment.
5. Depressed person: neurotic or psychotic depression, lyrical patient with perception for small details and difficulties to self actively place oneself in the world.
6. Observant and nonparticipant person: schizoid, patient with a perception of totality and included details who resorts to unknowns without creating suspense, distrusting their perceptions or those of others.
7. Organ neurosis—psychosomatic illnesses: people who produce somatizations of their lyrical and infantile aspects using narrative techniques as a defense and the body as the stage for their psychic manifestations.

Rojas-Bermúdez's (1997) orientation shifts from the periphery to the center, starting from the healthy areas. This is also Moreno's (1978) orientation since the space of dramatization is indispensable for constructing subjectivity, a function that



must be extended to the world of objects, people, and events. Thus, life is not only put on stage but is thought and investigated in cycles of action and reflection until the protagonist can reach the symbolization of his conflicts, reach the catharsis of integration, and follow new paths, as well as prepare himself for future situations.

## **Intermediate Objects and Other Objects Used as Auxiliary Resources**

The therapeutic use of the IO technique was developed by Rojas-Bermúdez (1985) during his activities as a psychiatrist at the Hospital T. Borda in Buenos Aires, by adapting puppet theater, handled by two auxiliary egos—mainly Ariel Bufano and Beatriz Suárez—to re-establish the interrupted communication of chronic psychotics. It has been possible to bring these patients out of their state of emotional encapsulation through the puppets. These patients had been in social and family isolation for more than ten years without receiving special attention, given the scarce therapeutic resources of the 1960s. They remained in constant incommunicability, with great difficulty in focusing their attention on what was happening around them and making contacts. Rojas-Bermúdez (2012) reports that he graphically visualized the situation of these patients as enveloped by a resistant “capsule” of unresponsive “back-and-forth”.

The classic group psychodrama framework was adopted, allied with puppet theater, gradually using additional resources to avoid the states of alarm shown with human approximation, such as covering the entire body of the auxiliary egos with robes and a hood so they could come out from behind the puppet theater. It was observed that both the interest and interlocution of the patients were directed directly to the puppets. This specific detail was tested in various ways that led Rojas-Bermúdez (1985) to call puppets intermediate objects.

Gradually, following this pattern of concealing the human body, the dramatizations began to be developed in an open scene and with the patients themselves holding another puppet. From then on, other techniques were included and applied gradually, continuing the work with dance, music, making of masks, etc., until face-to-face interaction was achieved, without triggering the state of alarm that made human contact impossible. One patient who had never been able to dance was able to indulge in dancing by wearing the mask he constructed, another who had motor restlessness was able to reasonably control his movements by covering his body with a robe (Rojas-Bermúdez, 2012).

Further experiments and studies were conducted to substantiate this experience with chronic psychotics. Then the IO technique was extended to cases of severe neuroses, such as panic crisis and social phobia, and then to less severe cases where the state of alarm was transitory, caused by some traumatic event. In group psychotherapy with children and adolescents, Rojas-Bermúdez (1985) started to include puppet theater with a slightly different format because the puppets are full bodied, but that

their intermediate function is similar to puppet theater. In this format, the patients themselves handle the puppets to play roles taken from children's stories like "Little Red Riding Hood" and the "Big Bad Wolf".

In all the situations experienced, Rojas-Bermúdez (1985) called the puppets and marionettes handled by the patients themselves the intra-intermediary object, with this he wanted to differentiate, I believe, the function of the object as mediators in the construction of bonds, having as a source the patient's own spontaneity and the psychodramatists' creativity for the handling and articulation of complementary roles.

Thus, although the technique of constructing images with people, objects, and fabrics became the axis of Rojas-Bermúdez's (1997) clinical work, it was the IO technique that represented his best contribution to psychodramatic practice. Both for its usefulness in cases of challenging approach and its various forms of psychotherapeutic application with psychotics, children and adolescents, severe neuroses, states of post-traumatic stress, or transient conditions of alarm block the patient's verbal expression and ability to communicate.

However, the author clarifies that in the absence of these symptomatologies and circumstances of role-playing blockage, there would be no need for intermediate objects. For Rojas-Bermúdez (1970) and Moyano (2012), the IO is understood as a psychodramatic instrument of therapeutic communication, aiming to overcome the barrier interposed by the patient in relation to the outside world. From this theoretical elaboration, Rojas-Bermúdez formulated the role scheme as a complementary structure to the core self, based on his clinical experiences with chronic psychotics.

Another elementary aspect of the concept of IO is highlighted by Fonseca (2018), taking a structural psychodynamic perspective that refers us to early childhood experiences during evolutionary development, especially about the period of recognition of the self in the second phase of the identity matrix, which sets boundaries between what happens inside and outside the self. It represents the exit from the state of fusion with the mother. The child goes through a transitional space in which he adopts substitute objects to support the maternal absence, called by Winnicott (1975) the transitional object (TO).

Similarly, Rojas-Bermúdez (1988) recognizes the approximations between IO and TO but points out that:

The point of view that culminated in the IO and TO designations are different, as are the theoretical explanation and its qualities. Nevertheless, one has to wonder about their similarities... there must be essential elements in common. Elements that may in part be related to the theoretical context in which they were generated. It will be necessary to bring them together since the IO is a communicational therapeutic concept (p. 28, our translation).

Moyano (2012) also corroborates the psychodynamic approximation between IO and TO and clarifies that the concepts are different only because it is a psychodramatic technique used as an instrument of psychotherapeutic action TO is only a theoretical concept.

Regarding the use of the IO technique, J.L. Moreno emphasized in the introduction to Rojas-Bermúdez's (1985) book, which presents all the material from his research with IO, its instrumental possibility beyond psychiatry:

It is an extraordinary pleasure for me to make an introduction to this volume *TÍTERE Y SICODRAMA* by J. G. Rojas-Bermúdez. It represents a valuable contribution to the crucial field of the warming process, especially in its application to the treatment of chronic psychotics. *Rojas-Bermúdez uses the puppet and calls it an “intermediary object” because it is an object and because of its mediating function.* It is a very apt term for this clinical procedure and is *applicable beyond the chronic psychotic* [emphasis added]. (p. 29, our translation)

In this way, the generic understanding of the IO technique as a possibility of mediation of the psychodramatic “as self” gained strength in Brazil and the world, starting to freely use a series of objects to facilitate the warming up process, the montage of scenes, and the realization of dramatic games, ranging from bottles, playing cards, pens, hands, chairs, papers, painting screens to concrete objects, computer screens, glasses, pencils, necklaces, stones, etc. (Rojas-Bermúdez, 2012).

I consider that the generalized use of the term theoretically mischaracterizes its function as an instrument. Despite any object used in psychodrama, serving the warm-up process and meeting some needs for psychodramatic realization and mediation, such objects bear no resemblance to the psychodynamic characteristic of the IO, nor to the TO (Winnicott, 1975), which, in principle, is characterized as an object of affection that facilitates the child, through play, the articulation between reality and fantasy in moments of maternal absence. In addition, Rojas-Bermúdez (2012) emphasizes the importance of the IO representing the human figure, especially with an emphasis on the face, given the diversity of natural expressions that favor natural communication.

Recently, the Rojas-Bermúdez School elaborated a complete classification of the main objects used in the psychodramatic clinic as a warm-up, for the creation of characters and the montage of scenes, according to the function performed by each object: either as an auxiliary resource replacing the auxiliary egos; as mediating objects when used as instruments; or as creative resources (Guimarães, 2018, 2020; Moyano, 2012).

Knowing better these various possibilities of using objects in psychodrama, in its specific conception of IO (relation role-object); or opting for its generic use of objects used as supplementary resources for psychodramatic mediation. This may facilitate the proper use of the term IO as an ego protector, with an extension of the self-displaced to the object (puppets and masks). These are specific situations of the emotional block that impede or prevent the performance of the role–role relationship. In Brazil, the practice of individual psychodrama has benefited a lot from the generalization made by Jacob Levy Moreno. However, this may not contemplate the theoretical deepening of the situations worked on the supplementary reality created only to favor the warm-up process or work on communicational blocks.

## Techniques for Building Psychodramatic Images

The psychodramatic image-building technique procedure consists of asking the patient to build on the stage a representation of the mental image he has of the facts. The patient can use other people's bodies to create a static image if they are in a group or use the objects provided by the therapist. After constructing the image, we ask you to observe the image from a distance and clarify what you wanted to represent (mirroring) and then, to enter the image and, from each element, make a soliloquy in part of the image. Once this is done, one can move on to the sharing stage, if the resolving clues are evident, or continue investigating the hidden meanings, requesting the unfolding of the image into a before and after image to be compared to the central image; asking for the creation of a story about the images constructed; requesting other intermediate images toward the past or the future; requesting a complementary image that offers a solution; or moving on to role-play and role reversal in an open scene to complement the image through role-playing.

I usually have for the construction of images a box available with fabrics of various colors and different textures, in standard sizes 0.80 × 1.80 cm; pillows of multiple sizes, colors, and shapes; and also three kits of handmade dolls: (1) loosely structured dolls, with only a characterized face and a cone-shaped body, which enables use in upright or lying position; (2) full-body dolls in different static and expressive positions, made of biscuits; (3) and some miniatures used in the sandbox game (Ammann, 2004) to represent human figures in specific social roles, represent animals, vehicles, buildings, mythical, and religious figures. All puppets have an average size of 0.6 to 0.9 cm for the characterization of adult, child, and fictional characters and to point out the differences in genders, ages, and ethnicities.

The objective of this work with puppets is to facilitate the projection, identification, and concretization of symbolic images through the construction of three-dimensional images, which work as a mirror of the patient's inner world and maintain the visual distance necessary for the articulation of the real to the symbolic and imaginary. The reading of the constructed image and its narrative gradually clarifies the senses, purposes, and meanings molded in the image, also making possible the instrumentation of classic psychodramatic techniques.

In individual psychodrama, the most significant difficulty was working with three-dimensional images, an essential variable for objectifying the image constructed with the body. With the inclusion of puppets for the construction of images, this issue was solved, often without the need for the patient to physically reproduce the characters to feel the emotions triggered in his or her own body. I have named this technique of image construction with puppets *Imagodrama* to mark the differences regarding the material resources used and the adaptation of the original procedures proposed by Rojas-Bermúdez (1970, 1997), especially in online psychodrama, where the therapist assembles the image from the patient's directions (Guimarães, 2018, 2020).

## The Technique of Image Construction with Fabrics, Cushions, and Dolls

My choice to work with textiles and pillows is justified by the ease of making these objects available in the office. Although the work with two-dimensional images is quite abstract and requires further investigation with the patient, the clarification of its forms and the meaningful contents in the image greatly enriches the process of image construction.

Cushions and fabrics are suitable objects for constructing images given their malleability, flexibility of positioning in space, and the coziness provided by the tactile and bodily contact, stimulating coenesthetic sensations and sensitive perceptions that can reverberate a series of feelings, thoughts, and emotions. These images bring to the stage the archaic memories stored in the limbic system, a neurophysiological structure corresponding to the nucleus of the self.

According to Rojas-Bermúdez (1997), this is because, during the image-building procedure, the right hemisphere of the brain is activated and brings the mnemonic traces, which are interpreted by the patient by verbal and visual means, being decoded simultaneously by the structures of the cerebral neocortex—left hemisphere (LH), role scheme, words, and symbolic world. This hemispheric interconnection facilitates the unlocking of verbal expression and produces associations between form and content.

In this way, the transformation of mental images into psychodramatic images establishes new synapses in the brain circuits, reinforcing the connections necessary to interpret the subjectivities involved, synchronizing image, act, and word. Through this process of exteriorization of mental images, one can objectify the patient's inner world and, at the same time, make room for the phenomenon of the adhesion of new learning in the brain circuits, triggering new experiences and reactions to internal conflicts (Guimarães, 2012).

Regarding the work of dramatizing the symbolic image, Hillman and Shamdasani (2015) analyze in *O Livro Vermelho* that:

paradoxically, it is a journey outward, but to go outward, it is necessary to go inward, for there is no direct path to the world without plunging into your solitude. so that the images resonate and pass on speaking as a personal, not conceptual, cosmology. (p. 33, our translation)

Perhaps, for this reason, Rojas-Bermúdez (1997) compares the process of constructing psychodramatic images to the process that occurs during dreams, equating them to the *oneiric images*, the unconscious ruler of psychoanalysis. This comparison takes into account that the patient can, through the image, elaborate a process of synthesis and concretization of different experiences, ideas, fantasies, sensations, and emotions and then fix it in the memory in another way, thus establishing a bridge to the understanding of the human being.

I remember a group psychodrama session in which a patient who complained about her relationship with her son said she was worried that she would come to feel her son as “a burden”. When constructing this image, she placed herself supporting

her son's body, squatting in front of him, having to bend forward to support the boy's weight. Observing the image, she said that this circumstance was precisely the reason for her affliction, but nothing else occurred to her when she did the soliloquy. After entering the image, occupying the son's place and returning to her position, performing the role reversal, she collapsed in deep tears and, after pulling herself together, said she understood that the person in the image was not her son but her alcoholic ex-husband.

This is a beautiful example of psychodramatic integration catharsis. In the case reported above, the patient was in group psychotherapy. Still, nothing prevents this procedure from being carried out in individual psychodrama, working with auxiliary ego or with just the director. Rojas-Bermúdez (1984) says it is important to maintain "asepsis" in the contact to not harm the therapeutic distance and enable the psychodrama director to observe the experience of the image from a distance. But the inclusion of the therapist in the image may be necessary and not interfere in the experience, considering the quality of the telerelations privileged in the psychodramatic frame, when working the therapeutic relationship with adequate perception of the therapist-patient roles, free of role transference (Moreno, 1978).

In constructing images with fabrics, pillows, and dolls, these transferential circumstances are neutralized since the images can easily be built without the therapist's participation. Only in the *Imagodrama* performed in the online modality does the therapist need to handle the puppets according to the patient's choices. The steps of the procedure are the same as described above. In the images constructed with fabrics, beautiful colored forms appear, sometimes braided, sometimes wrapped, sometimes separated or superimposed, entangled in a performance that provokes curiosity. When asked to enter the image and take the place of each posed element, we have the opportunity to verticalize the image and observe the patient's bodily expressions when performing the soliloquies.

In the *Imagodrama* with expressive puppets, this detail already exists from the choices made. The soliloquies are performed from a distance, with the patient looking at (or holding) one doll at a time and performing the corresponding characters and soliloquies. Then we can apply the basic techniques as needed. It may be interesting to conclude the procedure by asking the patient to bodily assume the position of the puppet, which represents himself. This will strengthen the interhemispheric connections (right hemisphere-left hemisphere) and facilitate the adhesion of new neural connections, called reference by Rojas-Bermúdez (1997).

In all techniques with images, initially, we stop at the perception of each detail, that is why the mirroring of the image is important for the patient to visualize the constructed forms. After reading the forms, the contents and their subjective meanings emerge. In one particular work, done with *Imagodrama*, it was necessary to perform the technique of the double for the protagonist to become aware of her grief, motivated by a recent loss. In these circumstances, the therapist chose a dummy characterized as a bereaved person to manage the technique through the dummy. In the images with fabrics, superpositions, proximities, and distances, empty spaces, formation of tight or loose knots, circles, labyrinths, stairs, and other infinite forms

appear, which receive the voices of the patient's soliloquies, and sometimes the images evolve into psycho dance, given the movements they evoke.

A student complained that she was consumed in a class on image construction, given an "exhausting day at work". She said that at that time of the night (6:30 pm), she was already ("coasting out of gear"<sup>1</sup>), a famous Brazilian expression meaning to get carried away by the exhaustion of following the rules. With that funny and meaningful expression, she got laughs from the group and was chosen as the protagonist. The image was constructed with fabrics and pillows, following the standard procedure. I requested the replacement of the objects with people to make the mirroring and verticalization of the image. We then moved on to the soliloquies, a moment in which it became evident that the protagonist already felt tired since she left home in the morning due to her state of mind. The overtiredness was related to very personal issues, not investigated because we were in an educational context, but the image raised awareness.

## Other Techniques Adapted to Individual Psychodrama

In addition to the techniques of building images with the body, with fabrics, with pillows and with dolls, which are well adjusted to the 50-to-60-min session time, we can use the other resources called *therapeutic objectifyings* (Rojas-Bermúdez, 2012), privileging qualified listening, focus on the therapeutic bond and verbal cues, allying with these:

- (1) the observation of gestures and facial expressions, the patient's standard dress and communicational style, body postures, modulation and tone of voice, glances, emotional intensity, and pace of action;
- (2) audio-visual resources, such as films, videos, and books;
- (3) the use of aesthetic and creative expression techniques, such as free drawings, watercolors, collage paintings from magazines, photographs and family albums, and making masks and puppets.

Furthermore, understand that the patient does not always need to be role-playing in the open scene, although he is always in action, playing the roles required for each moment. Bodyworks are essential and can be included in individual psychotherapy through psycho dance (Moreno, 1978; Rojas-Bermúdez, 1997).

We can start with internal psychodrama (Fonseca, 2018) and evolve to psycho dance, or do the whole warm-up in movement, using body expression exercises such as walking in various directions, jumping, leaping, crouching, followed by spontaneous dancing to the rhythm of different musical styles, and continue the psychodramatic work according to whatever emerges as the protagonist theme. Handling music as IO enables the creation of emotional climates, doubles, and symbolic

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<sup>1</sup> In Portuguese: "pegando na banguela".

mirrors. These are songs chosen by the therapist as complementary, supplementary, or inducing protagonist themes (Rojas-Bermúdez, 1970). If necessary, you can ease the delivery to the dance by wearing masks, reduce the lighting in the room with colored lights, and offer dancing fabrics. They are therapeutic resources that favor the deepening of psychodramatic psychotherapy by reducing inhibition, body rigidity and stabilizing the mood when the affective climate becomes heavy, silent, or persecutory, creating obstacles to the development of the session.

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# Chapter 12

## Psychodramatic Group Psychotherapy and Its Modalities in Brazil



Aline Oliveira Belém and Cybele Maria Rabelo Ramalho

**Abstract** This chapter will discuss fundamental principles of psychodramatic group psychotherapy and how it is used in Brazil, emphasizing the relational process, the therapists' role, and the issues related to countertransference, bringing references to the work of important Brazilian psychodramatists. Different modalities of group psychodrama in Brazil will be discussed and nuances of contract and selection for forming therapeutic groups, especially in the Brazilian reality. There is also an emphasis on the stages of the method and its main characteristics and dynamism, involving coconscious and counconscious processes. In addition, a discussion of the therapists' spontaneity and the relationship of their stance to identifying and dealing with transferences will be presented. Guidelines for managing interpersonal resistance and the importance of developing telic relationships in the therapeutic group are also presented. Finally, some modalities of psychodramatic group psychotherapy that have been gaining space in Brazil, such as thematic groups, public psychodrama, and online psychodrama, will be described.

**Keywords** Psychodrama · Group psychotherapy · Sociatry

### Some Fundamental Principles

In highlighting group psychotherapy within the vast Brazilian psychodramatic universe, we need to rescue some basic concepts of great relevance in the performance of group psychodrama in Brazil, developed and applicable by sociatry (the branch of socionomy responsible for therapeutic interventions), which has its roots in the work of Jacob Levy Moreno (1889–1974), creator of psychodrama. In the socio-economic view, there is a place for group treatment from the three sociatric methods: sociodrama, psychodrama, and group psychotherapy. In this chapter, we will deal

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only with psychodrama as group psychotherapy, in the modalities: processual (no fixed time), focal (with limited time and specific theme), public (performed in single psychodramatic acts), and online.

We know that group psychodrama aims to activate forces that promote health and conflict resolution. It offers new possibilities for intervention and the free interaction and expression common to other group psychotherapeutic approaches. In psychodrama, group interaction and the development of relationships aimed at existential encounters can dissolve the crystallized aspects of subjectivities, investigating mental health processes through dramatic action. In socionomics, we assume that the psychological suffering of the subject corresponds to the lowering of their spontaneity–creativity,<sup>1</sup> affecting the performance of their roles. The search for the rescue of more spontaneous responses aims to promote the potential for change and transformation.

According to Moreno (1974), the principle that people can be therapeutic agents for each other, benefiting from the positive effects of the democratic distribution of power, affection, and knowledge in a group, following the *principle of therapeutic interaction*, is essential. There is also the *principle of spontaneity*, the meaning of which is that the spontaneous production of the group is valuable from a diagnostic point of view. Another important aspect lies in the direct and immediate nature of the interaction, characterizing a reality check, as the participant is confronted not only with situations from their life outside the therapeutic setting, from a narrative brought to the session but also with the situations and people in the group, in the here and now (Belém, 2019).

For Moreno and Moreno (2006), psychodramatic group psychotherapy is a conscious process whose theoretical framework is centered in the group, interpersonal interaction and relationship, aspiring the best therapeutic grouping of its members and respecting the spontaneous tendencies of each one. The specificity of clinical psychodrama, as group psychotherapy, is to give expression to individual dramas (which in turn reveal collective dramas) through the creation of a scenic work (at the moment of dramatization).

Psychodramatic group psychotherapy aims to go beyond verbal discourses and simple emotional discharge, promoting more profound experiences (Moreno, 1974). In this approach, we use the five basic instruments of psychodrama: audience/group; protagonist; director/therapist; auxiliary ego, and scenario. Of these instruments, the protagonist stands out as the element that the group chooses for condensing, in their drama, the collective drama; the protagonist is the one who first agonizes, that is, who brings in their scene or emotion a content that contemplates and represents most of the group. Through their scene, which will be psychodramatized in the session, the group will be treated. The role of auxiliary ego also deserves to be highlighted in group psychodrama since it can be played either by trained professionals (who act with the director/therapist) or by a member of the group, who will be chosen or invited by the protagonist to play a role from their inner world.

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<sup>1</sup> The concepts of spontaneity and creativity are central to the Morenian work; spontaneity is defined as responding in new ways to current or old situations (Giacomucci, 2021).

The work with psychodrama crosses the individual, group, and social contexts. The method develops in three primary stages: warm-up (specific and nonspecific), the role-play itself, and the sharing stage. It is important to emphasize that dramatization need not occur strictly in every session of a psychodramatic therapeutic group. There are times, for example, when the group demands more time for verbal processing of content from previous sessions.

In the scenic work, affective continence must be offered for experiential experimentation in the “as if” of supplementary reality, a central concept of sociometrics, which allows psychodrama access to a form of reality more rarely reached in other therapeutic approaches. Through the supplementary reality, a free expression (but also of confrontation, deconstruction, and reconstruction) theater is performed, enabling subjects to leave the limited world of individuality, acting in a virtual and limitless world, in this extra or supplementary reality (Moreno et al., 2001).

In dramatic action, we objectify our subjectivities, and we concretize the experience of our fantasies, fears, and feelings of all kinds, which produce liberating effects on the soul, that is, they make possible the therapeutic effect of the *catharsis of integration*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, working with supplementary reality allows us an experience in which the group and subjectivity are not situated in the individual field but in social and collective production.

## **On Selection and the Group Contract and Its Alterations in Brazil**

Moreno was the creator of group psychotherapy since he used this term for the first time in one of his scientific articles, published in 1931. However, it was only possible through the development of sociometry (whose methods facilitate the understanding of group structure), sociodynamics (which allows a sense of group dynamism) and psychodrama itself, which he also created. Through sociometric and sociodynamic connections, the whole group is addressed, not just the protagonist. In Brazil, we more often develop psychodramatic group psychotherapy that relies considerably on the collaboration of sociometric and sociodynamic biases.

A good group psychotherapy begins with a good selection of participants, and, in the case of psychodrama, it makes us observe how their identity matrix is composed. The goal is to verify whether the client applying for a group is still in a symbiotic moment or stuck in corridor relationships since it would be necessary for the group member to be in a more advanced relational process of recognizing the I and the you, already being able to promote circularizations and role reversals in their interpersonal bonds. It is recommended that the subject not be in a moment of severe psychic

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<sup>2</sup> The Morenian concept of *catharsis of integration* defines a characteristic active phenomenon in psychodrama, promoting a therapeutic effect, during or after a dramatic action, enabling an integrative emotional discharge of previously dissociated elements from consciousness, promoting an expansion and reorganization of perceptions and sensations (Giacomucci, 2021; Ramalho, 2011).

suffering or acute crisis, presenting psychological conditions to transition between fantasy and reality. To verify these conditions, it is customary to conduct a previous individual interview with those interested in joining a therapeutic group.

The most usual indication for psychodramatic group psychotherapy is for clients where individual psychotherapy has been deemed insufficient. However, this is not a rule, after all Moreno himself considered the group process to be more therapeutically profound than the individual one. In addition, there may be a demand for group psychotherapy for the simple desire to live this experience, or because it may be more financially accessible in some circumstances, since the therapist's fees may be divided among the participants, depending on the contract drawn up by the professional, which often happens in Brazil. These situations make the previous individual interview even more important because we are not always dealing with clients who have already undergone psychotherapy.

The contract established with the group includes, besides its usual ethical aspects (such as the importance of confidentiality), instructing how a psychodramatic group psychotherapy takes place and presenting and discussing its objectives. The central goals are to develop open and honest communication with increased spontaneity and increase autonomy to make decisions in everyday life. The first meeting mainly discusses: punctuality, attendance, duration, fees, absences of participants and the therapist, vacations, interruptions, minimum quorum for the session to occur, new members joining, and simultaneous requests for individual sessions.

A minimum number of four and a maximum of ten people is recommended. In case a new member joins the already ongoing group, it is essential to have a "preparation, which presupposes the balance on the threshold between welcoming without privilege, as far as the newcomer is concerned; and preparing without neglecting the newcomer, as far as the veteran group is concerned" (Belém, 2019, p. 154, our translation).

Some psychodramatists prefer to work in functional unity, that is, there are two therapists, but one plays the role of director and the other the role of auxiliary ego. Others prefer to work in codirection to take on the shared direction and, eventually, the role of auxiliary egos while the other colleague directs the scene. When the psychodramatist works alone in directing a group, the function of the auxiliary ego can be performed by the members of the group itself. As we mentioned before, these are chosen by the protagonist in the specific warm-up moment, when the scenario of the dramatic action is set up, and the choice of people who can be supporting actors for the performance of the roles (from the protagonist's inner world), necessary for the dramatic action, is made (Ramalho, 2011).

## The Importance of the Three Stages: Warming up, Role-Playing, and Sharing

In the *warm-up* moments, we offer the group members access to many of their creative possibilities so that the barriers that the *cultural reservations*<sup>3</sup> place between the worlds of reality and fantasy can be broken down. The initial warm-ups (considered nonspecific) of the therapeutic process, through dramatic games or the use of initiators (mental, emotional, or physical stimuli), aim to situate the subject in the present, connecting them to the moment of the session and to themselves, diluting rationalizations and other defenses. Consequently, the nonspecific warm-up aims to increase the ability to establish positive (realistic and reciprocal) telic bonds, activating the potentiality to establish genuine existential encounters. This facilitates the emergence of group spontaneity–creativity, so that the psychotherapeutic process becomes a permanent state of sharing, with intense intersubjective interaction, involving *coconscious* and *counconscious*<sup>4</sup> processes.

Psychodrama is considered clinical when an attempt is made to rescue the spontaneity of a participant who emerges in the group bringing their drama, being chosen as a representative of a collective plot or feeling. After the initial warm-ups, with spontaneous group emergences, one of them that sensitizes the most with their narratives or expressions may be chosen by the group as their representative, being invited by the director to a virtual stage or scenario, where the individual will be able to concretize their scenes. The group member will become a protagonist if their drama, once worked out, also represents a group drama.

At this point, the specific warm-up of the protagonist begins so that the role-play can be performed. It is important to point out that the specific warm-up involves the whole group since it is necessarily involved in managing the scene to come. In this warm-up, the imaginary scenario must be set up (in the “as if” of a supplementary reality), and the auxiliary egos must be chosen. Thereby, the *counconscious* parts of the private dramas and the collective drama become progressively *coconscious*.

In the actual dramatization stage, the director will resort to classical psychodrama techniques (double, mirror, role reversal), among others. During role-playing, dramatic insights and the protagonist’s catharsis (where there is a recharge of lost spontaneity–creativity) can arise. Ramalho (2011) comments on some important care regarding the stage of dramatization and the use of classical techniques: The double can be performed by the director or by some auxiliary ego the group, with the caution that the double happens in a telic climate and that it does not confront the protagonist with feelings that the protagonist does not recognize as their own; the

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<sup>3</sup> *Cultural conservatism*, another concept by J. L. Moreno, is defined as that which opposes spontaneous–creative forces. They are finished, established, and standardized cultural products, which obstruct and accommodate the spontaneous creative flow (Ramalho, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> *Counconscious* is a Morenian concept that refers to those contents shared by a group with a common history. The elements of the group jointly produce unconscious contents that can emerge to group consciousness when the group meets. The *coconscious*, in turn, represents the content shared consciously by the group.

mirror is an interesting technique for the end of dramatizations, as it favors insight and can be performed by the therapist, auxiliary ego (in the perspective of the functional unit) or by a participant in the role of auxiliary ego, provided that the therapist requests it. Finally, in role reversal, a technique widely used in groups, the egos, or participants incarnate counterroles or internal characters from the protagonist's world, under constant monitoring by the direction.

In the sharing stage, the group expresses its affective resonances and exchanges experiences. A catharsis of group integration may emerge, representing the sum of the spontaneities present. The group's creative resources are multiplied. Group counconscious contents can also be revealed, which become coconscious from that moment on (Nery & Conceição, 2012).

## The Importance of Tele and Transferential Processes

*Tele* is a fundamental concept defined by J.L. Moreno, present in all healthy relationships, consisting of feeling and knowing each other's "real situation" (Ramalho, 2011). In psychodramatic group psychotherapy, it is important to dilute distorted transferential perceptions and seek the greatest possible development of teleperceptions. When we understand that in transference, we transpose the contents of the internal world to the external world (Nery, 2003), we are unable to cocreate and form new bonds. Thus, the stereotyping occasioned in a transferential response makes it a challenge to be in a group in a healthy way.

Although initially, the transferential relationship predominates in the group, a certain amount of telic perception already acts, promoting cocreative relationships, the meeting of spontaneities, as a two-way empathy, felt with reciprocity. The therapist in group psychodrama should promote more telic and horizontal relationships in the group, creating a more secure "working alliance". The reciprocal relationship of tele will also be promoted through dramatic games, facilitating the group warm-up, being more present as the relationships become more dialogical.

During the psychodramatic process, there emerge what Perazzo (2010) conceptualizes as the *transferential counterparts*, that is, the indirect signs that appear in the associative chain of psychotherapeutic work and the client's body movement. These counterparts point to other scenes and contexts, imagined or preserved characters, which appear persistently in various relationships of the protagonist. The repetitions in different roles indicate that a repetitive affective logic of behavior occurs, which maintains a process of crystallization or conservation of roles, devoid of spontaneity–creativity or sickened (Nery, 2003).

In dramatization, an affective logic of behavior is expressed, a specific pattern of behavior generated at the core of the transference, as a survival strategy, expressed in the most varied forms. The therapeutic process must bring out the countertransferential processes that hinder cocreation and appear in the form of "disproportionate emotions concerning an event; unexpected changes in voice tones, exaggerated gesticulations, inhibitions, dominations; excessive self-demand, self-devaluation"

(Nery, 2003, p. 22, our translation). These reactions demonstrate a connection not with the other but with the inner world, constituted by conflicting bonds, that hides a role that needs to be acted out in the supplementary reality and transformed, on the play, into a psychodramatic and transforming role.

This is what is made possible in the psychodramatic scene and will allow the construction of a new relational process. Often the construction of the scene in the context of group psychodrama, in the supplemental reality (which is the reality of imagination, in the “as if” of imaginary roles) will allow the reconstruction of past core scenes of the client’s life, from which conflicts, traumas, and crystallized roles have developed (Perazzo, 2010). The psychodramatic action from there will favor the client the analysis, dilution, and elucidation of the transference expressed and shared, even though it has to deal with regressive scenes (scenes from the past) and identifications with the auxiliary egos, which bring up such transferences, in the here and now of the sessions.

The roles that the psychodramatist plays in the group are simultaneously those of caregiver, conflict mediator, social analyst, and group coordinator. The psychodramatist needs to develop specific skills that go beyond his theoretical and technical knowledge. For Nery (2010), the “therapeutic function of the group coordinator depends largely on his belief that living conflict is an art as well as a science” (p. 98, our translation). In this sense, the therapist must avoid favoritism and have the sensitivity to welcome and develop a vast emotional expansion.

Therapists, in their professional training, must develop the ability to role-play and direct, as well as have the courage to put their whole real persona on the line, which is exposed while directing. At the moment of sharing, they must take care that their transparency is not indiscriminate because it only makes sense if it has therapeutic value for the group. Their main working tools are their spontaneity and creativity; so, fundamentally, they are open to change and improvisation, believe in the power of collective construction, and develop confidence in the method they use.

The psychodramatist “must have an exact understanding of their feelings, of what is happening to them, what repercussions that moment in the group has for them” (Castilho, 1998, p. 47, our translation). Recognizing these feelings requires the maturity to accept and understand their limitations. In this same direction, Nery (2010) states that the psychotherapist’s role in conflict situations, so common in groups, should be developed by technical training, theoretical studies, critical social consciousness, and especially by self-knowledge.

The management of resistance is one of the most decisive assignments for the group therapeutic process. The therapist must seek a balance between a posture of openness to the group and a more directive and active posture, especially with the proposition of warm-up techniques to face resistance. This can take many forms, manifesting itself in silence, delay or absence, bodily expressions, psychosomatic manifestations, escape from focusing on the present, or stereotyped behaviors, so common in group processes. But in psychodrama, in particular, we still have the resistances to role-play, called interpersonal resistance.

To deal with this kind of interpersonal resistance, we use the unique psychodrama method, combating it by warming up the group (creating a more relaxed field, a

favorable spontaneous–creative climate) and promoting an adequate warming up of the protagonist and the auxiliary egos. In the dramatization stage, the protagonist may put the brakes on the action, preferring excessive use of soliloquies, or thinking out loud to themselves. These expressions of resistance allow an assistant to intervene, testing the individual’s ability to cope, on the scene, with their situation. A good initial warm-up, in turn, can avoid the constant interruptions in soliloquies. Some techniques soften the interference of resistance, such as the use of the double, the empty chair technique, symbolic distance (creating an imaginary scene and acting it out), and nonverbal expression of emotions (body images or intermediate objects).

## **Group Psychodrama in Brazil: Experimenting and Recreating Modalities**

Psychodramatists who work with therapeutic groups can prepare themselves to work on several fronts, in addition to procedural psychotherapy. In one of the nonprocedural psychodrama modalities, we constructed a psychodramatic act in a single meeting, known as public psychodrama, which will be discussed in another chapter of this book. Meetings are held in this modality with many people and in larger environments (the street is one of them). Although the group is set up to have a single experience that lasts an average of two to three hours, the therapeutic potential is kept alive.

In Brazil, the relevance of the therapeutic act as a modality of group intervention in psychodrama has been widely considered, given its practicality in offering support and empowerment in a single intervention, reaching a larger number of people. Several experiences have taken place in public face-to-face environments and, recently, also online. As examples, we have the *Public Psychodrama at the Centro Cultural de São Paulo* (which has been going on for more than ten years), the *Psychodrama in the Bookstore* (in the city of Salvador, which took place for a decade in a bookstore), and experiences of *Public Psychodrama in the Park*, in Aracaju. This event can benefit various social segments of the population by promoting creativity–spontaneity in groups, activating interpersonal networks, and fostering encounter relationships. Thus, public psychodrama in a single act becomes an instrument of psychosocial intervention, promoting the expansion of awareness in favor of quality of life and sustainability, which contributes to the demands of contemporary society.

Furthermore, Motta et al. (2011) state that public psychodrama may extrapolate the therapeutic purposes according to several purposes, such as: learning, the exercise of citizenship, coconscious and counconscious research on a certain theme, dissemination of psychodrama, exercises of spontaneity and creation, presentation of a psychodramatic modality or a direction model, catharsis, sharing, socializing, and fun. Roughly speaking, the psychodramatic act (single session or single act) also takes place in a single encounter and “is not a new methodology, but rather a *modus operandi* of operation, which makes use of psychodrama methods and techniques” (Iunes & Conceição, 2017, p. 22, our translation).



The psychodramatist in Brazil, due to the clients' economic difficulties in continuing long or medium-term treatments, usually works with focal group psychodrama, which gathers around predefined themes and audiences, with predetermined duration (eight to twelve sessions, approximately). This work has been quite developed in the Brazilian reality because it brings a shorter and more economically viable approach. Some examples are focus groups on gender, racial/ethnic relations, adolescents, diabetics (or chronic diseases in general), victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, AIDS patients, survivors of some environmental disaster, etc. In focal psychodrama and public psychodrama and psychodramatic acts, it is extremely important to invest in a safe, respectful atmosphere, with an offer of support afterward in some cases, besides trying to contemplate the cultural vicissitudes of the social context and the group context.

In Brazilian psychodrama, there is also the wide use of the self-directed group (SDG), a psychodramatic group psychotherapy strategy carried out in the training of directors, as a way to teach and learn psychodrama. This strategy was already happening in Beacon (NY), under the direction of Jacob Levy Moreno and Zerka Toeman Moreno, and became part of the psychodrama training in some schools in Brazil. In this proposal, the direction is usually rotated so that all participants experience the roles of director, auxiliary egos, protagonist, and audience in the same group. The directors will always be members of the group itself, and this alternates at each meeting. For Wechsler et al. (2015), SDG "is a device that has a dual perspective: theoretical–methodological teaching–learning of the Morenian and post-Morenian approach and psychotherapy" (p. 44, our translation). In addition, it can be considered training for working with groups that experience self-management processes and, according to the authors above, a privileged space for experimenting with socionomic methods, promoting possibilities for action research.

The group psychodrama developed in Brazil, both the one performed in clinics or private practices and the one performed in mental health institutions, is rarely conducted by a functional unit (a director and auxiliary egos), but only by a director, who asks the participants of the groups to assume in the psychodramatic scene the functions of auxiliary egos. This change in the classical Morenian technique is also due to the difficulties of remuneration for two professionals to attend to a group in Brazilian institutions. Some still work in codirection together with another psychotherapist, but without defining a priori a fixed role for both, who alternate between the roles of director and egos during the work. In the group warm-up process, we use various strategies (involving body expression, poetry, dance, and music), as well as with other art forms, building images with the body, with clay, painting, fabrics, miniatures, and masks, as well as other art forms, such as spontaneous or replay theater (playback theater). As in our culture myths and folklore are very rich in corporal expressiveness, many times our psychodramatic work is identified with a joyful, artistic, less rational climate, which promotes the development of spontaneity and group tele with unusual and very creative unfoldings.

Another modality of group psychodrama that has been quite developed in Brazil is online group psychodrama psychotherapy after the advent of the pandemic. We must maintain the ethical contract and the basic principles of face-to-face (Fleury,

2020; Vidal & Castro, 2020). The main techniques undergo some adaptations and the telic bonding between members needs more time and care to be established. To do this, the online psychodramatist should promote as many interactions between members as possible to enable group recognition and trust-building, with brief “eye to eye” verbal games and warm-ups. In role-plays, it is customary to start with short interviews in the roles, with protagonists and auxiliary egos chosen, to warm up a virtual dramatic action gradually. We must make it possible for other members to participate in counterroles so that group psychotherapy does not run the risk of becoming a bipersonal psychodrama in the group—a caution that holds for the other group modalities mentioned above.

We often observe a fragmentation of the online scene. The screen is limited to a reduced visual plane, as only the upper body can be seen. But we have the constant and regular presence of the accidental that becomes part of the scene and the warm-up (such as the presence of people passing by, interruptions of the internet, a time requested to attend to other demands, etc.). This demands from the Brazilian psychodramatist a more cinematographic vision than a theatrical one. Many of our basic techniques have been adapted. We have observed a broad attempt to build a new psychodramatic practice, more creative and adapted to these changes, without losing the essential Moreno references. For example, dialoguing with art therapy and Jungian psychodrama resource tools to promote better group warm-up techniques, working with onirodrama, with psychodrama in the sandbox, among other resources.

In Brazil, similar to the *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Freire, 1987), we argue that it is necessary to develop a “psychodrama of the oppressed”, as a collective intervention based on the libertarian principles advocated by educator Paulo Freire in the field of education, adaptable to the clinical area. Versatile in the sense that, in the clinic, one also seeks to develop awareness, criticality, and the capacity to produce a language that makes the subject autonomous and appropriate of their living conditions. The oppressed group’s psychodrama would be based on these principles and aimed at fighting the fear of freedom. This is especially important in a reality such as the Brazilian one, structured on prejudice and violence directed at minority and/or marginalized groups and which witnesses the people’s rights and democratic relations constantly threatened, especially in recent years. We defend a psychodrama in the Brazilian scenario in which processes of liberation from oppressive relations are the protagonists of our history.

## Final Considerations

Finally, each psychodramatic group ends up constituting a new experience, a new theory, new research. It is often necessary for the therapist to actively intervene, proposing exploratory techniques and games that release the creative spontaneity in the group. Their posture needs to remain dialectical, to respect the sovereignty, the movement, and the direction that the group desires, acting as a “midwife” coparticipant in the group action. Their presence and performance help the group give

light to a new life that springs from its dynamics, intensifying a process that is, fundamentally, of the group.

Those who consider psychodramatic group psychotherapy as a simple application of techniques run the risk of making irreparable mistakes. More important than the technique employed is the spontaneity and teleperception of the psychodramatist to make a sociometric reading of the group and with the group. The psychodynamics of the group or group context must be taken care of, so that subgroups are not strengthened, nor are isolated and excluded people. Each group requires the use of a diverse and unique language because it is new and unique.

What a group therapist cannot bear, their group cannot bear, and the therapist must trust in the effectiveness of the psychodramatic method and submit to it as a client and in clinical supervision. The group is permeated by what the therapist is, by their natural being. Without establishing an adequate spontaneous–creative therapeutic climate, the therapist/group bond is not set with sufficient affective continence, and the development of the process may be aborted. A therapeutic environment capable of offering protection, freedom, acceptance, and continence is fundamental in psychodrama groups. The techniques may be in the service of not promoting the existential and telic encounter, being used “defensively” by a psychodramatist who is insecure or fearful of a genuine relationship.

In Brazil, psychodramatic group psychotherapy takes up the principles of J.L. Moreno, but it develops mainly through the production of Brazilian authors. Psychodramatists have been asked to carry out group work in the clinical context and the social context, with a preventive bias, concerned with interventions in the social field, where sociopsychodramatic approaches are applied more in an expanded clinical perspective. By valuing our culture and local knowledge, we seek new theoretical trends and current applications in psychodrama, besides the interlocution with other group approaches.

Finally, we know that there is a defense among many psychodramatists that psychodrama was created to be useful to the twenty-first century, just as psychoanalysis was to the twentieth century. In this sense, we ask: How to be a group psychodramatist in this century? Some groups need to learn to relate to the different (the divergent), reverse roles and develop empathy and teleperception in this ever-changing world. In our society, we witness volatility, complexity, ambiguity, intolerance, and unpredictability. As a human species, we live an existential crisis, a crisis of planetary survival of various kinds (such as the crisis of moral values, sustainability, territories, etc.).

It becomes necessary to develop the spontaneous–creative capacity, promoting a flow of more humanitarian, liberating, and transforming relationships. As well as the use of strategies to deal with the contradictions of everyday life, daring, breaking conserves, innovating, and rebuilding, in today, the tomorrow we want. To overcome the insurgent existential crises on account of the world panorama, we need on a large scale the most sensitive and most spontaneous professionals in the field of social sciences, humanities, education, and mental health workers, especially group psychodramatists.

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# Chapter 13

## Psychodrama and Family Therapy: Methodological Interface



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**Abstract** This chapter aims to present the interface between family therapy as a practice that identifies the protagonist of the intervention as a living system and psychodrama as a theoretical–methodological approach to understanding human beings’ relational dimension and their expression through roles. These practices include the individual inserted within a system context, influencing and being influenced by the characters involved and the social network around them. Using the two approaches, the authors present a case of a bereaved family who lost their father to suicide, revealing the richness of psychodrama as a methodological resource in assisting families, expanding possibilities for understanding the intersubjective dimension present in the family plot. Therapeutic work opens space for mothers and daughters to recognize their feelings toward the deceased, express the pain and suffering, and symbolically perform a farewell and reconciliation ritual for the lost figure. It was possible to inaugurate in the dramatic context a new stage in the development of healthy mourning for each member of the family system.

**Keywords** Family relationships · Dramatic context · Grief · Suicide · Psychotherapeutic care

### Introduction

**Our parents**—Moreno was part of a group of psychotherapists from eastern and central Europe. All of them had connections with the “parents of the parents”. Strong connections with their ancestors (Schutzenberger, 1997). They are: Nathan Ackerman, Ivan Boszormenyi, Murray Bowen, Nicolas Abrahan, and Maria Torok.

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All of these therapists inherited a strong rootedness, each in their own culture and more precisely a double culture due to emigration's inheritance.

**The transgenerational matrix: the mother**—According to the theory of spontaneity, the person's first developments occur in the identity matrix, a biopsychosocial and cosmic cradle. It is the first place where the roles are developed and assimilated, the locus in which its roots immerse. And, the family is where this identity matrix concentrates all material, social, psychological, and cultural factors. Also, myths, beliefs, rites, and all transgenerational inheritances, comprising the individual and their family within their life cycles, starting points for the process of defining themselves as an individual.

The family, a relational system in which individual and social needs are transmitted, lived, and organized functions intertwined in a relational web in constant transformation. An organism that changes as its members go through the process of differentiation (Costa & Marra, 2019; Costa et al., 2020; Marra, 2020a). The context gives the understanding and the meaning of the here and now (Bateson, 1972; Moreno, 1972). Andolfi (2018) points out that the observer's interest is no longer focused on isolated phenomena but on "organized complexities" (p. 24), and Bowen (1978) states that the family system is a three-dimensional reality, in which past family relationships manifest in the present to develop in the future. These affective projections that the social atom configures are nothing more than the person's universe, relational complexity, uniqueness, and sociometric communication networks (Marra, 2004).

## Epistemological Advances

By 1920, all scholars who wished to understand and treat families made a parallel between families and small groups. Group therapy had a formative influence on family therapy. It was initially developed in the early part of the twentieth century as an inspiring, convincing, and protective technique. At this time, social scientists began to study natural groups in society, hoping to solve political problems by understanding social interaction in organized groups. In the years between 1920 and 1948, many important group scholars contributed to the initiation of studies of family therapy, based on their work with the group, such as: Wilfred Bion, Samuel Slavson, S.H. Foulkes, Fritz Perls, Kurt Lewin, and Jacob Levi Moreno.

At this time, Moreno innovates in the understanding of the individual and the other, adding "dramatization" and the techniques of dramatic action as a diagnostic and treatment possibility. Moreno (1972) said that psychodrama is a dramatic representation of the participants' lives, in which various techniques are used to stimulate emotional expression and clarify conflicts. It is a direct and powerful way to explore family relationships. Correlations are observed between systemic therapy and psychodrama, as Moreno anticipated systemic therapists by focusing his attention on the relationships between people who make up a group. Thus, the interpsychic and the interrelational started to be considered in clinical practice.

Between 1940 and 1950, several family therapy schools were defined and strengthened, many approaches were known, and great training leaders appeared. Four decades after the birth of family therapy and its consequent maturation, it was possible to perceive its practice and theory's uncertainties and doubts. Many things have changed. Strong ideologies that once competed with each other seemed to match. Incisive techniques have given way to more subtle and more cooperative methods. Action can be understood as meaning and sense. Both family therapy and group therapy were successful, expanded, extended to cover different populations and to serve other groups such as: situations of social vulnerability, family violence, the clinic, the school, the institutions (Marra, 2020b), concomitant with this development, systemic, and cybernetic thinking have advanced and family therapy as well.

It was from the change in the therapist's main function to intervene to "cocreate" with his/her patients that family therapy meets with psychodrama. There is no single way to think about the family/group and its problems. Moreno's works can be considered important markers in the break with individualist conceptions since they developed concepts about the formation and dynamics of bonds, the measurement of social relations, and the treatment of groups and relationships (Fleury et al., 2015). The therapeutic process is not a remedy to anesthetize suffering, but a space to build alternatives for the couple, the family, the group, or the individual who is seeking self-knowledge and knowledge of the other and constructing a happier path for life and quality of life.

The methodological description of psychodrama and the resulting theoretical discussion encompass postmodern epistemological trends. A methodology focused less on explanation and more on transformation. It rejects the worldview that justifies explanatory-causal reasoning. Psychodrama as a therapeutic approach, just like family therapy, writes through action to understand, transform, coconstruct. Moreno suggested that we look for the drama that comes spontaneously and look for it in the streets, houses, and places where people live.

Postmodern theories considered human understanding as a construction negotiated between people's conceptual networks. It results from the birth of historical conscience and from a time when everyone is the protagonist. Postmodern approaches rejected hegemonic and monologic discourses, which marginalize minority, dissenting, and deviant voices, pointing to the political implications of this marginalization (Marra, 2014). In this perspective, there are also the works of Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Moran, Gergen, Michel White, Shoter, and many others. In turn, Moreno can also be seen as postmodern, understanding that subject and object are interconnected in the uniqueness and multiplicity of contexts, cultures, considering the assumption that knowledge implies living with uncertainty, unpredictability, and unknown. Therefore, knowledge is not discovered but socially constructed, a discursive practice that assumes that people and their identities are shaped through their narratives, that they build on themselves and their life experiences. Narrative practices are considered actions that look at their meanings and senses. Psychodramatic resources have the role of developing these premises in the subjects since one person is always considered the other's therapeutic agent.

Another highlight that converges in postmodern approaches and psychodrama refers to the therapist's role who starts to consider the client an expert, the author of his story, detecting possible paths and growth. Moreno designated the client as the "protagonist" of a family system. Andersen (2002), another representative of the postmodern movement, brought the "reflective team" to the therapeutic context, who at first, behind the mirror and later, inside the room shared their feelings about listening. Moreno (1972), in turn, brought into the context of dramatic action the "sharing" of those present, of their feelings toward the protagonist. According to these approaches, being with the other and for the other enable the protagonist's narrative to emerge and can be coconstructed in the therapeutic context that involves the client and the therapist. By expanding the voices of the participants present in the therapeutic process, it allows them to emerge dialogues not previously perceived and can generate more liberating narratives (spontaneous/creative), expanding the narrated stories (Bello & Marra, 2020; Labs & Oliveira, 2019; Maciel, 2014; Soares & Penso, 2014).

## **From Pain and Suffering to the Search for Meaning for Suicide**

The death of a loved one represents the most overwhelming experience and can become a significant stressor in the person's life depending on the type of death.

A loss through death changes the family structure and generally requires a reorganization of all members' functions and roles. Different factors, such as the type of death, the bond with the deceased person, the moment of death in the family life cycle, and the bereaved age, are some important points that will define the process of individual and family mourning.

According to Luna and Moré (2013), loss experiences are linked to attachment relationships, the bereaved person's belief system, all cognitive and family processes, and the sociocultural context. Walsh and McGoldrick (1998) draw attention, in their book *Death in The Family: Living Beyond Loss*, for the fact that this work constitutes the "first to examine the impact of the loss on the family system and to consider both the normative and dysfunctional processes concerning each passage in the family's life cycle..." (p. 23).

In the context of family therapy, in particular, the perspective of life cycle studies Walsh and McGoldrick (1998) holds that loss experiences reach patterns of interaction throughout the development of stages in the life cycle, which, undoubtedly, provokes and demands a reorganization of the roles and functions of each member of the family system. In this context, according to the authors, an experience of loss causes a transactional process that involves the person who died and the bereaved relatives in a typical cycle of ruptures and continuity of family life. Each member of a family has a particular experience of the loss of a loved one.



Losses, such as the death of family members, lead to a grieving process. According to Parkes (1998), the grieving process comprises a set of reactions triggered by it, it is a dynamic condition, it comes from the rupture of a presumed world that was at the base of all ideas and constructs formed about one's own identity. (Moreno et al., 2001), in turn, it states that all people have to go through the grieving process when they suffer a profound loss. Leif Dag Blomkvist, in dialogue with Zerka in the book *Surplus Reality and the Art of Healing*, mentions "perhaps the mourning in psychodrama or psychotragedy can also be a healing ritual, because it is performed in a group, and not in isolation" (Moreno et al., 2001, p. 97).

Walsh and McGoldrick (1998) identify two familiar tasks for the grieving process:

1. The shared recognition of the reality of death and the common experience of loss. They add that the recognition of the loss is facilitated by clear information and open communication about death's facts and circumstances. Loss due to traumatic deaths can trigger intense feelings and compromise family cohesion, leaving members isolated and hindering the course of communication, affecting moments of sharing the pain and emotions that involve that type of loss.
2. The reorganization of the family system and the reinvestment in other relationships and life projects. The impact, a consequence of the loss of a family member, can lead the family to seek unplanned, hasty movements, such as moving house and marriages. Others may remain stuck to old patterns, which are no longer functional to minimize the feeling of loss.
3. Sudden deaths, such as suicide, tend to trigger difficult grief in survivors, which can lead to complicated grief (Scavacini et al., 2019). "Suicide survivors" is the name for family members, friends, and colleagues who are emotionally affected by the suicide of a close person.

It is not uncommon for suicide cases or suicide attempts in the same family. It is important to investigate the family history of suicide. Therefore, one must be aware of the transgenerational dimension present in families. Suicide impacts survivors, making this population vulnerable, at high risk for suicide, and should receive care in the form of postsuicide intervention, thus contemplating a preventive dimension (Marcolan & Silva, 2019).

Grief over suicide must be seen as a systemic issue as it encompasses many particularities, such as age, psychosocial aspects, and the degree of attachment of the suicide to other members of the family system (Aragão Neto, 2014). A wide range of feelings invades family members, friends, and colleagues of the suicide—survivors of suicide—such as: anger, shame, guilt, social isolation, and fear (Worden, 1998).

Families mourning suicide need an opportunity for members to legitimize their pain, suffering and build meaning for their loss and for the world that has been altered by family tragedy. Many feelings are often expressed and legitimized only in the psychotherapeutic context. The space opens up to correct the denials and distortions about the reality of the loss by suicide, providing the opportunity to redefine the deceased person's image (Worden, 1998).

Sudden death as suicide occurs in any age group of the population (Teixeira, 2009). Suicide tends to trigger complicated grief in survivors. Often, friends and

family members who would usually give support and help with other death types in the family walk away and do not know what to do. This further favors the feeling of isolation and abandonment felt by survivors (Scavacini, 2017).

It is evident the need for bereaved people to receive psychological help because, according to Runeson and Asberg (2003, as cited in Scavacini, 2018), the risk of suicide among survivors can be two to three times higher when compared to a control group and which can be greater if the survivor has a complicated grief diagnosis. Another essential item when addressing the grieving process experienced by one person or the entire family group refers to funeral rituals' participation. The rituals performed at the time of death facilitate the expression of individual suffering, demarcating changes in relationships, ratifying the loss in the family context. For Bromberg (2000), experiences with rituals have proved to be significant in life cycle transitions, which allows the establishment of a link between the past and the future as they incorporate meanings of both family and culture.

In turn, Imber-Black (1998) argues that all cultures have rituals to address mourning's complex process. The author states that these rituals "composed of metaphors, symbols and actions in a highly condensed dramatic form, serve many functions" (p. 220). It is also known that the absence of funeral rituals can hinder the grieving process.

In the list of approaches used in bereavement therapy, the psychodramatic methodology stands out as it effectively helps family members discover new possibilities in elaborating the grieving process. Psychodrama as a relationship therapy promotes a true and genuine encounter between the bereaved person and the loved one who died by suicide, avoiding installing less spontaneous and creative attitudes in coping with the new reality, thus removing the risks for the installation of prolonged grief.

Next, we bring stories and narratives that translate the senses and meanings of these internal voices that explain the pain and suffering toward the construction of liberating narratives. We present a case that highlights the link between psychodrama, family therapy and the grieving process of a family. It is worth mentioning that there was acquiescence from the family to share their story in the form of an article. Fictitious names were used to preserve the identities of family members.

## **Illustrative Case and Therapeutic Understanding**

Débora, 60 years old, mourning her husband's suicide, sought therapeutic help because she had difficulty communicating with her two daughters, Joana, 28, and Mariana, 25, who avoid talking about the family tragedy. She began to dedicate herself more than usual to her activities as a doctor. She feels a "lump" in her throat when thinking that there are many things that she needed to say, ask, and the dialogue between her and her daughters are cut off.

Débora was out of the country on a vacation trip with her eldest daughter when she received the news of what had happened. She was warned by her brother, who paid all the care and attention to his youngest daughter, Mariana, who was at home

when the tragedy happened. Her husband, Daniel, was 68 years old, an engineer and owned a civil engineering company. He committed suicide by shooting himself in the head in the couple's bedroom. Despite the impact of the moment, Mariana had to call her uncle and, in desperation, she had to activate the family network, as she was very fragile. The mother and daughter Joana arrived a few days after the event in time to integrate the posthumous rituals organized by the family and friends of the couple.

In a family therapy session, mother and daughter talk about pain, suffering. There were paused speeches, permeated by intervals of silence. They revealed that they had many questions about the reasons that led Daniel to take his own life. Wife and daughters narrated that Daniel was always very quiet, never talking about his feelings. They did not imagine that something could be happening to him to the point of causing his death.

Wife and daughters expressed with difficulty their feelings since death: guilt, revolt, and the need to isolate themselves from social contact to avoid moments of greater suffering as people inquired about the reasons for that death.

## **Shared Grief: Revealing Affection and Disaffection**

Family therapy made it possible for mother and daughters to explore the feelings brought about by the affective impact of the loss of their loved one. There were many moments of silence in the family. Silence protected them from getting in touch with their true affections toward their father.

The therapist's explicit invitation in a given session to directly voice the feelings present at that time allowed the identification of strong tension, which had created communication barriers, a characteristic fact in the family system bereaved by suicide.

## **Session Clipping**

Therapist: I realize that suffering affects everyone in the family, but each person's mourning expressions have been different. I imagine that, for each of you, the loss represents a bond that has been broken. And the way of talking about this pain is always accompanied by many thoughts, different feelings.

Deborah: I keep thinking every day about the reasons he would have to leave us.

Joana: I feel so many things...

Mariana: I was talking to my father so much; I didn't notice anything...

Therapist (addressing Joana): You feel so much. Speak loudly about the feelings that arise in your mind.

Joana: I... didn't mean..., but I'm sorry, but I'm angry with him. Yes, I feel angry...

Therapist: Do you want to talk more about that?

Joana: He was selfish, he didn't think about how we would be. This is not a financial issue. It's not that. It's about our family. I feel abandoned by him (starts to cry).

Deborah looks at her daughter and says: I never imagined you would be angry with your father. It is tough, but... (pause) I sometimes feel a whirlwind of emotions. I blame myself for not insisting when I saw him very quiet. Anger never felt. But listening to you now, I start to think that maybe I felt it too, and I didn't allow myself to think about those things.

Therapist looking at Mariana: How are these things coming to you, Mariana? You mentioned that you talked a lot with him and you didn't notice anything. You...

Mariana, cutting the Therapist: Yes... I think there is a lot here (placing a hand on the chest). I... feel... guilt.

Therapist: I would like to propose that each member of this family try to express the things that occupy your mind.

(The therapist places one more chair in the circle. All members of the family were seated, forming a circle).

Therapist: We have Daniel, husband, deceased father here. Each of you will be able to tell him what you feel now. As if he could be present at this moment here with all of you.

While taking the word, they expressed their perplexity at what had happened, they spoke of the difficulties that followed, at the same time that tears flooded their faces. The youngest daughter, Mariana, started to talk about her suffering when she found her father dead after hearing a gunshot. She spoke of the fear she felt until she entered the room, the dread of not knowing what to do in the first moments, the feeling of helplessness. Joana said that she did not believe it when she received the news, it was all too heavy to believe in that suicide story. It was she who communicated to the mother. At the time, her mother had remained silent, asking no questions, just burst into a desperate cry.

Then, the therapist asked if anyone would like to take Daniel's place. They all looked at each other, and the mother got up, sat down in her husband's place and spoke next.

Deborah (in the role of Daniel): I was really bad, confused. I didn't do it because I didn't like you, but I couldn't get stuck in that life. That's what I managed to do.

Deborah returns to her chair; everyone starts to cry a lot. There was a tune of emotions.

The moment was of extreme relevance given having allowed strong emotions to emerge. Moments later, Mariana said: I think we needed to talk, talk and cry. No one is to blame, no one could do anything. I believe that each of us has felt a lot. Anger, guilt, always thinking that it was up to, who knows, each one to have discovered the dark world of suffering in which my father found himself.

Based on the empty chair technique, the moment allowed each member of the family to connect with their feelings. This brought a dimension of contact with the reality of the loss, necessary for elaborating the mourning. In this session, it was possible to make room for guilt within the speech of mourning for the loss of a loved

one by suicide, allowing mourners to connect with their emotions. Giving voice to thoughts becomes a reparative movement for mother and daughters, allowing the most mixed feelings present in the process they experienced to emerge.

## **Rituals that Facilitate Mourning**

The session that follows highlights the therapeutic value of creating rituals by the members of the family. The therapeutic process unveiled a unique moment for the family, that of giving a new meaning to the absence of the husband, the deceased father, through the joint creation of a farewell ritual that also covered a precious moment in which mother and daughters wished to honor the deceased person, demarcated changes. Such an event brought up the relational dimension, emotions, and connections between people in the family system.

### **Session Clipping**

Deborah begins to talk about her memories of her husband. His taste in music. Mariana remembered that, on one occasion, her father had told her about the beauty and enchantment that he had for indigenous culture and peoples. Joana reinforced this aspect, adding that once, her father had told her about the rituals present in different cultures and how they are designed to support a people's traditions and beliefs.

Supported by the family group's conversation, the therapist asked if the family would like to create a ritual for the father. One way to make the evoked memories make sense in the process of being able to say goodbye in a dramatic way. It was then that, quickly, mother and daughters decided to use spontaneity, creating an indigenous ritual of farewell.

The family used resources arranged in the room. They chose large cushions to symbolize the coffin with the dead person (a funeral urn). They placed it in the middle of the room on top of the rug (which marked the dramatic context) and then began to sing and dance around the coffin.

That was a cathartic moment, connecting the family to the lost loved one, opening a way of expression beyond the verbal dimension. The ritual was a spontaneous cocreation, promoting the reconciliation of relationships and, consequently, a family member's new involvement with life.

Reconciliation takes place in each one's internal processes and at the level of the relational process among the members of the family system. The silence that reigned at the beginning of the treatment, the difficulty of talking about what happened, retaining the emotional burden that usually accompanies the situation of mourning due to the death of suicide gave way to the desire to reinforce emotional bonds, communication between family members, preventing thus the fragmentation and isolation of people.

The crisis brought about by the suicide event allowed this family to recognize the importance of the family, to experience its strength and unity, rescuing the value of intimacy and also of individuation.

The family started to report that they talked more about the loss, about projects for the future. Projects of each woman in this family and the role in the new family history.

The therapeutic space, the relationships built, and the shared narratives pointed to new meanings attributed to suicide as an event that resulted from the husband's individual choice, father.

The experience of losses, although it brings much suffering, allows each person to discover their strengths and, even at different rates, can build new narratives, new meanings for life, so that they can move forward with the internalized experience of the loved one lost, which will continue to be present in the memory and history of their lives.

And, to conclude... Psychodramatists and family therapists realize in practice that transformations occur in the dynamics of relationships, in conversations, and in action (Anderson, 2009, 2011; Moreno, 1972) and provide the possibility of building the space where changes may occur. The meeting between the approaches took place, effectively opening up a conversational space between therapists/family, marked by the full shared, sensitive, and welcoming presence. Reality is constructed through social interaction between people who act in a coordinated manner. In this way, psychodrama is a bridge between people, enabling a way of understanding the world. The dynamics that maintain the family organization consist of a dialectic between repeating and creating, maintaining and changing.

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# Chapter 14

## Psychodrama and Sexuality



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and Carmita Helena Najjar Abdo**

**Abstract** Sexual activity is a complex experience involving biopsychosocial and relational factors. Sexology has brought important contributions to the diagnosis and treatment of sexual dysfunctions and the understanding of related comorbidities. Psychodrama has been the psychotherapeutic modality of choice for the treatment of sexual dysfunctions and paraphilic disorders, as well as a relevant resource in the management of psychotherapy sessions for groups of people who do not identify with the gender designated at birth and/or in situations of suffering related to sexual orientation. The thematic time-limited group psychotherapy program for treating sexual dysfunctions integrates the methodology and the psychodramatic technique with the biological, psychosocial, and cultural aspects of sexual behavior. The program consists of 16 weekly themed sessions, lasting 120 min. The topics include information about sexual function, integration, and evolution of the group and addressing risk factors for the intervention's target population. With the requirement of social distance, the program is adapted for online service. Throughout the group process, with the use of psychodramatic techniques that promote disinhibition and expression, the sexual health of these individuals is achieved.

**Keywords** Psychodrama · Group psychotherapy · Sexuality · Time-limited group psychotherapy · Thematic psychodrama

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## Introduction

The sexual response model, formulated by Masters and Johnson (1984) and modified by Kaplan (1977), served as the basis for the traditional sexual response cycle (APA, 2002). This model considers awareness of sexual desire as the initial phase, which triggers arousal, followed by orgasm and resolution, common to men and women (APA, 2002). Basson (2001), in the early 2000s, presented a new model, pointing out feminine particularities of sexual experience. In this new model, the desire for intimacy, instead of a biological impulse, would trigger the sexual response. The relationship's emotional and physical outcome would also play an important role in the woman's availability for an upcoming experience. The researcher considered a circular model, which values not only physical responsiveness (based on vascular and neuroendocrine changes) but receptivity (based on relational and psychosocial aspects), confirming the complexity of the female sexual experience, involving biopsychosocial and relational factors.

Sexual difficulties affect both genders at all ages (Abdo, 2004; Laumann et al., 2005). The Sexuality Studies Program (*Programa de Estudos em Sexualidade, ProSex*), created in 1993 at the Institute of Psychiatry of the Clinics Hospital of the University of São Paulo's Faculty of Medicine, has since been assisting, teaching, research, and services to the community related to sexual activity and its effects disorders (Abdo, 2014). It is based on an interdisciplinary intervention proposal, with health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, urologists, gynecologists, physiotherapists, graduate students, among others) perform drug treatments and psychotherapies, physiotherapies, supervisions, courses, lectures, and studies.

The therapeutic modality used is thematic time-limited group psychotherapy for sexual dysfunctions (Fleury & Abdo, 2010), based on psychodrama, with proven results in addressing sexual dysfunctions, favoring the evolution of the various dimensions involved in sexual performance, in addition to the personal development of patients (Fleury & Abdo, 2008). This therapeutic modality allows the patient to come into contact, in a safe and controlled environment, with several conflicting, traumatic, or painful experiences previously lived, many of them responsible for the current sexual difficulties.

The therapist's role is to facilitate the development of awareness and understanding of current difficulties, the resources available for change, and the main blocks for this, prioritizing the development of roles and the personal strengthening of group members.

Most groups are mixed (men and women), with 8 to 12 participants presenting different sexuality disorders, equally, whenever possible, in gender and age group. They are also characterized as closed groups (the entry of new components is not allowed once the process has started), homogeneous as to the diagnosis of sexual dysfunction, and the participants have a level of emotional development compatible with the process.

Thematic time-limited group psychotherapy for sexual dysfunction has been adapted for homogeneous groups. Greater homogeneity, for example, groups in

which all participants have the same sexual dysfunction, allowed work to focus on risk factors for the participants' dysfunction and common characteristics. The program takes place without changing the initial protocol until the ninth session, when the themes address the risk factors for the population served (Brotto et al., 2016).

This model of psychotherapy has been applied to groups of women in the transition from menopause (Fleury & Abdo, 2011), patients victimized by sexual abuse, men with erectile dysfunction (Abdo et al., 2008) and with premature ejaculation (Fleury & Abdo, 2008). It has also been applied to a group of patients with sexual dysfunctions and associated comorbidities (diabetic and hypertensive) over 50 years old to rehabilitate sexual functions. In these groups, the approach to expectations becomes particularly important to adjust to this age group's possibilities.

Patients with paraphilic disorders or sexual preference disorders also benefit. Concerning atypical sexual interests, the 5th edition of the *Manual Diagnóstico e Estatístico de Transtornos Mentais* or DSM-5 (APA, 2013) considers disorder when there is personal distress related to sexual interest, the desire involves psychological suffering, physical injuries, death of other people, or sexual practice without the personal consent of those involved or with people unable to consent to such practice legally. The paraphilic disorders most present in this service are: pedophilia, exhibitionism, and transvestic fetishism. Sexual compulsions (general or pornography) are also served.

The adaptation of the thematic time-limited group psychotherapy program also applies to treating transgender individuals diagnosed with gender dysphoria (Torres et al., 2016). The existence of two genders (male or female) was questioned by a new paradigm, the concept of nonbinary sex, and the recognition of the diversity of expression of gender identity. In this new paradigm, the nonconformity between sex attributed to birth and gender identity is not, in itself, pathological, fitting physical, and psychic interventions only when the transgender individual reports suffering from this condition, that is, gender dysphoria. With this conception, the program addresses the risk factors specific to this population and facilitates comfortable gender expression. Depending on the case, it can facilitate changes in gender roles or even disclose this condition in their family and/or social context, depending on what is healthier and more desirable. Considering that Brazil is the country with the highest death rate for transgender individuals (Benevides & Nogueira, 2019), this care model has been highly valued for caring and listening to this population's suffering.

The psychodramatic approach in conducting these thematic groups is shown to be, in addition to being efficient in the treatment of these disorders, an excellent pedagogical and preventive instrument. In a controlled, protected, and instrumentalized environment, traumatic and feared scenes could be relived, they can be reframed, and new and appropriate responses related to sexuality can be found.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the thematic time-limited group psychotherapy model for the treatment of sexual dysfunctions, with a description of the preparation and supervision of the therapeutic team, the intervention stages, and the thematic sessions, as well as the adaptations made to online care, necessary after the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

## The Preparation and Supervision of the Therapeutic Team

The development of a group therapist's role requires theoretical and practical knowledge and personal group experience to identify the group's sociodynamics and follow the group process and relational dynamics in the different stages of the group's evolution (Knobel, 2020). In ProSex, it is necessary to know the process of limited time and the disorders of human sexuality, both in theoretical and epidemiological aspects. The therapists involved in this process, led by the group supervisor, psychodramatically experience the phases and games that are part of the treatment protocol for thematic time-limited group psychotherapy, playing the role of patients with possible sexual dysfunctions.

The therapeutic team is composed of two or more therapists. When they are more experienced in handling the psychodramatic methodology, they act as cotherapists. They can form a functional unit (Haguiara-Cervellini et al., 2015), in which one of them acts as a director and the other as an auxiliary ego. They are usually of both genders to facilitate the approach of complementary experiences, which helps the patient to sharpen the perception of his/her sexual difficulties.

The supervision of assistance has the function of pointing out the opportunities for developing this basic training. In ProSex, supervision can be centered on the clinical case, on the role of a group therapist, on the experience of the supervisory group and institutional demand, depending on the issue brought up by the group or by the coordination of the service. Supervision strategies depend on the moment and the objectives in focus.

1. Supervision is focusing on the clinical case/group of patients. The objectives are: development and integration of theory and practice, identifying the group's sociodynamics, technical dilemmas, and ethical limits. The difference is creating scenes to identify the group's main relational dynamics and the group with the therapeutic team. With this strategy, professionals from different theoretical approaches can actively participate in recognizing relational dynamics, discuss methodological strategies, and visualize the different facets of a group therapist's role, instrumenting them for the appropriate interventions at the time of grouping.
2. Supervision focusing on the role of a group therapist. The objectives are: to develop the role of group therapist and the ability to be empathetic and contingent to diversity in the sexual expression of patients and to deal with intimacy. The role of group therapist implies the development of skills to: formulate the contract and the rules for the functioning of the group; identify criteria for the selection and preparation of participants; identify the phases in the evolution of the group and the strategies indicated to favor its constitution, maintenance, and development; keep the focus on the objectives proposed by the group. To monitor the group process, it is also important to identify the group's sociodynamics. Another important aspect concerns the therapist's thoughts and feelings toward a person or the group. When the experience is favorable, it can be an opportunity for development. On the other hand, when unfavorable, it can be

- a limitation for the group, depending mainly on the therapist's conditions to recognize and deal with their perceptions.
3. Supervision focusing on the experience of the supervision group. The objectives are development of the reception capacity for feelings of shame and vulnerability and appreciation of the here and now experience. In ProSex, the supervisory group's experience can be an example for predominantly theoretical discussions, with possible notes on some situations.
  4. Supervision focused on institutional demand to develop a methodology for application in public health, which requires evaluation of results and continuous improvement.

The therapeutic team plans the composition of the group, guaranteeing characteristics of intrapsychic dynamics that favor the complementarity in the relationship between them and defines the inclusion criteria, which are generally: having sexual dysfunction of psychogenic or mixed origin (psychogenic and organic), possessing sufficient cognitive capacity to elaborate internal content, absence of serious psychic comorbidities, not using drugs with important adverse effects, and disabling sexual activity and economic conditions that allow travel to the treatment site or access to the internet when dealing with telesessions.

## The Therapeutic Program

Thematic time-limited group psychotherapy, focused on sexuality, seeks to mobilize emotions and behaviors connected to experiences related to sexual development. It favors the focus on psychosocial and cultural aspects relevant to sexual function, favoring expanding knowledge about sexuality. The main thematic focuses are: identification of individual and group parameters for assessing sexual health; communication process; autonomy and intimacy.

The main characteristics of the time-limited group process are: therapeutic management of time limitation, equated therapeutic objectives, focus on the present, more directive and flexible therapist, and the experiential component. It also requires a more careful selection (Fleury, 2008).

The preparation for the therapeutic program consists of three stages and is completed when the first group session begins:

1. Two to three initial interviews with one of the therapists for preliminary diagnosis confirm the indication for group work and psychosexual anamnesis, where relevant data on the patient's sexual development are searched. The contract and characteristics of a group process are addressed, aiming to increase adherence to the work to be started.
2. Five weekly psychoeducational group meetings (60 min each), with basic information on the functional aspects of sexuality.
3. Oriented waiting group with free debates on sexuality to prepare to share sexual difficulties in the next stage.

The psychotherapeutic program itself consists of 16 sessions, each lasting 120 min and with a weekly frequency. Some are previously planned, and others are open to addressing issues or themes emerging from the group, focusing on issues related to the sexual dysfunctions of the participants, always establishing possible parallels with the relational experience lived in the group. Resources for the dramatizations, such as graphic material, pillows, reproducer of ambient sound, among other facilitating objects, must be available.

The sessions follow the proper phases of the psychodramatic methodology: nonspecific warm up (initial comments while going to the session location), specific warm up (start of the dramatic action), dramatic action, sharing between the participants, and the processing of the association between the content experienced and emotions related to sexuality, with the help of the functional unit, which keeps the focus of therapeutic work.

The group process develops in four stages:

Stage 1. Preparation of participants. It starts in the first individual sessions and ends in the first group session. The objectives of this stage are: to develop the bond between each participant and the therapeutic team and to develop coresponsibility for the creation and maintenance of the group. In this stage, the psychodramatist has the following functions: to confirm exclusion and inclusion criteria, to identify the main relational patterns of each participant, to present the group's operating rules, and to define the contract. It plays an active role in naming predictable concerns about group participation (self-exposure, shame, fears, etc.).

Stage 2. Constitution of the group (second to the eighth session). The objective of this stage is to create the group context. The psychodramatist has the function of creating the group's culture, using therapeutic factors such as universality. The approach of specific themes favors the maintenance of a focus on cognitive, psychosocial, cultural, and relational aspects relevant to sexual function. Indications of low adherence must be addressed to maintain the stability of the group.

Stage 3. Group development (ninth to the fifteenth session), through work with emerging issues and the group process development. This stage's objectives are: strengthening group cohesion and addressing the anxieties involved in separating with the group's end. The psychodramatist has a less active role in the development of interrelations in the group. The topics raised by the participants, usually directed at the predominant difficulties, may be related to the group's sociodynamics or the deepening of issues related to sexual health.

Stage 4. Closing (last session). The objective is to assess the need for referral. The psychodramatist evaluates the performance of each participant and the group.

This psychotherapeutic proposal considers two levels of intervention. The first one refers to the group process described previously. The second refers to the themes selected from identifying risk factors for sexual difficulties relevant to group participants.

## Description of Themed Sessions

The first eight sessions consist of specific dramatic games that follow a natural sequence of presentation, intending to integrate group members and mobilize specific emotions related to sexual difficulties and possible causes. Below is a brief description of these sessions:

**Session 1**—Fantasy game: presentation of participants and group integration. Group members make assumptions about participants based on personal characteristics.

The specific warm up for this game consists of the formation of a circle, each one presents itself only by name, and everyone walks around the room in different rhythms suggested by the functional unit. Each participant starts to observe the others and approaches the one they identify by the pace of the walk. They are formed in pairs, according to this affinity criterion.

The dramatic game begins: The functional unit asks each pair to discover and describe the other, reciprocally, due to general characteristics such as age, profession, marital status, musical taste, sexual difficulties, and motivation for treatment. Each pair introduces the other to the group, and after everyone has been introduced, they can comment on the experience, confirming or not the imagined information and the feeling provoked by the fantasies about them.

In sharing, in addition to everyone's presentation, therapists encourage the expansion of the concept of sexuality and the detailing of sexual difficulties reported by group participants.

**Session 2**—Performance game: It is a survey of the group concept of satisfactory sexual performance, idealization of sexuality, and individual and group expectations about the therapeutic process.

The specific warm up can be, for example, to the sound of music, and therapists encourage participants to imagine different situations and contexts, such as walking on a beach, encountering obstacles where they pass, walking in the rain, running from something until they arrive at the place where they are and the motivation for seeking help.

In the dramatic game, participants are asked to produce a short text that expresses their understanding of what good sexual performance is. In the end, they deposit the text in an urn without signing. The therapist reads the texts to the group. After discussing the written ideas, they build the group concept of satisfactory sexual performance.

In sharing, based on the group's concept of good sexual performance, each reveals their participation in this construction, identifying expectations to be achieved by the group.

**Session 3**—Trust game: It identifies individual difficulties related to aspects necessary for sexual intercourse, such as surrender, trust, insecurity, attachment, and detachment.

In the specific warm up, the group is divided into two rows positioned on the back. The first row makes mimics to be guessed by the members of the other row. Therapists help by suggesting movie names, famous characters, songs, etc.

In the dramatic game, in pairs, holding by the wrists, unite the feet' tips and tilt the torso backward until they reach a point of balance. The pairs take turns, then form trios and quartets, experimenting with various combinations between them.

In sharing, they report the feelings with the different experiences of finding the balance point, anxiety, giving up, sustaining the other to the detriment of their balance, body rigidity, tranquility, distrust, and detachment.

**Session 4**—Scale game: a subjective measure of satisfaction with sexual performance.

In the specific warm up, the room is prepared with the choice of how to mark on the floor (with pillows, chairs, or sticky tape) the measurement points of satisfaction with the sexual performance of each participant.

The dramatic game consists of creating a straight line with five positions where the percentages 20, 40, 60, 80, and 100% will be marked, respectively. Each of the participants stands next to the mark corresponding to their self-assessment of sexual performance and sets out their reasons for their choice. In the end, everyone is positioned in the chosen demarcations, and the auxiliary ego takes the place of each one so that they can “look from outside” their position and that of the others. They can opine on others' choices, disagree, agree, and even suggest changing their position and that of others on the scale.

In the end, they share the emotions and feelings during the assessment, the recognition of the difficulties that brought them to the treatment, and the necessary trajectory to achieve the goal.

**Session 5**—Free tribune game: opportunity to express feelings, difficult and traumatic moments, as a training to set limits, organize and reinforce action guidelines.

In the specific warm up, they experience a game called “chair dance”, where the chairs (one less than the number of participants) are placed interchangeably, one opposite the other. At the sound of music, they must walk around the row of chairs until the music stops, and they must quickly sit down. He who does not find a chair leaves the game, and the music plays again. Successively, one by one leaves, until there remains a winner who will be the first to occupy the free stand.

The dramatic game consists of forming a circle of chairs with one of them highlighted in a special place. Each participant will sit down and have three minutes, controlled by the therapists, to occupy this time as they wish. They can sing, pray, tell something important, speak, and even be silent. There will be three rounds for each one in the same sequence as initially established. During these presentations, comments or interruptions are not allowed.

In sharing, they bring respect to each other's limits, situations of tension and exposure, opportunities for expression, and group organization.

**Session 6**—Blind and guide game: stimulate the identification of sensations caused by the experience of complementarity.

In the specific warm up, the participants walk around the room to the sound of soft music, choose the first partnership by the looks, and form the first pairs.

In the dramatic game, one of the duo members seals their eyes to be blind, while the other will guide. Then, they take turns until all the participants try the two positions with different partnerships. The guide must conduct the blind person around the room, explore it differently, cross obstacles created with cushions, ropes, strings, etc. Therapists bring various objects with different textures, smells, and flavors so that the blind can discover what it is about. Participants live the experience of being the guide and the blind.

They share the ability to share, care, exchange, stimulate, accompany, and be accompanied. The analogy is sought with surrender, continence, and confidence aspects of sexual performance.

**Session 7**—Magnet game: training the perception of the other and the synchronization of movements.

In the specific warm up, the participants walk around the room listening to songs with different rhythms. Therapists ask for movements of different parts of the body.

The dramatic game begins with the formation of two rows facing each other. The participants' palms in one of the rows will be the "magnets" and those in the front will be the "irons". To the sound of music, the "magnets" attract the "irons". The hands do not touch but produce the same movements simultaneously as a kind of choreography that must be copied by the "irons". The positions of iron and magnet alternate, the positions of command and commanded, so that everyone goes through both experiences. Other parts of the body can be requested for this game, following the same rules.

In sharing, they reflect on the experience of submitting, commanding, and being commanded, accepting the rhythm of the other, perceiving and accepting differences in rhythm, the imposition of command and the sexual effective relationship with their partnership.

**Session 8**—Wheel game: brings feelings of exclusion, fear, or pleasure with proximity, seduction, strength, and aggression.

In the specific warm up, the group forms a closed circle intertwining the arms. At the sound of the music, the wheel starts to move without changing its shape.

In the dramatic game, the wheel stops moving, and without saying a word, just exchanging glances, the members of the group choose one to stay in the center of the wheel. The wheel is closing more and more around the chosen one who must try to leave despite the wheel making it difficult to leave. When one makes it out of the circle's center, the game starts again until everyone has the same experience.

In sharing, they bring the feeling of being chosen and choosing, fear, or pleasure of closeness and physical intimacy, being outside and being inside, going out using force, or seduction. They draw parallels with sexual activity.

**Session 9**—Free comments and reflection on the contents lived, elaboration, and collective and individual evaluation of the group work. From the approach of the lived experiences, the participants suggest themes for the next meetings. The functional unit prepares new dramatic games for the selected themes, usually related to feared



situations related to sexual performance, such as rejection, failures, feelings of shame, performance anxiety.

**Sessions 10 to 15**—Dramatic games planned for the themes selected by the group. In this stage, the functional unit encourages the group to direct themselves, bring scenes representing their fears, experience the characters involved, and seek new answers to old and current conflicts. Sharing these sessions focuses on reflections related to the group's sexual difficulties.

**Session 16**—Repetition of the scale game (Session 4) for the psychotherapeutic process's final assessment. Each one places self in the position chosen at the beginning of the process, evaluates their trajectory, and moves on the scale to their current position. The group can give an opinion on the position chosen by each member, ensuring that everyone evaluates themselves. The functional unit discusses with the group the closure, possible referrals or the continuation of the psychotherapeutic process, if applicable, for a few more sessions.

## **Adaptations of the Thematic Time-Limited Group Psychotherapy Program for Sexual Dysfunctions for Online Care**

With the requirement of social distance to avoid the spread of COVID-19, the sessions started to be online. With this new format, the contract started to include training for the use of the online platform.

Regarding the original program, some dramatic games have been adapted, and others have been created. An example of adapting to the fantasy game was warming up: closing eyes, bringing attention to the breathing, and remembering the reasons why one is looking for this type of help, their sexual difficulty. For the dramatic game, the functional unit divides the virtual room into pairs to continue, following the original steps.

Some dramatic games were created, with adaptations of dramatic actions originally used in face-to-face care. Some examples:

*Trading bazaar game.* In the warm up, each one writes a list of emotions and behaviors that they perceive in themselves. In the dramatic game, the therapist runs an exchange bazaar where each offers their emotions/behaviors to exchange with other participants. Each exchange tells the motivation of the exchange and how they feel about what they are exchanging. In sharing, they report what it was like to give up something, what changes in itself with new exchanges, losses and gains, and how the emotions/behaviors exchanged could help a satisfactory sexual performance.

*Dance and feel game.* When warming up, they stand and, to the rhythm dictated by the therapist, dance with the whole body and then with specific parts of the body (feet, legs, hips, chest, neck, head, eyes, mouth). In the dramatic game, they fill a party balloon or take a softball, lean against a wall or door, and, with their eyes closed, massage the whole body with the ball or balloon without dropping it on the

floor. The therapist conducts the game by directing the perception that brings contact with the body. In sharing, each describes possible difficulties in the warm up and the sensory discoveries with the massage. The therapist must observe how this relates to the sexual difficulties brought about and the various sensory possibilities experienced by the group.

*Puppet game.* In the warm up, each one draws a free drawing that expresses something he/she likes a lot, bringing him/her good memories of satisfaction and pleasure. The drawing must be done without the others being able to see and without any comment during the execution. In the dramatic game, each pair must replicate the other's drawing without seeing it, without knowing what is drawn, just following their pair's instructions on how to draw. In sharing, they bring the importance of communication, command and be commanded, submit and be submitted, and how this relates to sexuality and/or the sexual difficulty that each one presents.

*City building game.* In the warm up, each one imagines a character who is part of a community and, when describing it, imagines it in the community, its role of importance, physical, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. The therapist warms up each chosen character as they are described. In the dramatic game, everyone builds the city through the performance of each chosen character. After the "construction", the group describes this city's daily life, what it is like to live in it. Next, the therapist brings some controversial situations to be resolved by the community, including themes related to behaviors that involve sexuality. In sharing, participants identify the differences between the imaginary city and the real city and reflect on moral, social, cultural, religious values, paradigms, and myths about sexual behavior.

## Final Considerations

Unfavorable conditions plus insufficient sexual skills can aggravate the couple's sexual dysfunction, especially those in which emotional intimacy and communication skills are insufficient to preventively deal with the necessary adaptations at each stage of life. In these cases, interpersonal factors become more important than the physiological and hormonal aspects, indicating the need for psychotherapeutic care.

Psychodrama, due to its experiential characteristic and biopsychosocial approach to human beings, has been the modality of choice for the treatment of patients and a valuable tool in constructing the role of therapist.

In the training process for online care, therapeutic teams have taken patients' role in the adapted model of thematic time-limited group psychotherapy. By experiencing "the other's place" they were able to develop new possibilities of perception regarding the expression of patients' sexual difficulties, they learned to dominate the scene, now no longer multidimensional, but as a common space for the group and with objects that help in the dramatic scene.

In the construction of this new form of online care, therapists' challenge was to rediscover the dramatic strength of psychodrama and the richness of living experience. They developed new action resources to help the patient deal with their difficulties, acting as a facilitating and active agent of this change.

The online service has brought new challenges to the participants with some social and technical difficulties that prevent them from participating more actively and constantly. The lack of human contact has become the most frequent complaint, but they still express their human, social, individual, and relational dramas, finding the group welcoming and the opportunity for transformation.

In group interventions carried out with different populations, psychodrama has shown that welcoming and group continence favor developing the capacity for communication and interaction between partners. Throughout the psychodramatic group process, using techniques that facilitate disinhibition and expression, ProSex has confirmed the significant improvement in the patients' quality of sexual life.

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**Part III**  
**Sociotherapeutic Acts—Psychodrama,  
Psychosocial Practices and Vulnerable  
Populations (Or Turned Vulnerable  
Populations)**

# Chapter 15

## Psychodramatic Resources in Psychosocial Interventions Against Sexual Violence: Victims and Offenders



**Liana Fortunato Costa, Marlene Magnabosco Marra, Denise Lima Moreira, and Monique Guerreiro de Moura**

**Abstract** The text is a report on applying psychodramatic resources in psychosocial interventions offered in a public health institution. Interventions take place in a program to assist: (1) victims of sexual violence (children, adolescents, and adults of both sexes) and (2) sexual offenders (preadolescents, adolescents, and adults of both sexes). The family has active participation in all the programs, being considered as a client as well, thus bringing together the theoretical and methodological contributions of family therapy and psychodrama. The team responsible for the assistance comprises psychologists, social workers, physicians, nursing assistants, and resident nursing and psychology students from a local public university. The choice of focus on psychodramatic action aims at relaxing the field, creating a way of acting based on playful action, the use of the “as if” in sociopsyoeducational role-playing, which constitute facilitators of dialogue and acting with such an arduous theme, both for the clientele and the professionals. The action schedule in the programs includes theoretical and practical training and continued supervision. To execute this action research, a partnership with a federal public university takes place as a field for undergraduate and graduate students.

**Keywords** Violence · Sexual violence · Psychosocial intervention · Psychodrama

### Introduction

Violence is a public health problem. A technical note from the Brazilian Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2015) makes an alert about the impact of violence on the sickness and death of the Brazilian population. The damage resulting from interpersonal and self-inflicted violence generates great demand in the health sector, highlighting its role in confronting violence, including sexual violence. As a response to society’s demand,

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the State Secretariat of Health of the Federal District Government (*Secretaria de Estado de Saúde do Governo do Distrito Federal*, SESDF), in view of the complexity of the phenomenon of violence, develops specialized actions with the creation of the Specialty Centers for the Care of People in Situations of Sexual, Family and Domestic Violence (*Centros de Especialidades para a Atenção às Pessoas em Situação de Violência Sexual, Familiar e Doméstica*, CEPAV). The SESDF is located in the Distrito Federal, Brazil's central region and home to the country's capital.

The CEPAVs are located in hospital outpatient clinics or specialized health units. They are named after flowers as a proposal to meet the national humanization policy of the Brazilian Unified Health System (UHS), which focuses on valuing the subjective dimension of the different subjects that are in a situation of violence, including the offender. The SESDF has 18 regionalized CEPAVs to care for people who live or have lived through a situation of violence. Its actions involve: welcoming people by spontaneous demand or referred by the intra- and intersectoral network, care, notification, and follow-up in the health network. In addition, it also carries out actions to promote and prevent violence, permanent education for health professionals at the different levels of care, and other partners in the protection and judicial accountability network.

The CEPAVs Alecrim, Caliandra, Jasmim, and Margarida stand out acting according to their specificities. The CEPAV Alecrim attends adult sex offenders; the CEPAV Jasmim attends adolescent sex offenders and victims of violence with their families; the CEPAV Caliandra attends teenage victims of sexual violence and their families. The CEPAV Margarida attends adult and older adults, regardless of gender, who are victims of violence that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering. The details of the services provided are detailed as follows.

## **Sexual Violence: Complex Understanding, Relational Nature, Dramatic Action**

Sexual violence is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes and the nature of relational interdependence. The guiding principles of the theoretical and methodological conception proposed in this text are Esteves de Vasconcellos's systemic thinking (2018), which presupposes reality as complex, unstable, and intersubjective. The existence of the development of sexual violence in the life histories of victims and offenders configures a belonging to violent family relationships, disrespect for the fundamental rights of protection, and guarantee of dignity in the development process from an early age to adulthood (Wolff et al., 2016). Sexual violence is understood as family and social communication, and the presence of complexity inherent to the violent act is acknowledged, and the need for specific actions to be signified and resignified as violence from the very first moment they are committed. Therefore, these behaviors, since they are unstable, are perceived to be transformable. Furthermore, violence is part of a circuit involving main actors (victim and victimizer) and

secondary actors (family, extended family, belonging groups) and is constructed in intersubjectivity.

In addition to the focus on systemic thinking (Esteves de Vasconcellos, 2018) and accurate to the view of valuing the whole and the interconnected parts, the theoretical aspects of systemic family therapy (Andolfi, 1991; Minuchin, 1982), and the valuing of playful and spontaneous action, bases of psychodrama (Moreno, 1993) are added as central and complementary concepts. The transversal theoretical bias of these three choices is the view of social organization as mobile atoms connected to each other and to the whole. This position brings about the creation of a facilitating environment for the conditions of group interactions. Playfulness favors that trust, empathy, and creating a relaxed atmosphere can be expressed and thus contain the narrative of violent acts, the sufferings discovered, and the meanings revealed. These are several of the aspects present in an intervention aimed at a public that presents itself, in the majority, without the demand for a therapeutic intervention, which implies confrontation and the unveiling of secrets, painful revelations, and the entrance into the legal environment without having mastery of the meanings of this context (Marra & Costa, 2016).

To meet this challenge, there is a priority in applying some concepts that guide the action planning. First, the interventional action adopted is psychosocial. In addition to being an option that brings together professionals from different backgrounds, from both the humanities and health sciences, the *psychosocial intervention* is a methodological option that is characterized by being group, focal, objective, and with the incorporation of other social actors who must participate in restoring the protection and health of the people involved, whether victims or offenders (Costa & Penso, 2010).

From family therapy, it is considered that the intervention process contemplates the system (the whole family) and the subsystems (parental, conjugal, filial, fraternal); it knows transgenerationality (repetition of violent interaction patterns); it focuses on the family's life cycle; the sense of belonging and affection (Andolfi, 2018). In terms of method, provocations, emphasis on both the form and content of family (or group) communication and above all, a systemic reading of the conversations and movements of the family organization is used.

From psychodrama, it considers first and foremost the action and interaction among the group participants, who organize themselves and produce physical and interpsychic movements to explore the perceptions, the feeling, and the meanings of what is experienced and constructed, or deconstructed, together with the group and the family (Conceição et al., 2018). All group members externalize their telereactions and their coconscious and counconscious states in the form of representation. These states are those that subjects have experienced and produced jointly with a group or family members and that can now only be represented and reproduced jointly because it is not the property of a single individual. This action occurs through the psychodramatic tools used in the interventions.

These tools can be the psychodramatic games that have the potential to transform situations and transport the group to other situations where they can perceive what they have experienced, either as victim or offender, and, from the "as if", deepen their



reflections. The subjects experience roles that take them to other contexts. When they return, they reflect on their discrepancies, their maladaptation, understanding them as maladjustments concerning themselves and their interactions (Moreno & Moreno, 2006). Another essential tool used is the double technique, which reactivates the emotional initiators that help maintain the tone of the role-play. This allows a more direct interference in the scene and the behaviors of the group coordinators so that the offenders, the victims, and the families understand/assimilate specific meanings that favor the advancement of learning. The coordinating team must understand the theoretical principle that underlies applying this technique (Leveton, 1979).

The scenes instituted from the stories that are told and the plastic images created from the group's warm up with the dramatic games take the participants of the action into a relaxed field and enable participation in situations that are the very extension of life, understanding the demands that already exist, or creating new ones, and thus entering into the feared scenes. The local context and the group's needs make it possible to define which technical strategy or intervention is most appropriate for that moment. The group and the states of spontaneity organized around the interaction in the here and now are the potentials to define which interventions to adopt, for psychodrama has the property of articulating with other fields of knowledge and adapting to the specificities in question (Costa et al., 2020a).

By integrating these two fields of knowledge, family therapy and psychodrama, several coinciding and complementary aspects are brought together. These theoretical-methodological proposals are essentially concerned with understanding the context, and they promote a mobilizing action and facilitate the apprehension of new knowledge for individuals and families. They also develop a creative circle between action and critical reflection lived in the dramatic space of the "as if", where the subject and the object in relation build an experience from which new ways and means of seeing, feeling, perceiving, thinking, and taking attitudes toward life emerge.

## **The Way of Acting in the Psychosocial Clinic**

The SESDF has an essential mechanism for dealing with people in situations of violence, which are the CEPAVs. These operationalize the actions to confront violence through several regionalized units: The CEPAV Jasmim attends children and adolescent victims of violence (sexual and others), as well as those who have committed this violence; the CEPAV Alecrim attends men and women who have committed sexual offenses; and the CEPAV Margarida attends adult victims of sexual and other violence. Each CEPAV was assigned a fancy name of a flower to humanize the service and reduce prejudices and stigmas for people in situations of violence. The allocation of assistance to victims and perpetrators of violence in the health area was intentional to allow these subjects to be seen in their wholeness and human rights.

Costa and Penso (2010) point out the clinical dimension of psychosocial intervention in the valued focus on listening to narratives interpreted in relational spaces. This listening aims to apprehend the vulnerability present in the relationships and in the contexts of belonging of the participants in the action, allowing the group (preferably) or individual sessions to be planned and carried out in a way that is articulated with their reality and expectations. The psychosocial intervention is distinguished from traditional clinical care by considering the material difficulties of the service users, the challenges of attending several sequential appointments, and the establishment of long-time frames for the execution of the care process and interruption of violence. The psychosocial intervention requires a deconstruction of traditional aspects and a new look contextualized and focused on the objectives of the action (Costa et al., 2013).

In general, the services are group, psychosocial and can bring together people from the participants' family and social networks. The approach always privileges family care for children and adolescents (victims or offenders) (Minuchin, 1982). The organization of each service session follows the methodological orientation of the psychodramatic session (Gonçalves et al., 1988), which indicates three stages: warming up, role-playing, and sharing. For the operationalization of the sessions, considering the specific attendances of each CEPAV, there was an adaptation of this organization for the stages: *warm up*, *discussion*, and *conclusion*. The *warm up* is intended to integrate the group and stimulate the introduction of the session topic. The *discussion* aims to go deeper into this topic, develop the ability to reflect on the subject, and welcome the psychological suffering arising from identifications. The *conclusion* synthesizes opinions on what was discussed, evaluates learning on the topic, and formulates practical suggestions to families.

The team responsible for the different services is multiprofessional, including a psychiatrist, a gynecologist, psychologists, social workers, nursing assistants, and residents from the psychology and nursing courses. The local government has a university that offers training in medical and biological sciences, and the programs are the context for the practical experience of these professional training. Next, the ways of acting in each of the group modalities are described, considering the victim's or offender's condition and the moment of biopsychosocial development. All these actions described have their operation in a public reference hospital located in the city's geographical center (a large capital city).

## **Children and Adolescents Victims of Sexual Violence (CEPAV Jasmim)**

The approach to assist victims of sexual violence is based on the proposal of vigilant care (VC), which seeks to develop parental care through the constant presence of parents in the care of their children and the exercise of positive authority in playing their roles as coordinators and guides in their development (Omer & Fleury, 2020).

The goal is that parents exercise authority based on attentive presence to their children, insight, and the development of self-control to avoid an escalation of violence that causes parents to lose respect and legitimacy (Omer et al., 2013).

The VC adopted for violent situations comprises training in constructive conversations and relational responsibility through five group sessions, each lasting two and a half hours. These group conversations enable several families' attendance and offer the opportunity to elaborate their difficulties together, finding authorship in the resignification of their stories and appropriating the collective knowledge, constructed by all and with therapeutic effects (Marra, 2016). The groups are conducted by a team formed by a psychologist, a social worker, a social service intern, a physician, and a nurse. The family is considered a methodological resource for exploring existing perspectives in creating favorable and alternative living contexts that are fairer and more appropriate (Marra et al., 2015). Psychosocial care begins with an individual and family acquaintance phase. This is already first care that is continued with the referral to group sessions.

The themes developed in the VC sessions are: first session—acquaintance to the group, and all participants must attend; second session—we, women and men, and our stories (only fathers and mothers attend); third session—parental presence, all participants (fathers, mothers, and sons/daughters) must attend; fourth session—the mother and father I was, and the mother and father I want to be; fifth session—the meeting of the family with the supporters and the expansion of networks, and mothers, fathers, daughters, and supporters must attend. Supporters are those people who have friendship/kin bonds and/or care about the family's problems and want to help the family. In this phase of the group intervention, the procedures used are: telephone support, a letter from the mother/father sent to the daughter/son informing about the conversations that took place in the group, and the making of a symbolic gift for the daughters/sons, prepared by the parents. This gift and its delivery constitute a symbolic ritual designed by mothers and fathers as a promise to stay connected to their daughters and sons. There is yet another letter written by the parents and addressed to the supporters explaining the suffering situation in which the whole family is involved and asking for help.

At the end of the VC, the adolescents and children receive a card with all the addresses and telephone numbers of the institution's supporters and technicians for emergencies or problems, for example, the return of the offender home. After this ritual, there is a get-together between the families, the supporters, and the team members, seeking a connotation that everyone feels like they belong to a new family due to the changes and the new perceptions about the development of the new roles. Two months after the end of the VC sessions, a follow-up is carried out to determine how the members of each family are doing and what changes have occurred and been maintained during the period.

## **Adolescents Who Committed Sexual Offenses (CEPAV Jasmim)**

The proposed action to assist adolescent sex offenders is the multifamily group (MG) (Tavares & Montenegro, 2019), which follows guidance that the adolescent is seen in a situation of family interaction, considering the affective interdependence in their stage of development (Prigel, 2017; Robson, 2010; Worley et al., 2012). This choice is justified because a large number of sexual violence committed by adolescents occur intrafamiliarily (Marra & Costa, 2016). Based on this observation, the MG invites all family members (and the social network) to participate in the action, which offers eight meetings of 3 h each, held at biweekly intervals. Each session proceeds as follows: The *warm up* covers all the families in one group, facilitating integration and general conversation; the *discussion* promotes division into subgroups based on identification criteria, i.e., children acting with children, adolescents with adolescents, and adults with adults so that dialogue is more appropriate and can yield more qualitative results. And finally, the *conclusion* brings all the families back together, providing a chance for everyone to reflect on the topic and the learnings gained jointly.

Before the MG, there is a period of assessment of the adolescents, the vulnerability situation of both victim and offender, and family relationships. The adolescents come to the program through referrals from judicial bodies such as the Children's Court, the Guardianship Council, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. After the end of the MG, families are asked to participate (in person or digitally) in two feedback sessions (3 and 6 months) on changes that have occurred.

The themes developed in the MG are: (1) victims and adolescents need protection; (2) in adolescence, sexuality begins to express itself; (3) sexual abuse is a violence and a crime; (4) violence goes through several generations; (5) the adolescent needs a dating project with the help of the family. The MG is structured, in its format and objectives, with references from community psychology, social network theory, family therapy, and sociodrama (Costa et al., 2015). In terms of method, the MG understands that the *group is the client*, provides an opportunity for role-playing, for the presence of fictional situations through "as if". Regarding the use of materials, magazines, scrap material, paper, pencils, and other objects that can be used to express thought and suffering are offered.

## **Adult Women Victims of Sexual and Other Violence (CEPAV Margarida)**

This program aims to assist adult women and men who are victims of sexual and other violence. The clientele is composed of adults over 18 years old who have experienced or are experiencing a situation of violence and may or may not have already obtained judicial protection through a process in the Criminal Court. Users

can come to the service by spontaneous demand, or by an active search for patients seen and notified of a situation of violence in the reference hospital in which the program operates, or by referral from other services, both in the health network and in the intersectoral network.

Since it is a program that assists victims, one can observe people who seek assistance on their own initiative. This is a difference from perpetrators of violence who present themselves in a condition of *under obligation*. Due to its action interface with the legal system, the clientele is generally very suspicious of its safety (Trabold et al., 2018).

The action format is the same: Group psychosocial intervention and the organization of the sessions is similar to the psychodramatic session as well. This configuration greatly helps the team structure itself and manage the lower spontaneous demand from the clientele and the rather unstable frequency that characterizes these groups. All team members act as coordinators and guides of the action.

The men and women who seek the program go through a process that begins with the evaluation phase, in which they are interviewed individually from two to three times a year to find out about the situations of violence they have experienced, their health conditions, the impact of violence on their health, the risk of suicide and femicide, and their social and family support network. Next, female people are referred to the biopsychosocial intervention offered in eight sessions lasting 3 h, with a biweekly break, and conducted by the multidisciplinary team. At the end of the group, if these people have achieved 60% attendance, they will still have a psychosocial and medical and/or gynecological follow-up, if needed. Otherwise, they are referred back to the next group. Male people, so far, are still being served individually due to unstable and uncertain demand.

The psychodramatic resources used in the group with adult women are: dramatic games that provide an integrated action instead of repetitive and endless individual narratives about the violence suffered; composition of scenes and images that show the paradoxes present in the dependence on intimate partner violence; use of intermediary objects, such as costumes, princess crown, horror masks, scrap material, images from magazines, besides material present in the assistance room itself (Simonetti et al., 2015; Wolff et al., 2016). At the end of the group, there is always an indication of a task to be accomplished at home, in the period until the next group. This task aims to potentiate and amplify the provocation for change established in the group discussion. An interesting detail is that the women in the group are interested in and carry out their initiative, promoting a chat group on a messaging application to which only the participants have access. This virtual group is activated during the breaks between sessions to ask for help to think and decide on some more immediate action. At the end of the eight sessions, the team coordinates a “farewell tea party”, a much-appreciated event. The idea here is to establish and extend a support network after the intervention (Trabold et al., 2018). Besides this activity, some other cultural activities are being planned, with intentionality for certain themes: racism, gender domination, acquisition of executive skills. These complementary actions are: film discussions, short courses, lectures.

The themes developed in the sessions cover: (1) self-perception and self-care, aiming to stimulate self-affirmation and self-esteem; (2) questioning the feeling of guilt for victimizing violence; (3) establishing strategies to deal with the fear of confronting the perpetrator and also the whole social system that benefits the patriarchy in the Brazilian culture. Anger (4) is a feeling that needs to be treated with attention and delicacy because it is very much associated with ambivalence and the fear of being alone (5). The fantasies of seeking protection (6) and the appearance of a “prince” who offers answers to all of a woman’s needs are very present in cultures that value male domination and female submission (7): am I Cinderella? (Walters, 2017). And finally, the topic of sexuality vs. sex violence (8) needs to be seen as an essential moment for stopping the violence perpetrated.

### **Adult Women and Men Who Committed Sexual Offenses (CEPAV Alecrim)**

In Brazil, the assistance to adults who commit violence focuses on a very recent and still little-known issue. However, psychosocial attention to these subjects is foreseen in the National Plan for Confronting Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents (Brazil, 2013). It brings changes in social and institutional conceptions about *punishing versus treating*. The group psychosocial intervention is coordinated by a team composed of a psychologist, social workers, a psychiatrist, and resident professionals in those areas.

Adult males are attended in groups. The flow of assistance comprises three phases: evaluation, group intervention, and follow-up. The first phase includes individual interviews, family interviews, and psychiatric interviews; the second phase covers the eight group sessions, each lasting 3 h. The themes present in the sessions are: (1) evaluation and increase in self-esteem; (2) accountability for the suffering perpetrated on others; (3) coping with the violent action; (4) reflection on the creation of bonds and intimacy with other people; (5) presence of sexual fantasies involving children and/or adolescents; (6) recovery from the process of behaviors that took place before the sexual offense; (7) construction of strategies to avoid new situations of sexual violence; and (8) elaboration of a future life project (Costa et al., 2020b; Meneses et al., 2016).

The participants in this group have either already served their sentence in closed conditions, or are in semiopen conditions, or are linked to the fulfillment of alternative sentences. The referrals come from the Penal Execution Court, the Open Penal Execution Court, and the Domestic Violence Prosecutor’s Office. The assistance in CEPAV Alecrim is not under obligation and needs a more elaborate linkage to meet the objectives since there are no reports on the intervention’s progress (Penso et al., 2018). Adult females are, so far, attended individually for two reasons: The group mode has not yet been operationalized, and the referral of these women has been unstable since the demand comes from the Juvenile Court.

Concerning the mode of action, the men's group uses playful resources to relieve tension in the participants' interactions and between them and the team members. This condition is determined by the fact that everyone claims that they are there because of injustice because they are innocent. On the other hand, to advance the crucial question about sexual desire for children, the employment of "as if" is indispensable (Hollander & Craig, 2013). Only through this psychodramatic resource are some participants able to admit their suffering for being assaulted by thoughts of risk, inciting them to sexually desire a child (Fonseca et al., 2019).

Although the women are still individually attended, the proposal for action with playfulness, intermediary objects, creation of images, elaboration of projective material using paper of various sizes, pencil, paint, painting, music, poetry, and short stories is maintained (Simonetti et al., 2015). The goal is to provide a conversation through feminine aspects and the interest of women who may already be involved in motherhood. The international literature points out that it is a mistake to reproduce a psychosocial intervention designed for adult men for the female audience. In this sense, recognizing gender issues is a priority in the construction of individual or group action (Pflugradt et al., 2018). The themes developed in the individual intervention are: (1) promoting group integration, expanding the support network; (2) focusing on the need for bonding and trust in relationships; (3) recognition of identity; (4) construction of gender prejudice dominating interactions; (5) identifying and valuing the suffering arising from polyvictimization in childhood and youth; (6) expression of sexuality; and (7) recovery of hope to resume life. Group intervention, when adopted, will follow the same thematic line and mode of action.

## Action Research

It is also worth mentioning that all these actions are part of an action research project with a federal public university partner. Thus, the actions of the programs count on the participation of two professors from the psychology course who offer consulting services and use the contexts of the actions to receive undergraduate students for training and graduate students for research.

Regarding the research involving adult subjects who were sexually offended, the process was approved through opinion No. 972.246/2015. On research with adolescents, the approved opinion was No. 331/2009, with an amendment added on August 4, 2014. The research project involving the child victims obtained approval under No. 4.006.676/2019. All projects were forwarded to the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Human Sciences of the University of Brasília.

There is one detail that deserves to be pointed out regarding the research with adult sex offenders. Although the project was approved for personal contact with the subjects, the documentary research method was chosen because the adult perpetrators of violence do not agree to sign the Informed Consent Form because they deny the violence committed, justifying that they are innocent (Wolff et al., 2016). Currently,

the programs described are achieving greater visibility (as are these subjects so prejudicially excluded) through a contingent of national and international publications that reveal the effort to validate this theme in Brazil.

Action research (Barbier, 2002) is characterized by the dimension of action that provides the favorable context for applying the rigors of research, aiming to deepen observations and questions about the object of study. This text presents the results of a study on the description and systematization of methodologies for interventions in public institutions with such a delicate theme as sexual violence. Among the actions that fulfill the requirements of the research are: theoretical training for all team members of all CEPAVs, which includes reading and discussing texts related to the theoretical assumptions of each modality of care, the systemic theoretical framework (Minuchin, 1982), and the methodological stance of psychodrama (Moreno & Moreno, 2006). Regarding the VC, there is the addition of readings on the theoretical framework of social constructionism (Gergen & Gergen, 2010) and peaceful resistance (Omer, 2017). The methodological part is enriched by the experience of role-playing to develop the roles of group coordinator and the training of the role of auxiliary egos and especially for the technique of the double to develop their sensitivity and perception of feelings involved in situations of sexual violence. All groups are offered every other week and are interspersed with supervision meetings.

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# Chapter 16

## Psychodrama Applications in the Protective Measures of the Brazilian Justice System



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**Abstract** Psychodrama offers possibilities for innovative responses to work in the context of justice. Its power lies in promoting dialogue between the regulatory paradigm of justice and the comprehensive paradigm of psychology. Creating playful spaces in the “as if” favors the emergence of spontaneous responses, with reflexive potential, without confronting beliefs and values. However, in the Brazilian reality of immense social inequality and huge contingents of vulnerable and marginalized populations, psychosocial response to the demands of justice within the child and adolescent protection system needs to be adapted to the specificity of these populations. Given the complexity of the social reality of these families and the urgency of its resolution, it is necessary to adopt practical interventions with language accessible to this group, dramatic and interactive techniques that connect this subject with their psychic reality creatively. From this understanding, over the last decades, we have used psychodrama to develop methodologies for working in justice with psychosocial interventions with adolescents and their families through sociodramas, dramatic games, and axiodramas. This text will describe examples of experiences involving this public in various contexts of the protection system, such as in the scope of protective and socioeducational measures.

**Keywords** Dramatic games · *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* · Social and educational measures

### Partnerships Between Psychology and Law

Historically, the dialogue between law and psychology has its origins in the twentieth century and is born in the sphere of psychopathology. Psychology was responsible for making mental health diagnoses to support judges' decisions, using tests that

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classified the dangerousness of individuals to control or punish them. Thus, in its early days, the psychologist's role in the legal field was to provide a technical opinion, almost always decontextualized, to support the decisions of the judicial system. Since then, there has been an expressive advance in the psychologist's field of professional activity in this area, which has gone beyond the expert activity. In Brazil, this approximation of psychology with the legal field began in the 1950s (Penso et al., 2018). In this beginning, psychology kept a subservient function to the law and was limited to the emission of reports and expert diagnosis.

Today, the relationship between psychology and law is based on understanding the human being as a being of relationships that is part of a social network where he builds his identity in interaction with others, causing simultaneous changes in himself and society. It is, therefore, a transformative practice, which inaugurates a new model of criminal justice. In this sense, psychology is committed to not perpetuating stigmas and relations of oppression, transcending mere expert activity while considering the social problems that reach the legal world (Penso et al., 2018). This change in the relationship between psychology and law was fundamentally anthropological and philosophical. That is, the epistemological shift in the view of man in both fields of knowledge operated a change in the treatment given to them, giving them greater prominence and opportunity for change. This perspective is aligned with the conception of man in the Morenian theory, as it moves away from the stigmatizing classification of psychopathology and considers the human being as a product and producer of social reality, therefore, conceiving the individual as essentially spontaneous and creative.

The Brazilian juvenile justice system is governed by the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (ECA) (Brazil, 1990). This is a vanguard law built in a democratic and participatory way in response to the dissatisfaction and difficulties faced by the institutions that executed the policy of the irregular situation.<sup>1</sup> The significant change introduced by this law was to consider the child and the adolescent as subjects of law. The word "subject" conveys the idea that children and adolescents are autonomous and integral individuals, endowed with their personality and will, who, in their relationship with adults, cannot be treated as passive beings, subordinates, or mere "objects", and must participate in the decisions that concern them, being heard and considered according to their capacities and degree of development. The concept is close to what, in psychodrama, we call the protagonist.

The ECA (Brazil, 1990), with its new conception of protection and integral attention to children and adolescents, incisively states the need for the presence of the psychologist to deal with the specific issues in the area, whether regarding protection or the issue of adolescents in conflict with the law. Therefore, the psychologist's role becomes mandatory whenever a child or an adolescent has his or her rights violated

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<sup>1</sup> Before the paradigmatic change that established the Doctrine of Integral Protection, based on the view of childhood and adolescence as peculiar stages of development (Cairus & Conceição, 2010), the doctrine of the irregular situation of the former Juvenile Code prevailed. This situation included children or adolescents from the poor classes on the streets and considered "abandoned" or in conflict with the law and considered "delinquents". Framing poor children and adolescents in this situation authorized the state to take drastic measures of enclosure and other abuses.

or is involved in acts of infraction. The understanding is that adolescents should be heard in a listening that is open to the multicausality of the human act and critical because they often carry the message that something is not right with regards to the aspect of their social insertion (Miranda Junior, 1998).

The place assumed by the psychologist in the context of ECA needs to be understood from the relationship that psychology and law have established throughout history. The recognition of the benefits of this partnership is something recent, which occurred as a result of legal requirements that made it possible to include psychologists in the professional staff of judicial institutions. Law approaches psychology as the legal context has realized the presence of social complexity within trials and the work of legal professionals that require an adequate response (Carmo, 2014). In this way, psychology can contribute to judicial decisions by elaborating psychosocial reports/studies, a tool to help the judge in his choices, and pointing out psychic, family, and social issues that interfere in the problems brought to justice, especially those involving children and adolescents.

It is necessary to point out that Brazil, besides being one of the countries with the most prominent social inequality globally, is currently suffering a significant setback in its public policies, especially when it comes to the achievement of human and social rights. The biggest responsible for the worsening of poverty and inequality in Brazil today is the austerity policies of neoliberal governments (Pitombeira & Oliveira, 2020), which have been threatening rights won with much struggle. From this understanding, over the last decades, we have used psychodrama to develop methodologies to work in justice with psychosocial interventions with adolescents and their families through sociodramas, dramatic games, and axiodramas, some of which we report below.

Sociodrama, axiodrama, and drama games are sociatry methods that are intended to treat groups. In general, the distinction between these methods is merely didactic, since they often coincide in terms of objectives and results, although we can briefly list the specificity of each of them: Sociodrama has as its purpose the therapeutic experience of group conflicts in the psychodramatic space (Nery, 2012); axiodrama deals with the evaluation of religious, ethical, and cultural values in the spontaneous-dramatic form (Cukier, 2002), and psychodramatic games are the most primitive instruments of Morenian theory that have the purpose of bringing out individual and group spontaneity and creativity (Conceição, 2012).

## **Psychodrama and Performance in the Justice System**

In the wake of the development of the partnership between law and psychology, we seek to develop proposals for psychosocial intervention with children and adolescents and their families in the context of justice, using psychodrama resources that allow the exercise of a transformative practice for judicial issues. This means that the psychosocial intervention carried out must transcend the demands of the legal world, taking into account the social problems that arrive there.

Psychodrama is an action therapy approach that privileges the human group as the most favorable context for change. Thus, there are several contributions that socioeconomic methods can offer to the legal system. Moreover, the choice for the socioeconomic approach in this context is justified by its creative and innovative character, capable of promoting dialogue between the regulatory paradigm of justice and the comprehensive paradigm of psychology, since, by creating playful spaces in the “as if” (Gonçalves et al., 1988; Menegazzo et al., 1995; Moreno, 1984), favors the emergence of spontaneous responses, with reflective potential, without confronting beliefs and values.

The power of dramatic action consists of the fact that plots are woven into scenes that belong to different contexts (social, group, and psychodramatic) and different realities (internal and external), which brings visibility to issues often hidden or negated in rational discourses. Furthermore, the action elevates the individual to protagonism, makes conflicts explicit and moves him/her to seek new ways out of old clashes (Conceição et al., 2018).

Finally, the playful aspect that characterizes psychodrama is not a mere artifact. Besides being a legacy of the joy and optimism advocated by Hasidism,<sup>2</sup> whose influence is marked in Moreno’s thought and work, playfulness is also deliberately a *modus operandi* of psychodrama. Its purpose is to release tensions and create an open field for feelings of freedom and spontaneity to be evoked (Conceição et al., 2018). Furthermore, play and playfulness activate the body and psyche for action and discoveries (Campos, 2013). “Ludicity is a facilitator for group or individual therapeutic and psychotherapeutic processes. ... Interaction enriches and flourishes active protagonism” (Campos, 2013, p. 158, our translation). All in all, it is an invitation to play with seriousness. However, playfulness needs to be handled very well, for one must beware of the danger that the game does not turn into an occasion for escape or narcissistic displays. Thus, it is essential not to lose sight of the symbolic level of the scene (Leão, 1999).

## **Socioeducational Measures and Psychodramatic Interventions: Building Another Destiny**

Public policies concerning the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents in Brazil, within the scope of social assistance, are executed from the viewpoint of the primary (involving the essential protection provided by the social assistance policy), secondary (concerning the special protection of the aforementioned policy),

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<sup>2</sup> Hasidism is a Jewish cult created in 1750 by Baal Shem Tov that emerges as outright opposition to orthodox Rabbinism. Moreno has initiated into this cult thanks to the oral transmission of the Sephardic culture of his ancestors, whose philosophical, ontological, and epistemological influence is evident in his work. Hassidism cultivates the experience of spirituality through joy, pleasure, art, and knowledge of God’s presence in all things: What counts is the encounter with the world and with one’s fellows, for that, is how one reaches God (Nudel, 1994). For Hassidism, as for Moreno, there is always the prospect of the release of divine sparks.

and tertiary (on socioeducational measures) guarantee system (Cairus & Conceição, 2012). The socioeducational measures include interventions foreseen in the ECA (Brazil, 1990) to care for adolescents who commit acts of infraction. The goal of the socioeducational measure is to educate the adolescent for social coexistence so that he or she does not return to commit acts of infraction and learns to live in society without breaking norms (Cairus & Conceição, 2012). After the trial of the case, six socioeducational measures can be applied:

1. **Warning:** It consists of a verbal reprimand by the judge, followed by a signed term. This coercive measure has an intimidating character and must count on the presence of the guardians as a ritualistic act (Volpi, 2005) due to their responsibility for the adolescents;
2. **Obligation to repair the damage:** The judge determines that the adolescent must give restitution and/or compensation to the victim. This measure is coercive and educational, leading the adolescent to recognize the mistake and to repair it (Volpi, 2005);
3. **Community service:** In it, the adolescent performs free tasks in institutions of public interest, respecting school and work schedules (if he/she works), and the duties are assigned according to the adolescent's aptitude (Liberati, 1995);
4. **Assisted freedom (AF):** Adopted to accompany, help and guide the adolescent when he/she commits an infraction, due to the need to monitor the adolescent's social life and ensure "protection, community insertion, daily life, maintenance of family ties, school attendance, and insertion in the job market and/or vocational and training courses" (Volpi, 2005, p. 24, our translation);
5. **Semi-freedom regime:** This measure is granted as a transition to a half-open regime. It is applied when an infraction is committed and has its axis the compulsory schooling and the concern with the insertion in the job market. In this measure, the adolescent is confined to a facility, but during the day can carry out external activities;
6. **Internment:** The last measure to be applied when all others no longer fit, employed when there is threat or violence to the person, repetition of infractions, or unjustifiable noncompliance with the previous measure.

As far as working with adolescents in conflict with the law is concerned, the ECA (Brazil, 1990) proposes interventions that transform simple punishment into a significant experience in the subject's life through socioeducational measures. Therefore, the focus of the professional's intervention in the socioeducational context should take into consideration the three fundamental aspects concerning the functions of the socioeducational measure, described by Selosse (1997), capable of leading the adolescent to a transformative reflection about his/her acts, namely:

1. Its sanctioning character, that is, the coercive aspect of the measure in the face of the transgression committed;
2. Its educational or reeducative character, that is, the reconciliation of the adolescent with his social surroundings in other relational patterns;

3. Its reparatory character, that is, the reconciliation of the adolescent with himself through an internal reflection process that favors the restitution of his image that had been contaminated by the act of infraction (Conceição, 2010).

The time of completion of the socioeducational measure is a favorable period to implement proposals that aim to encourage alternative life projects to those involved in infractions. The literature on the subject criticizes the lack of prospects and social exclusion experienced by adolescent offenders, which reinforces the importance of building a life project with this audience. The work developed in the justice field is based on the premise that it is possible to act therapeutically in regulatory contexts, although this is not clinical. One of the biggest challenges of interventions in the justice context is to transform obligation into demand since the subject does not have the motivation to work through their difficulties.

Below, we will briefly describe some examples of work developed by psychodramatists and systemic therapists with the system to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents in Brasília, especially in the scope of socioeducational measures. The experiences to be reported will illustrate social and systemic interventions carried out with adolescents and their families in the context of AF, semi-freedom, and internment. We have chosen some of the experiences given the vast production of these practices in the last two decades.

A pioneer example of psychodramatic interventions in the justice system was the experience carried out in the Federal District, which associated a university research and extension project offered by the University of Brasília (UnB), to the demand of the Court of Childhood and Adolescence of the Court of Justice of the Federal District and Territories (*Vara da Infância e Adolescência of the Tribunal de Justiça do Distrito Federal e Territórios*, VIJ/TJDFT). On this occasion, the children's court judge requested a partnership for the assistance of adolescents who had reoffended in minor infractions (theft and robbery) based on the observation that these adolescents had severe family conflicts, as well as abusive drug use. The action took place for almost a year, based on group family interventions through the multifamily group, group meetings with the adolescents through what were called ideas workshops (Penso et al., 2003), thematic workshops (Conceição et al., 2003a), and rap workshops (Conceição et al., 2003b), and individual family interventions (Costa et al., 2007, 2012; Sudbrack et al., 2003). These initiatives began to be developed in 2002. They were baptized by the participating adolescents themselves as the Phoenix Project: psychosocial promotion of adolescents involved with drugs in the context of VIJ-TJDFT measures. The project aimed to provide psychosocial care to adolescents and training for professionals working with adolescents involved with drugs and serving AF and semi-freedom sentences. The research–action project was carried out under VIJ-TJDFT demand, in partnership with the Secretariat of State and Social Action and the Brasília University Hospital, to contribute to a definition of public policies for approaching drug addiction among adolescents in conflict with the law in the context of the socioeducational measure. In the case of the Phoenix Project, the adolescents were serving time in AF and semi-freedom.



From a systemic and socioeconomic perspective, the project was conceived to work with a group of 100 adolescents and their families for one year. The work was organized by an interdisciplinary team of 20 professionals from different disciplines: psychologists, social workers, professors, physicians (psychiatrist), nurses, professors and researchers from various fields of psychology, such as clinical, developmental, health, legal, and psychobiology, clinical psychology students, and scientific initiation students. Since its creation, the project had the effective participation of judges and prosecutors from the VIJ of Brasília, Federal District, guided by the exercise of interdisciplinary practice in partnership with a team formed by psychologists, social workers, educators, sociologists, judges, and prosecutors, who aimed to integrate the psychosocial and legal dimensions in the approach to drug addiction.

Adolescents' involvement with drugs is a unique challenge that needs to be addressed with methodologies appropriate to each context in which the issue is addressed. The condition of adolescents who, besides consuming drugs, are involved in infractions is a complex situation that leads us to search for solutions that are also complex. In addition to systemic and socioeconomic thinking, the study had as a reference the convoluted thought of Edgar Morin (1986), to the extent that the project is recognized in its transdisciplinary perspective, contemplating articulations between different actors and contexts, and the constant resonances between the psychosocial and the legal.

Regarding the offer of group care to adolescents and their families, Costa (1998) proposed a way of attention: the multifamily group, which has already received several adaptations to cover the emergence of problematic behaviors that are essentially linked to family conflicts (Costa et al., 2015). Sociodrama is one of the theoretical frameworks of the multifamily group. The group is the protagonist, and we privilege the group and its interactions, affections, and competencies. The group relationship is the great wealth of the intervention. In the multifamily group, families have common goals that bring them together. In this way, we try to give them back the leading role in solving their problems. The group meets in a playful environment that facilitates motivation to attend and with the use of dramatic games that mediates the expression of conflicts and suffering (Costa et al., 2015). The multifamily group presents itself as an essential therapeutic resource in situations where families are forced to attend services by judicial referral or by another public institution. In these cases, we notice that families present themselves with no demand for psychotherapeutic care. This is not to say that it does not offer an environment free from the needs of the traditional psychotherapy context since it seeks to constitute a space for clinical listening and transforming conversation and therefore includes a room for psychosocial intervention with therapeutic possibilities.

In turn, one of the actions of the Phoenix Project carried out in the judiciary of the Federal District, also at the request of the VIJ/TJDFT, was the offer of group attendance to adolescents through what was called workshops. One of the most concerning aspects revealed by the adolescents during the thematic workshops (Conceição et al., 2003a)—an activity carried out in the second phase of the Phoenix Project and consisting of group meetings with the adolescents from the project—was the tragic and inexorable fate that the future holds for these adolescents, since they see no other

outcomes for their lives than those they present as “the four Cs”: chain, cemetery, wheelchair, and clinic. As a continuity to the thematic workshops, the workshops “Resgatando a Auto-Estima e Proteção” (rap) were created (Conceição et al., 2003b), which consisted in offering a music craft-building activity with the rap music style, as this was, without a doubt, the musical style unanimously elected by the adolescents. The intervention aimed to get to know these adolescents’ life project by analyzing the records kept during the workshops and the production of rap lyrics they wrote during the rap workshop meetings. Twelve workshops have been held over six months, every other week and each workshop lasting two hours. The average number of participants per workshop was eight adolescents. The methodology of the work was based on the theoretical and practical referential of psychodrama, in which music was the “intermediary object” through which the universe of these adolescents was accessed. The rap workshop proposed to build individual lyrics that would tell the remarkable episodes of each adolescent’s life. The activity has proven successful in constructing texts rich in experiences of effective psychosocial content to modify the tragic outcomes in the lyrics of songs and the dramatic projects of these adolescents. The ultimate purpose of the workshops is to create a space for the adolescents to talk and reflect about their lives through artistic language—rap—to mobilize internal and/or external protection resources in the face of risk situations.

As an unfolding of the Phoenix Project, rap workshop activities were also developed with adolescents in juvenile detention, which we will briefly describe below (Tomasello, 2006). There were 22 meetings that followed the steps of psychodramatic sessions: nonspecific warm-up, specific warm-up, dramatization, and sharing. They were coordinated by a functional unit and took place in an appropriate space, guaranteeing the privacy of the participants. The frequency of the meetings was weekly and lasted approximately two hours per meeting (Tomasello & Conceição, 2015).

In the nonspecific warm-up, the reception of the adolescents was performed. They were invited to talk about how they were feeling, how the week had gone since the last meeting; if there was anything new, they wanted to share if they had a chance to do any leftover tasks from the previous session, etc. It was also the most relaxed and spontaneous time when the adolescents talked freely about any subject. The objective was to promote an atmosphere of rapport among the participants and start warming up for the proposed activity.

In the unspecific warm-up, the work begins with presenting the theme that would be developed that day, warming up the participants for the work. The definition of the theme worked on could be done by the director or by the participants. For example, on the day when the workshop’s objective was to create a character, the director would explain what a character was and then quote several stories or songs, asking the adolescents to identify the characters that starred in them.

In dramatization, a group dynamic or dramatic game was performed which dealt with the development of the goal of the meeting. Still, on the example of the character creation, a dynamic was applied in which the adolescents had to list the characteristics that would compose the character they were creating. After this activity, they were asked to draw this character from these characteristics. The director must be aware of

the group's "dramatic project", that is, what hovers in the group conscious, to choose the most appropriate method for the group's moment (Nery & Conceição, 2012). Both the coconscious and the counconscious are coexistent states in a specific group of people with close coexistence. These states occur when people are so interconnected that they begin to jointly produce typical conscious or unconscious contents that they share.

Finally, the products of the tasks performed were shared. The adolescents were invited to exhibit their work, drawings, texts, or songs. They were allowed to talk about their impressions regarding their works and those of their colleagues. In this phase, the director invites everyone to connect with their emotions, avoiding the influence of rationalizations and restraining the expression of judgments about the performance of themselves and others (Gonçalves et al., 1988; Menegazzo et al., 1995; Moreno, 1984).

Throughout the workshops, using sociodramas, psychodramas, dramatizations, dramatic games, and axiodramas, the three functions of the socioeducational measure proposed by Selosse (1997) were worked on, using psychodrama and sociodrama as a method and the intermediate object of music as the primary technique. By the end of the workshops, in week 22, the adolescents built a crucial therapeutic bond with the functional unit and the other participants (untrained egos). In addition, each of them constructed rap lyrics in which they recounted their modified life trajectories in their less tragic and more successful outcomes. The closing of this activity was crowned with the positive protagonism of the participating adolescents, with musical presentations of the raps they wrote, if was attended by parents and family members of the adolescents, as well as authorities and employees of the detention unit. A CD with all the songs was released at the event, entitled "Life is beautiful, but not inside a cell".

It is worth highlighting some of the lessons learned from these experiences. The first one refers to the challenges of an intervention in which the demand is from a third party: justice. Working on this demand in the adolescent and reversing his desire to retaliate for being the object of "punitive" intervention is mandatory for any therapeutic alliance to be established. To this end, elevating the adolescent to the protagonist role, allowing his blunted spontaneity to emerge should be the first step to be taken. The first step is to establish an initial contract that must be revisited at each meeting to achieve this purpose. Some agreements are agreed upon to meet the adolescents' conditions for voluntary participation and ensure the necessary conditions for the functional unit to conduct the sessions. The deconstruction of judicial imposition and the role of the operating unit as allies of the enemy must be minimally worked out. The initial pacts include the stipulation of minimum unbreakable rules and other negotiable rules. The idea of the rap workshop was created based on the demands of the adolescents who, during the thematic workshops, asked for their songs to be used in the workshops, whose preferred style was rap. This was the cue for us to start negotiating the conduct of the workshops (such as the choice of music style, break times, snacks, delays, abstinence from drugs during the meetings, etc.)

and to explore the subjective content of the rap lyrics, thus creating the rap workshops. Therefore, with this negotiation, the adolescent was committed to fulfilling the conditions for work and thus became more involved in the workshops.

On the other hand, psychodrama proved to be a method of great acceptance by adolescents. Due to its playful and artistic character, with low verbal and/or intellectual repertoire requirements, the adhesion to the program happened almost immediately, without the need for many warm-ups. In the journey toward role-playing, adolescents were abandoning the cultural preserves that imprisoned them in the role of transgressors and undesirables and entering a friendly, welcoming world where reparation was possible. Another advantage of psychodrama is the impossibility of hiding behind the acts, which made the dramatic projects explicit and denounced the unspoken or group counconscious, leading the group to experience events and visit unusual contexts and only possible through the psychodramatic “as if” route.

## Conclusion

In the Brazilian reality of immense social inequality and huge contingents of vulnerable and marginalized populations, the psychosocial response to the demands of justice, within the scope of the child and adolescent protection system, needs to be adapted to the specificity of these populations. Furthermore, given the complexity of the social reality of these families and the urgency of its resolution, it is necessary to adopt practical interventions with language accessible to this group, that is, dramatic and interactive techniques that connect this subject with his or her spontaneous and creative psychic reality.

It is observed that the group work, using psychodrama resources, allows the discussion of contents and reflections arising from the interactions among the members of the group itself, which would hardly come up in formal contexts or conventional interviews. Moreover, the playful aspect of the psychodramatic session allows extremely relevant contents to emerge that might not be possible to appear otherwise.

Although we have made progress in overcoming stigmatizing and oppressive paradigms at the intersection between psychology and law, the logic of retributive justice, characterized by an “eye for an eye” perspective, is still prevalent. As long as this paradigm holds sway, the guarantee of protection for children and adolescents will continue to be threatened. In short, it is advocated to invest in socioeconomic intervention methodologies that access the language and expression of this clientele to prevent and interrupt the cycle of violence.

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# Chapter 17

## Between the Open Sky and Raw Concrete: Reflections on Sociopsychodramas with Street Population



**Oriana Holsbach Hadler**

**Abstract** In the current Brazilian reality, the homeless condition crosses everyone, from those protected behind the bars of their condos to those exposed to the raw violation of their rights. This chapter brings problematizations regarding marginalized daily life, which means getting in touch with our lights and shadows, our own exclusions, and ingrained preconceptions. Living on the margins, in this sense, says less about being in a situation of social vulnerability than in the indifference of a gaze. The main thread for this analysis comes from the experiences of thematic sociodramas about homelessness carried out in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, with several sectors of the social assistance network. In this sense, the sociopsychodramatic bias is used to give visibility to this discussion. In this sense, psychodrama as a way of acting in the world is an ethical–political strategic tool in the moment it tries to break with the rigid pathologizing and excluding view, enabling the subjects to put themselves in the other’s place.

**Keywords** Exclusion · Vulnerable populations · Public policy · Role reversal

### Introduction

True story of any given day, when the characters presented here met in the corridors of life, in front of a basic health unit, in a city in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, Latin America, World. The place: a bus stop; the weather: rain and cold; the social reason: leaving the health center, people coming and going for admission exams, guaranteeing benefits, pregnancy confirmation, HIV

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This work was done together with Vanessa Rodrigues Alves (*in memoriam*). Vanessa was a psychologist (Feevale/RS) and psychodramatist (IDH/RS) who worked with children, adolescents in social and personal risk situations and working with homeless collectives. In 2017, she became a star in the constellation of people who mark our lives with their intensity, broad smile, and unwavering belief in humanity.

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tests, tuberculosis or chickenpox tests, health certificates, etc. Under the protective roof for those waiting for their bus are ten people: a mother in her mid-60s, but who looks 47; a daughter in her mid-20s, but who is tired from waking up early and walking her mother through public health traffic; a middle-aged couple, both with gray hair, pinched eyes, and whispering about yesterday; three female garbage collectors wearing orange; and three bearded beggars of gray color. All these latter creatures smoke. The first of the garbage collectors is sitting behind the garbage cart, a cigarette in her hand and her eyes turned to the ground; the second is standing beside the broom, her face scarred and hard, her eyes staring at the cold of the day; the third standing in the rain pushes with her work tool some debris that locks the sewer entrance to the curb, the cigarette in her hand is just a wet stub now. From the homeless: three men, three smiling, and confused features, with the first of the nameless ones picking up the stub of the garbage collector thrown beside him; the second anonymous one smokes the cigarette of the last man that took the bus at that spot, who, kindly, had given it to him to at least brighten a piece of this indigent man's day; the third homeless man breathes the air blackened by smoke and mist from the rain that becomes stronger with each passing hour of buses that do not come.

Everyone is a foreigner in that place, to be miserable is a condition that plagues humanity in the arid terrain of what is taken as marginalization. In the current Brazilian reality, the homeless condition crosses everyone, from those who are protected behind the bars of their condos to those who are exposed to the raw violation of their rights, even more so when we live in a world plagued by a pandemic that crosses and makes everyone vulnerable. Rescuing our marginalized daily lives<sup>1</sup> means getting in touch with our lights and shadows, our own exclusions and ingrained preconceptions. Living on the margins weighs less on being in a situation of social vulnerability than on the gaze cast on the souls that cross our lives daily: when we hold the seat of the elderly on bus benches, when we throw away the paper on the sidewalks, when we pass by and do not look at who is on the cold ground on the corner, when we do not listen and respect our limits at work, in the family, in the groups to which we belong, when we do not look into the eyes of those who sleep outdoors and wake up under the feet of passers-by.

Having in mind that the attention to the time of existence on the streets is precious to public policies, as several types of research<sup>2</sup> have already shown that the longer the permanence in this street condition, the greater the possibility of social exclusion and rupture with social institutions, this chapter is inserted not only as a possibility to think the social psychodrama as an ethical-political practice, problematizing issues related to the street population, enabling new interventions in this social field, as well

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to a workshop developed on October 4, 2010 at the XVII Congresso Brasileiro de Psicodrama and I IAGP Latinoamericano de Águas de Lindóia called "Resgatando nosso cotidiano marginalizado", in which the works of Alderon Pereira da Costa, Claudia L. Paz Román, Cíntia Bortolotto Almeida, Ellen Lamberg C. Bond and Maria do Carmo M. Rosa. These group psychologists from different parts of the world presented experiences with excluded people from society—from people with neurofibromatosis in Rio de Janeiro and young ex-guerrillas in Colombia until people in homeless situations in São Paulo.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this issue, see Gomes (2006), Natalino (2016) and Souza et al. (2019).



as offering a space to discuss the role of Brazilian psychodrama regarding social work, especially related to the street situation, at the moment it provokes psychodrama as a tool for people to put themselves in the other's place, seeking the inversion of roles between those who do not see themselves in the daily life of the streets and those who make the streets their dwellings.

## **Getting to Know Our Ground: Public Policies for Social Assistance in Brazil**

Since the 1930s, it is possible to see the first signs for a social protection system in Brazil. At that time, however, social rights and assistance were focused on specific groups of workers, since industrialization marked the country's economic growth. In this context, those who did not work were seen as a danger to development, being marked under the sign of disgrace and targeted in hygienization and social control practices. In this scenario, in the 1940s, psychodrama arrived in Brazil through the sociologist Guerreiro Ramos, who developed sociopsychodramatic works with blacks and unemployed people in Rio de Janeiro (Motta, 2006).

It is only during the 1980s and 1990s that new policies aimed at the rights of the entire population, not only union workers, emerge in resistance to the dictatorship. The fight for freedom of speech, the burst of speeches about social action, and the birth of new looks regarding federal social assistance programs are transforming the concepts and ideas about people in vulnerable situations. Regarding the homeless population, there is resistance to the bias of social danger that has been attributed to them, and new references are presented seeking to encompass a humanitarian vision of protection and social support. The landmark for such change in social paradigms is represented by the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil, 1988), which places human rights in the field of action of government policies. Different practices about the wandering populations begin to appear, and instead of a concern with hygienizing those who, in theory, were cluttering the streets, we begin to hear the mottos about groups in situations of personal and social risk.

After the Constitution, the federal government created the Ministry of Social Welfare, and in the sphere of children and youth, we see the emergence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. From these movements, new parameters are put on the table that come to incorporate legislation, affirming the value of children and adolescents as bearers of the continuity of their people, family, and the human species. Once their vulnerability is recognized, this population develops a new role, appearing as deserving full protection by the family, society, and the state. In turn, they must act through specific policies for the assistance, promotion, and defense of their rights. One implication of these articulations is the creation of the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (ECA), which will outline norms that direct the protection of childhood and adolescence, aiming at the integral development of these groups (Brazil, 1990). Children living on the streets are now seen as subjects of rights, and the

notions of “delinquent” and “marginal” that were in place until then are questioned, with repercussions on the views cast on the adult street population as well.

Together with ECA, there is the emergence of the Organic Law of Social Assistance (OLSA), Law No. 8,742, 1993, which comes to promote citizenship for those marked as the excluded ones of society (Brazil, 1993). This law has redefined the social assistance policy. Together with the OLSA, after 10 years, the IV National Conference on Social Assistance is being held in Brasília. This event marks the birth of the guidelines for constructing the Unified Social Assistance System (USAS). Soon after, the National Social Assistance Policy (NSAP) was implemented by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MSD), of Lula’s administration. To strengthen the USAS actions, it is now divided into two types of protection: basic social protection, focusing on prevention and strengthening ties; and special social protection, aimed at assisting families who are in situations of violation of their rights, such as children who are victims of violence, young people who are serving socioeducational measures, and homelessness. Thus, as centers in the field of basic protection, the Social Assistance Reference Centers (SARC) and, as special protection, the Specialized Reference Centers in Social Assistance (SRCSA) are created, both financed with federal government funds (Brazil 2005).

In addition, the services are further subdivided according to the level of complexity of the situations in which the individuals find themselves. Low complexity can be understood as those situations in which there was no violation of rights; SARC being the equipment responsible for serving this population. On the other hand, at the medium and high complexity level are those whose rights have been violated, the former being when rights have been violated. However, there are still family and community ties, and the latter when there are no family or community ties. The municipal structures responsible for serving this population group are the shelters and the SRCSA.

## **Between the Open Sky and Raw Concrete: Sociopsychodramas and the Street Population**

The situation: The social worker was approaching the city streets, and in one of his interventions, he finds an injured boy who must be taken to a basic health unit for treatment. Upon arriving at this location, the on-call nurse attending him, when unable to understand what the boy was trying to say, turns to him and says “I’m trying to put myself in your shoes, I’m trying to see with your eyes, but you have to help me and put yourself in mine!” At this, the social technician looks surprised at the young nurse and smiles, a gesture also provoked in the injured boy. The young woman sought to put herself in the place of the man on the street, in a self-you process, looking at him not as just another case to be attended to, but as a person of equal value who deserves respect and dignity, as a citizen and subject of rights.

Based on this experience, the question arises: Is it possible for psychodrama to be a tool that favors the inversion of roles between people on the streets and those who are not? And, it is this question that begins to guide the sociopsychodramatic meetings between people living on the streets and public policy workers (psychologists, social workers, social educators, police officers, teachers, in short, a whole range of people who work in the most diverse sectors of society).

In this way, five sociopsychodramatic meetings are proposed that are open to the entire population interested in attending. The invitation was extended to the whole social assistance protection network of the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre (capital of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil), to people experiencing and/or living on the streets (or who had already gone through a situation like that), to professionals who work with this theme, as well as other interested parties who had their lives directly or indirectly crossed by the issue of homelessness (family members, people who had neighbors living on the streets and/or individuals who had come into contact or witnessed some similar situation). The importance of the public character of the meetings, that is, open to anyone, without a maximum number of participants and without restrictions of gender and age, is emphasized since, by working on collective themes, this provokes a process of awareness in the participants where the solution to limiting situations can be created from the encounter with the other, which may not happen if we are isolated in the world (Monteiro, 2004). In this way, the groups sought to be developed with the largest possible number of participants from the whole community to bring the emerging theme of the street situation to be worked on at a broad collective level.

The proposal was to work together with the community and actively listen to all sectors of society, have access to the people, and invoke a debate and an exchange of experiences, a collective reflection, a questioning of reality. Moreno (as cited in Monteiro, 2004) already told us this when he presented us with the idea that life provokes and builds infinite stories. We should use them instead of the stories already represented in readymade works. In this way, the meetings were aimed at an articulation among the social assistance networks to raise awareness about the theme, establishing partnerships to sign the commitment to defend, without discrimination, the rights of all people, for a sustainable coexistence in the natural and social environment, capable of ensuring human dignity, transforming nonplaces into unique *locus* of transformation (Mascarenhas, 2008). Another important feature to note about the meetings was the attention to the interdisciplinary factor between the different institutional groups, to provide a horizontal relationship between the social segments, to allow an accurate perception of the other to promote acceptance of differences and reciprocal respect. This had become the goal of sociopsychodramas with homeless people: a dramatic project on several symbolic levels, where dramatization produces effects on collective ways of existing, acting, and thinking (Cesarino, 1999).

For Nery (2010), sociopsychodrama presupposes respect for differences to transcend them, that is, to work with conflicts arising from social inequalities, deep-rooted prejudices, structural racism, and intolerance toward difference, to find solutions to behaviors that compartmentalize humanity in specific social segments. The author

also reports that Brazil is a pioneer and world-renowned in sociopsychodramatic work in the field of the struggle for human rights and social conflicts.

The title of these meetings being named “Between the open sky and raw concrete”, the participants featured in the accounts appear in this writing with star names.<sup>3</sup> These were not used at the time of the meeting but were chosen to protect the participants’ identities for the writing of this chapter. Considering that, more than simple action, the sociopsychodramatic practice is a rescue of the cosmic man proposed by Moreno, these divine sparks become star people in this great social constellation of which we are part. Thus, here will be narrated one of the encounters that marked this work. It is worth noting that this meeting takes place before the new coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) that crosses the planet starting in the year 2020.

## Invisible and Insensitive Under a Red Sky

The warmth of the spring sun streamed in through the windows of the blue room, mercilessly pouring into the chairs that received its incandescent light. Outside 25 °C, inside, up the steps, through the wooden door, people gathered in a circle of chairs as wide as possible to let the shy breeze flow among them. Under the four ceiling fans spread around the corners of the room, more people sat, seeking to share in the subtle winds caused by the spinning blades.

The unspecific warm up begins with a round of introductions, the characteristics, and names of each person that appear in a circle with 43 participants. Emerging in the large circle of chairs are the star people—*Mizar*, *Vega*, *Adhara*, *Hadar*, *Antares*, *Acrux*, etc. Of these, the last three are homeless people, and the first two were a policeman and a social worker. After the anxious faces and discoveries of similarities and differences between each other’s characteristics, I ask everyone to stand up and I go on to ask them to walk and divide into groups as sociometric choices are thrown,<sup>4</sup> such as: who has similar pants? Or who has similar eye color?

The specific warm up begins in the sequence when everyone is asked to continue walking to the sound of the song *Crendice* (by Carlinhos Brown) and that, when the music stops, they should look at the person next to them and answer: “I came in search of what? What do I seek in this meeting?” A few moments pass and, after this initial moment, the music stops again, the participants meet again answering a new question: “What do I bring to this meeting?” Many participants, who previously found themselves laughing when splitting the groups, seem to get in touch with more introspective behavior, thinking about their participation at that moment.

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<sup>3</sup> Star names taken from *The Hipparcos Catalog* (ESA 1997) and *Harvard Revised Bright Star Catalogue* (Hoffleit and Warren Junior 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Sociometry here is understood as Castro (2011) presents it, that is, as the principle that tells us about the ways we inhabit the world, the ways we know it, and from which place we are located when relating to that which crosses and surrounds us: an exercise in understanding how we are chosen and how we choose other people in interrelationships.

After such exercise, it is requested that groups of more or less six people be formed and that, when assembled, they reflect and discuss the title of the project “Between the open sky and raw cement”: that the group share/converse about this title and look for an image or a scene that refers to this phrase. Preferably, the first thing that comes to mind when you think of that title.

Six images are presented, and after each performance, there is a brief interview with each participant asking how the protagonists feel in that role. At the end of the images/scenes, the audience chooses which scene was most striking. Two scenes are chosen:

- Red like the color of the sky: A flyover is represented by two participants joining hands with outstretched arms. Underneath it, people are sleeping; meanwhile, two women are crossing next to it going to the cinema, they look at those sleeping there, signaling that the authorities should do something; while one says “no one does anything! Someone needs to do something about this”, the other talks about the smell they exude. Further back, another woman passes by on the flyover clutching her purse.
- The invisible and the insensible: A man has his eyes blindfolded by the hands of a participant who stands behind him. Meanwhile, people on the ground find themselves crying and are ignored by this one who cannot see.

The two scenes are set up concurrently, and the audience is asked to select, if appropriate, which part represented there mobilizes them most: In the flyover scene, the cutout with the flyover and the people underneath and the woman with the bag was chosen, and in the scene of the invisibles, the part chosen was that of the blindfolded boy. Thus, the other participants in the scene were invited back to the plateau—a new scene is formed, where the flyover, with *Mizar* underneath it, and *Vega* as the woman afraid they would steal her purse stands in the background. At the same time, the blindfolded man, *Hadar*, positioned himself beside the flyover.

I ask the audience if they would like to do something different in that scene, that there were human modeling masses (whose wills would always be considered) that could be developed and, of course, with each action would be consulted. A young woman lifts and removes the blindfold (a woman’s hands symbolized such action) from *Hadar*. I ask how he feels now without blindfolds: “It’s good now, now I have hope”—says *Hadar*. The scene continues, with him seeing everything now. Someone else from the audience appears, opens *Vega’s purse*, and gives money to *Mizar*, who is under the flyover. Another person moves quickly after this action and tries to pull *Mizar* out from under the flyover abruptly, pulling her by one of her arms. It is requested that the roles be reversed between the one who pulled and the one who was pulled. There, in the place of the person who was under the flyover and was taken off, the participant exclaims that she wants to go back under the flyover. The roles are reversed again.

Various movements go on, from the arrival of SARC and SRCSA—*Acrux* and *Adhara* enter the roles of the institution—to the transformation of the flyover into a school, then into a community, to return to being a flyover with the society around it: Several people enter the scene and form a circle holding hands around *Mizar*, who

has come out from under the flyover. Her face shows features of conflict. But, she cannot say anything. At this point, the auxiliary ego comments that someone from the audience said they were putting themselves in *Mizar*'s shoes. Ask if this person would like to enter the scene. It is *Antares* who enters as a double of *Mizar* (who was paralyzed looking at all the people around her) and comments: "I'm feeling suffocated and confused!", says that she does not know what she wants and that she does not understand what all these people want anyway; "I'm being pulled all over the place, everyone wants for me and no one cares what I want!".

The scene ends. Everyone sits down, and the space is opened for the sharing step. Despite being told that such a moment was for sharing feelings mobilized during the meeting, most participants stopped at explanations about their professional role and the daily fight for the rights of homeless people, a clash between institutions and who did more. However, *Mizar* posts the following comment: "I felt agonized. Because no one talked, asked or listened, people just gave or scorned or took away from me". She then reveals that it was a relief when *Antares* stepped into her place. This awakens some movements in the group. Behold, *Adhara* says: "Giving money and food is looking, we went there to try to solve it because SARC was not changing the situation, so SRCSA, me, went there to try to solve it". Behold, one last questioning is provoked: "In whose service?" says *Antares*.

To mark the end of the meeting, a jar is passed around as if to hold a word from each participant about what remained for each one of that day: The jar is passed from hand to hand, and people put the following terms: hope, humility, productive, deconstruction, network, construction, renewal, honesty...

## Final Considerations or Processing...

The first day of the workshops. From the images presented, it is possible to analyze that the sociopsychodramas raised exactly the conflict points existing in that society, the portrait of human relations overflowing in miniature there in the group field (Moreno, 1983). Thus, were identified, at the moment when *Adhara* and *Acrux* enter the scene, the dispute for territories and spaces of action between SARC and SRCSA; the construction of fear facing the role of "beggar" when *Vega* passes by protecting her purse from *Mizar* who was under the overpass; the salvationist ideology in specific actions, represented when someone from the audience comes up and gives money to *Mizar*, a posture that does not see the need of the being who is there, but comes in the service of the anxiety of those who pass by and do not quite know what to do in front of such a situation; it is also possible to identify the confusion of *Mizar*, as a person who was in a homelessness situation, to see so many movements happening around him, but without considering his wills and desires... until the appearance of *Antares*.

At that moment, telically connecting with *Mizar*, who was found paralyzed, *Antares*, still while in the audience, mentions how much she is feeling "agony and suffocation", as if she were in the shoes of the one surrounded by social actions.

Since the invitation to enter the scene had been extended to the actors of the audience, *Antares* is called upon to play the double of *Mizar* and, taking the same posture and body expression as her colleague proceeds to externalize what she was feeling but could not verbalize. For Gonçalves (1998), the double is used when the protagonist cannot verbalize or express clearly what they feel. Incredibly, *Antares* was not part of the functional unit of psychodramatists that comprised the meeting, yet her ability to put herself in the other's shoes does justice to the Morenian philosophy that emphasizes that, in the group, each subject becomes a therapeutic agent for the other.

Concerning the opening given to the audience to intervene in the scene, such a proposal is based on a stance adopted by Aguiar (1998) in works with spontaneous theater. Under this approach, audience members can take the psychodramatic stage to contribute to the construction of that reality. This author points out that it is extremely challenging, in the case of large group work, to incite widespread participation without everyone being on the scene. It is up to the director, in this sense, to organize and define the objectives of the work. Thus, throughout this work—including subsequent encounters—the use of the audience varied, with its members sometimes being invited as part of the staging through chorus (making the “sound-track” of the scene), at other times, the actors from the audience would come on stage to mold the actors (as if they were handmade pieces), and, as in the case of this meeting, they were called upon to be placed in the scene, stepping into the psychodramatic role, and creating according to the sensibility of the moment.

It is worth noting that, in the case of this scene, despite the acceleration and a large number of participants at the end (around 15 people on stage), no actor from the auditorium entered the psychodramatic stage without intervention from the direction being made or a movement from the actors on stage being elicited. Another care that was sought to be taken was to avoid general overheating through explanations by the public when they were consulted. So, when someone showed movement for suggestions, this person stepped into the role and played along with the others instead of explaining the action.

Although Aguiar (1998) warns that the director must ensure that all the actions performed on stage are directed to the audience, this is one of the biggest challenges with agile groups whose protagonists enter the role with ease, because the scene can transform extremely quickly, as if we were all on a sidewalk with thousands of stimuli running through us. In this sense, calling many people to the scene places itself as a critical place for the understanding and agency of the scenic project. So that, at the end of this meeting, the sensation that went through that collective was that of being overflowing with stimuli.

In terms of processing the sharing stage, one of the characteristics of this encounter was that the participants felt a great need to explain their actions and one of the emerging group themes observed was the difficulty in dealing with the lack of a complete and “rounded” “happy ending” to the scene. The question of the powerlessness of those who work in the field of assistance with homeless people crossed everyone's minds. However, something changed when *Mizar* and *Antares* put their feelings toward being seen but not looked at. From the spontaneous actions

and sociopsychodramatic unfolding, hope is reborn (according to the participants' statements) and new possibilities for creation and interrelationship in the social field.

For Moreno (1975), these movements led by these star people living on the streets promote a greater awareness of the identity with oneself, helping in the development of the capacity for invention and interpersonal relationships, resonating with what Moreno (2006) points out, psychodrama enables the protagonist to build (im)possible beyond the roles played in life, to create a deep link with their own existence and to experience the encounter with difference.

Finally, it was possible to witness how the participants felt an expansion of resources and alternatives for dealing with conflicts that may have different ways of constructing the story despite not having fairytale endings. From this sociopsychodrama, it was possible to mobilize changes in the performance of social roles in recognition of the potential of each participant in their network of affections and, more than that, to understand that the existence of possible alternatives must be built in relation to the other.

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# Chapter 18

## On the Recognition of Ignorance: Popular Education and the Psychodrama Encounter with Indigenous People



**Oriana Holsbach Hadler, Rebecca Torquato de Almeida, Larissa Leite,  
and Pedro Carrard Sitta**

**Abstract** This chapter is based on scenes experienced by professionals committed to the policy of the Brazilian Public Health System known as Popular Health Education with indigenous collectives. We put forward the discussion of what it means to be Brazilian by questioning the patriarchal colonization processes that worship precursors legacies disregarding the ancestry of Mother Earth. Taking the founding principles of the National Policy of Popular Education in Health as triggers for the updating of the Morenian Revolution in the contemporary Brazilian scenery and having as references the studies of Paulo Freire and Alton Krenak in the dialogue with Brazilian psychodramatic authors, our discussion takes the assumption of the shared construction of knowledge and healthcare to think about psychodramatic practice. In this relationship, the depathologization of listening and the valorization of local knowledge produce a dialogical psychodrama, where sharing is not understood as a final stage of dramatic action, but becomes a collective construction based on the roots of a Brazilian multiculturalism ethos, on indigenous orality and an ethic of care anchored in popular knowledge.

**Keywords** Encounter · Indigenous culture · Popular education

### More Than an Introduction: A Learning Psychodrama

Perhaps, this chapter is somewhat different from those read so far in this collection. Perhaps, the strangeness that these writings can cause is in the relation within

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219

which we take the place of the speaker. Unlike other psychodramatic reports that depict scenes from a director's perspective, the "sharing" outlined here will seek the place of another participant in this relationship. Even though it will bring scenes, the narration will be of a participant's perspective of what touches us, seeking to adopt an epistemic<sup>1</sup> humility in relation to the production of knowledge, to psychodramatic knowledge, and to sharing stories. Thus, we bet on the power of these meetings to think and understand not what Brazilian psychodrama can do, but what the psychodrama can learn as a listener among others. This listening shows a way of placing ourselves next to the other from a position of permanent availability, as Paulo Freire (2013) said, "as a learner. Learn".

Ailton Krenak (2020a), indigenous leader, environmentalist, Brazilian professor and writer, calls us to the urgent need for humanity, to learn from the "immensity of beings that we have always excluded" (p. 9, our translation), those beings that were invested by the thirsty hands of the *waradzu* (the whites), forcing them to change their native methods into colonizing practices like their "stomping on the land". Extinct animals, burnt land, polluted rivers, suspended skies, endless pests. In less than a decade, Brazil has experienced a series of environmental disasters directly linked to large corporations (such as the mining company Vale) and/or criminal actions by groups involved with the agroindustries. Among the last disasters that had an international impact, we mention the Belo Monte ethnocide in Pará since 2012; the fire in the port of Santos in 2015; the collapsing of the dams in Mariana and Brumadinho in Minas Gerais, respectively, in 2015 and 2019; the oil spill off the northeast coast in 2019; the Amazon and Pantanal fires, still in this current year of 2020.<sup>2</sup> All of these catastrophes resulted in irreparable damage to the planet biodiversity, damage to local communities, waves of diseases and deaths that metastasized the Brazilian soil.

Although possibly taken by desperation, it is Krenak (2019; 2020a; b) who reminds us that environmental changes do not leave anyone out, because after all, we share the same universe. In this scenario, the Brazilian psychodrama sought to turn its attention to practices that involve environmental issues. Works such as those by Almeida (2019), Rodrigues and Felício (2016), Romano and Chleba (2020), and Silva and Bernardes (2017) testify to psychodramatic practices that reformulate the idea of the Moreno's revolution, the creator of psychodrama, by putting on the scene a Morenian proposition in which a psychodramatic project could have nothing less in mind than all of humanity. Even so, such works do not bring the native people's point of view, focusing on the contributions of psychodrama as possible actions for change

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<sup>1</sup> This expression was brought up by Veiga-Neto (2007) when he affirms that epistemological humility "was never present in the Illuminist thinking" (p. 34, our translation). We understand that this point of view is articulated with our criticism of the production of knowledge based on colonizing practices and, therefore, we take a deep breath in this perspective to question our own practices and views in psychodrama.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about these disasters, we invite the reader to look for the writings of Brazilian writer, journalist and documentary filmmaker Eliane Brum, on the El País website: <https://brasil.elpais.com/autor/eliane-brum/>.

without any integration with indigenous<sup>3</sup> communities. And, it is in this aspect that our chapter will take its course, starting from scenes that speak of encounters with indigenous collectives. It is important to emphasize that we do not put ourselves in the place of knowledge specialists; in order to see, we seek to abdicate from this place of expertise, in order to assume a Freire's position of the learner.

This learner approach emerges from the encounter with the National Policy of Popular Health Education (PNEPS). Popular education is a theoretical perspective that was consolidated in the field of Brazilian education from 1950 to 1960 as a libertarian movement linked to social struggles, guaranteeing rights, and resistance to dominant models of education. Being Paulo Freire one of the main references in his field, popular education has become an emancipatory tool in which actions are directed toward the promotion of critical awareness, social protagonism and fighting for social equality (Brazil, 2012). During the redemocratization process in Brazil (in the end of the military regime in 1985), the principles of popular education became part of the national health policy, questioning the current health models. With the implementation of the Brazilian Unified Health System (UHS) in 1988, ideals such as community participation, regionalization, and integration of knowledge enabled an expansion of the notion of health, displacing it from a biological and hospital-centric perspective. From this alliance, at the turn of the 1990–2000, the PNEPS emerges, affirming popular participation as a political force in the health system. It is important to highlight that it took more than 10 years of a long discussion process until the fruition of the PNEPS in 2013. Among the guiding lines of this policy is the popular care practice,<sup>4</sup> dialogue, caring, problematization, the shared construction of knowledge, emancipation, and commitment to the democratic project construction.

In view of this chapter proposal, we will focus our discussion on the principles regarding the popular care practice and the shared construction of knowledge, as we understand that both dialogue with the Morenian proposal of the psychodramatic encounter. Therefore, this chapter brings these principles of popular health education to think about the psychodramatic practice. In this relation, the value of local knowledge produces a dialogical psychodrama, where its sharing does not come together as a final stage of the dramatic action, but becomes a collective construction supported

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<sup>3</sup> In Brazil there are more than 300 indigenous ethnic groups, who speak more than 150 different languages. When speaking about indigenous or native people, we do so because we understand that these groups were in Brazilian territory before the Europeans took over (Instituto Socioambiental 2018). In this chapter we will share experiences with some of these indigenous people: the Kanhgang in Rio Grande do Sul, the Xucuru-Kariri in Alagoas and the people participating in the Multiethnic Village at the Chapada dos Veadeiros, bringing together groups from the Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, Caatinga and the Amazon. For more information, visit the websites: Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (<https://apiboficial.org>), Instituto Socioambiental (<https://www.socioambiental.org/>), and Aldeia Multiétnica (<http://www.aldeiamultiétnica.com.br>).

<sup>4</sup> Among the many examples of popular care practices and their actors, we mention root artists, spiritual healers, herbalists, midwives, *terreiro* (Umbanda religious space, generally in the backyard) practices of African and indigenous origin (Brazil, 2012). In the course of this text, we will be presenting these different roles of care practitioners, being that root artists and spiritual healers are understood here both as healers who do treatments with the use of natural roots and/or remove “evil” by the use of practices that are connected with nature.

by the roots of Brazilian multiculturalism, indigenous orality, and an ethics of care anchored in popular knowledge. We start, therefore, from four scenes experienced with indigenous collectives to think about the role of being Brazilian, questioning the colonization processes that praise the words of the father<sup>5</sup> and reject the ancestry of Mother Earth, where each scene, respectively, unfolds a discussion on the “whitening” of Brazilian psychodrama, the notion of collective health and the incorporation of local knowledge for psychodramatic practice, the indigenous orality as a principle for listening to the protagonist who comes from the land, and, finally, the power of the encounter in the creation of new starting points in the construction of a dialogical psychodrama.

To leave from scenes. The verb “to leave”, “from”, “to split” starts to be conjugated here under several meanings: It is taken both in terms of a starting point, as well as of “to set out on the road”, of to do (in) pieces, or even, referring to as “to give light”, give birth. There is no choice between the senses of these meanings, as they happen concurrently, one overlapping the other.

### ***Scene 1: From Colonization Processes to a Mother’s Knowledge***

The auditorium was full. It was academic week in the psychology course at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil; but this time, the themes were about respect for diversity. An open letter from a group of black students had been read stating how tired they were of the epistemicide that was happening before their eyes, considering the erasing of black culture and reality from the academic system, in opposition to an affirmative and overusing of Eurocentric, masculine, and white references in classes (Hadler, 2020).

The auditorium was in silence. Next, three young Kaingang students stand up. Rejane Nunes de Carvalho steps toward the many faces that looked at them and says: “We are the collective”. Her voice travels through the bodies and gives goosebumps the people listening in a shiver.

Indigenous students are looking for undergraduate courses that will be attended by the demand of their communities, the choice is collective. My uncles told me many times to study to be a lawyer, to help the community defend its rights. So that was what I wanted to do, Law school, but when I went to take the entrance exam at UFRGS there was no vacancy for this course, among the courses offered there was Psychology. At the time I did not know much about what a psychologist does, but it is a new profession in our communities, there were no psychologists within the village. So, I thought that if I could get the *fóg* (nonindigenous) to understand our way of being, our *Kanhangang Êg My Há*, our way of feeling alive, what makes us feel good as a *kanhgág*, it would help our community a lot. ... When I started taking the classes, I realized that some issues fit within our *Kanhangang Êg My Há* and that was the beginning of this construction. During that same period, I received my gift from *Tupê*, little

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<sup>5</sup> There is a wordplay here that will be explained in the first scene, referring to the book of title *The words of the Father*, by Jacob Levy Moreno, (1992).

*Kafág*, my son. I then became an academic student and a mother (Carvalho, 2020, pp. 10–11, our translation).

Epistemicide: a form of colonization of the ways in which scientific knowledge is structured and the subordination of all other forms of knowledge of people and cultures that do not fit the molds of Western Eurocentric science. For Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1999), it is one of the most infallible and continuous instruments used to dominate by denying and destroying the knowledge of the other. Sueli Carneiro (2005) states that the strength of epistemicide lies in the way it hijacks reason. Under psychodramatic analytics, this means placing oneself above the others in the construction of the role of being Brazilian, starting from the colonization of the production of identity where black and indigenous people always become the white people's "other". Moreno (2012), in his protocol *The Black-White problem*, states that this principle of identity speaks of an undifferentiated relationship of the identity matrix where, for nonblacks, all blacks are considered identical and, inside a racist structure, seen as inferior.

Understanding this process of epistemicide matters when we talk about psychodrama in Brazil, as it speaks of a relationship to whiten psychodramatic knowledge in the country. As Maria Aparecida Bento (2002) points out, whitening refers to the crucial symbolic appropriation of the white group to the detriment of the others, and understanding it is essential to break with the projection of the white privileges produced after years of fear and in a process of silencing others.

Considering that the pioneer of Brazilian psychodramatic practices was a black intellectual and politician of the 1940s, we cannot deny that the schools of psychodrama and the psychodramatists formation became a privileged place with regard to access and updating the theory in the Brazilian scenario. It is in the figure of black psychodramatists and with the works of Maria Célia Malaquias (Malaquias, 2020; Malaquias et al., 2016) that the Brazilian psychodrama finds its Afrodiasporic roots in rescuing the psychodramatic *locus nascendi*<sup>6</sup> from Guerreiro Ramos and Abdias Nascimento. Therefore, when we say in the introduction that there is an acclamation of the "words of the father", we do it purposefully by resuming the book of the same title published by Moreno (1992). Thus, we play a game of questioning the Western Eurocentric knowledge of the colonizing white man whose production of knowledge is evidenced as a recognized scientific epistemology to the detriment of the knowledge of the native people and the Earth who, in some cultures, continues to be recognized as our mother and provider in broad senses, not only in the dimension of subsistence and in the maintenance of our lives, but also in the transcendent dimension that gives meaning to our existence (Krenak, 2019).

When we look at the colonization processes, the creation of the Brazilian identity goes through a recognition of a colonizing father who services our Mother Earth, of whom we are becoming orphans (Krenak, 2019). Therefore, when the indigenous student places the plurality of her roles, she resignifies the role theory by questioning

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<sup>6</sup> *Locus nascendi*, according to psychodramatic theory, means the place of origin of something or someone. Moreno (2012) states that the *locus nascendi* of a flower, for example, is the soil from which it sprouted and not someone's hair, or even the vase in which it can be placed.

the way white people live by splitting their lives into pieces—by being a student and having to abdicate from the role of motherhood (when she was refused to live with her son in the student housing), to be academic and not a student (when she was required to have a standard level of reading and interpretation of a nonnative language), and so on. Krenak (2020b, p. 83, our translation) reminds us, we were “for a long time, lulled by the history that we are humanity and alienated from this organism of which we are part, the Earth and, in this way, begin thinking that it is one thing and we, another: the Earth and humanity”.

In conclusion, this scene poses the question: What is Mother Earth saying to Brazilian psychodramatic practices? And, the invitation that academic student indigenous mothers offer us is to enter the stage collectively, to become in sync with the Earth. So that, other listening practices become possible.

## ***Scene 2: The Popular Practice of Other Hearings Toward a Caring Ethics***

In 2019, the technical coordination of indigenous health of the city of Porto Alegre (RS), from one hour to the next, enters an attendance room at the Psychosocial Care Center for Drugs and Alcohol (CAPS AD),<sup>7</sup> without notice, to discuss the construction of the care and active<sup>8</sup> search of a Kaingang indigenous man, requested by his family. According to them, seven years ago, this man had suffered from street violence, having his body burned. After this incident, he, then, dropped out of the college he was attending and started an intense use of alcohol and crack, homelessness, and breaking affective/social ties.

If we analyzed this situation from a pathological view of care, we could compulsorily manage it with hospitalization, prescribing medications and diagnosing it according to the International Disease Code (WHO 1998) in the classifications F19.2, Z59, and Z60 or, whatever mental and behavioral disorders due to multiple drugs usage and use of other psychoactive substances, dependency syndrome due to problems related to economic and housing conditions and problems related to the social environment would mean in Western language. For many, the “problem” would be resolved, right? Well, we say no, it will not. Not only would the situation not be resolved, but we understand that acting in this way would be a way to perpetuate the violence produced by the state and operated by society. The technical coordination of indigenous health reports that the indigenous person was living in one of the city parks. In one of the attempts of active search, we found indigenous artisans, to

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<sup>7</sup> Psychosocial Care Center—Drugs and Alcohol, Ordinance 336/2002 of the Ministry of Health, Brazil (Brazil, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Active search is a UHS procedure that aims to find cases in an itinerant situation for a humanitarian approach to health care. According to Lemke and Silva (2010), the active search “becomes a political principle of resistance in the defense of life, when health workers break with the automatisms, be it of thought or perception, allowing an opening for an invention plan” (p. 291, our translation).

whom we introduced ourselves as UHS workers who assist people that use alcohol and other drugs. A certain initial apprehension and little opening for dialogue was formed in the conversation. After an abysmal and truncated silence and questions about where they lived and people they knew, we presented a pamphlet on how to prevent tuberculosis<sup>9</sup> and, lo and behold, a breach opened up. That had called their attention, because at some point in their lives, they experienced the contagion of tuberculosis, having been affected by the disease in their communities. With that, the care proposal was felt, and the need to find the indigenous from a caring perspective unfolded in an affectionate way, in a world that had finally become possible to be shared.

From this dialogue, one of the Indians introduces himself as a relative of the man we were looking for. Referring that the relative was lost in the white world, he had tried his own path outside the community. But a few weeks earlier, he had returned to his tribe, being welcomed and cared for in this place, in his community. Concern about a possible withdrawal syndrome was formed within the health team. However, when this question arose, we knew how to answer: He and the community will know how to take care of it.

One of Moreno's concerns (1993) was to encounter humanity's position in the universe. Understanding man as a cosmic being, Morenian care crossed the path of putting oneself in the place of the other, of the protagonism of a collectivity, of listening in mutual perception between the subjects of the drama. This man, however, is referred to as a universal being. When bringing references to ethnic-cultural aspects, even though mentioning ethnodrama as a way of working with conflicts of ethnic groups, the view on the indigenous population is brought by the creator of psychodrama from an analytical bias of the nonindigenous man who witnesses a tribal ritual, which is analyzed by the author under the principle of proximity to psychodramatic practice.

Moreno (1993) once told the tale of a treatment he witnessed in an indigenous village and compared its ways with psychodrama. The story tells of the return of an Indian to his village. Described as someone who was on the verge of death, experiencing a state of extreme distress, this returning Indian is received by the healer of his tribe and his helpers to represent the situation that had caused him the shock—the encounter with a wild animal. Dramatizing the fateful encounter, the healer enters the role of the animal and, in a circle composed of fellow tribesmen who are around the suffering Indian, cure him of his illness. Moreno brings this story when presenting psychodrama and the possibility of treatment through action. What calls our attention, however, is not the tribal technique. Nor is the similarity of this story in what resembles the classic psychodramatic elements: the protagonist, the director, the auxiliary egos, the stage, and the audience, for example. What draws our attention in this small section of contact with experiences about indigenous people is what in differs it in relation to the way of receiving the other person's pain.

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<sup>9</sup> Tuberculosis is an infectious-contagious bacterial disease caused by Koch's bacillus that affects the lungs, which is pulmonary (with a lot of high-contagion cough) or extrapulmonary (affecting other organs and compromising the immune system) (Brazil, 2021).



In the second scene of our chapter, the scheme of listening to pain becomes common when there is a shared experience. However, above all, it is in the reception within their tribe that the returning Indian finds care. There are no diagnoses, there is listening to pain. In this regard, popular health education recognizes local knowledge. You know that there, in another place, in another community space, care happens. If for Moreno (2012), every second time it frees the first, and for Paulo Freire (1997), it is the experience that can lead to the theoretical. This means that limit situations, which dull spontaneity, will not lead toward stagnation as many might think, on the contrary, such situations can lead to critical yet imperative moments of social change since resistance can appear as a form that subvert domination, creating an unprecedented viable, as Freire would call it (Brazil, 2012). The issue that we are called to, however, based on an ethics of care with the Kaingang people, is that protagonism is always collective.

### *Scene 3: “Each Caboclo Has Got His Science”*

The year was 2016, we were part of a collective of popular health educators who were on their way to participate in the first Meeting of Integrative Practices and Indigenous Knowledge Holders located in Palmeira dos Índios in Alagoas, in the Xucuru-Kariri village. The invitation came through the indigenous leader named Koran, a medical woman, member of the National Articulation of Popular Education in Health (ANEPS), and one of the organizers of this event. This took place in partnership with the Multidisciplinary Indigenous Health Team—current at the time—community leaders and social movements. We left Sergipe in a caravan, being a group composed of popular educators, health workers, community leaders, native herbalist women, healers, among other health therapists. The journey to the village was already a great warming up, narratives about ancestral knowledge transited, where the Sergipe native herbalist women wove their memories and made connections in their family tree with their indigenous relatives. An atmosphere was built where each one, through the whispers of their memories, narrated their life experiences. Leave one and receive as much. When we arrived at the Mata da Cafurna (Cafurna Woods), our welcoming came through hugs, and in each hug, we received a whisper by the ear that said: “save your strength”. Recalled of our strength, the feeling of being part of all that took hold, recognizing one another and embracing the difference. On the opening night, women, men, children, young people, and the elderly celebrated together with *Toré*,<sup>10</sup> singing sacred songs in the search for integration with the forces of nature. The circular dance made it possible for everyone to look at each other, the percussive instruments rocked the dance, the stomping on the floor along with the rising dust reflected the power of the connection with yourself,

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<sup>10</sup> *Toré* has different meanings for native peoples, in this context it is synonymous with a ritual that unites dance, religion, fight and play. The *Toré* is performed in a unique way according to different indigenous ethnic groups.

with the others and with nature. Early in the morning we entered Mata da Cafurna, we were taken in an experience inside the forest where some of the village rituals took place. People arrived from various corners of Brazil, and the event schedule was divided between conversation circles, operational discussion groups, and care practices. The content that circulated in this meeting showed ways of understanding health that expanded the forms of life and existence, referring to care based on traditional knowledge.<sup>11</sup> As well as the provocation of certain ways of doing health that annihilates the plurality and diversity of people and under the perverse impacts that this can cause in a community. At a certain point, a leader asked for a speech and started singing: *“Every caboclo has science/Oh my god what will it be?/There is divine science/and that of the trunk of juremar”*.

“Every caboclo has science” brings with it an affirmation of power. Recognition and legitimization of popular and ancestral wisdom. Krenak (2019) questions why such narratives/wisdoms have been forgotten and erased at the expense of a narrative that tells a unique, globalized story. Krenak’s suspicion involves rethinking about an idea of civilization abstraction, which suppresses diversity, and denies the plurality of existence. The guiding principles of popular health education follow a logic that includes knowledge. Starting from the perspective that there are no better or worse knowledges, but that there are different types of knowledges (Freire, 1997). Therefore, one of the methodological strategies is to give space to dialogue, as a horizontal and circular relationship, allowing the exchange of experiences and the space for listening to others. The experience of meetings and/or seminars between collectives, through conversation circles, operative groups or experiences allows for both exchanges of knowledge, as well as pointing out to a look at reality through problematization, identifying limit situations and building bridges to face such difficulties from a critical thinking. Thus, it is bet that from the collective experience, when a group proposes to build knowledge in a shared way, based on principles that cross problematization, dialogue, commitment to a democratic society, and kindness, there is a possibility that such experience has an emancipatory character, which only the possibility of being in the relationship with the other produces (Bornstein et al., 2016).

As subjects in relationship, we are challenged daily to produce viable novelties. Freire’s concept of the unprecedented viable can be understood not only by an extreme situation that we have overcome, but also by dreams never imagined and which manage to be achieved (Freire, 2013). This unprecedented viable, in an urgent and emerging global moment, is the voice that echoes the song, but that has not yet become a protagonist emerging on the current psychodramatic stages: that of indigenous orality as a principle for listening to the protagonist from the land. The knowledge that permeates our original peoples presents an invitation to relearning in the connection between me–me, me–other, me–world. Every subject carries his strength as well as his wisdom. Let us salute our strength, heal our wound of being fragmented from the world, and reaffirm our wisdom, this is the song that resonates

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<sup>11</sup> Traditional knowledge is taken in this article as that of the original peoples, resuming an appropriation that the ‘traditional’ would be the colonized/westernized.

with the feeling of being alive that the indigenous people call upon us. In this relationship, which does not separate Earth from local knowledge and the history of each and every one, indigenous orality transforms Brazilian psychodramatic practices into dialogical psychodrama. This constitutes the encounter of Paulo Freire and Moreno with the knowledge of the original people becoming the stage for the respect for plural existences, the belief in the creative potential, and the recognition of differences without homogenizing them.

#### ***Scene 4: An Unprecedented Viable—The Encounter with Native People***

At the Chapada dos Veadeiros (Veadeiros Plateau), there is a space dedicated to the strengthening of the cultures and political resistances of the indigenous people and their reminiscent: the Multiethnic Village. This space has as principles the preservation, promotion, and access to the Brazilian material and nonmaterial inheritance. Every year, this space receives different indigenous ethnic groups for an experience of living together and immersing themselves in nature and indigenous cultures. Received by indigenous friends, a white woman decides to spend a day among the tribes and ends up staying three. The only concern, since the sleeping tent was guaranteed by her friends, would be the food. On the day of arrival, when I visited the hut where the people from the top of the Xingu were staying, I became friends with Tunuly Yawalapiti, a native healer to his people. I heard beautiful stories about the nursing process through plants. When the night came, I needed to solve the issue of food. The nonindigenous friends went to the cafeteria made for those who were attending the event, and I went to walk around the place to see what was going on. I realized that the natives ate their meals at their huts, and I decided to go back to the Xingu hut and see if I could eat with them. I was a little embarrassed; after all, it is the opposite of what we are taught about the visitor's code of conduct: never asking for food at others people's houses, always accepting what they offer you, and only entering if you are invited. When I entered the hut, with a fear of violating this code of conduct, very quickly, any fears I had faded away, suddenly losing their meaning inside that territory that operated under other codes. In fact, I did not even need to ask for food, just by entering the hut, they were already inviting me to sit around the ground fire and eat baked fish with tapioca.<sup>12</sup> It is the code of sharing. For all questions, the same answer was given—"of course you can, it's ours!" Sitting around the fire, on a huge baking tray, made out of clay, tapiocas were made by the impressive agile hands of an indigenous woman. The complex task was looking at it: take a huge amount of dough with your hands, spread it on the baking tray, to flip at the right time, place the giant tapioca on a mat next to it, and quickly clean the pan for the next round. At some point, I was asked if I did not want to try making tapioca;

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<sup>12</sup> Tapioca is the gum extracted from the cassava, used in typical Brazilian food recipes and originally from indigenous cuisine.

after all, the purpose of the event was to experience and exchange knowledge. And, there I went, a white clumsy girl to try to make the giant tapioca. In the simplest task, which was to take the dough and to spread it on the baking tray, the lack of skills of nonindigenous hands for taking the dough unfolds into many trips with clumsy hands. The indigenous woman sometimes sympathized and helped, which made the circle around us laugh. There was peace in that because there it was possible to be on the other side of a very common collective imagination about the indigenous: One who is not civilized and, therefore, needs to learn from white people. At that moment, the white woman was the one who did not know and had become a learner. To spread the tapioca, it is necessary to bend down and approach the fire. As the smoke rises, the eyes become irritated, which caused a disastrous “white” movement to get up to let the watery eyes dried out. Between approaches and distances from the fire, tapioca was being made. The time was coming to flip it. And, the tapioca almost broke! Finishing the tapioca was possible with the help of the indigenous woman. It was time to remove the tapioca to put on the mat, and it was a great challenge not to break the tapioca in this process. Tension in the air. Take a deep breath and go. Miraculously the tapioca goes to the mat without major damage. Everyone applauded and laughed at the fact that the task was finally completed, not without a last hitch: “you put it on the wrong side!” Another burst of laughter in the air. In the middle of an established mission, laughter and a light environment of joking, the experience of an encounter happened.

A meeting like the one presented by Nurit Bensusan (2019) in his book *Do que o Encontro é Feito*. In this book, the author takes the narrative of Amos Oz and Shira Hadad (2019)<sup>13</sup> and this writer’s analogy of what an apple is made to think of the encounter between whites and indigenous people as a sowing of possible worlds. If we ask ourselves what an apple is made of, we arrive at the union of a series of elements such as water, Earth, the sun, an apple tree, fertilizer, and so many other things. However, the apple from this combination does not look like any of these isolated elements. Water, Earth, sun, an apple tree, and manure can give rise to a handful of dry leaves, and they can end up in infertile branches or unfertilized flowers. This is not enough to generate an apple. Bensusan (2019) says that this is how he sees the encounter of nonindigenous societies with the knowledge of indigenous people and local communities. A sum of elements that does not automatically result in an encounter, but that can become fruitful if there is an opening out of the immured way that we are used to living. An invitation to break with the colonized cultural preserves<sup>14</sup> that shapes us.

As Nurit Bensusan (2019) said, it is just any white contact with the indigenous that is fruitful. In the narrated scene, the fruitful encounter happened due to a willingness

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<sup>13</sup> Amos Oz was an Israeli writer, pacifist and political activist who died in 2018. Among his literary works that marked the awareness of a culture of peace, the book *What is the Apple made of*: six conversations about love, guilt and other delights written with his publisher Shira Hadad (Oz and Hadad 2019) turn to fiction in order to think about the power of encounters, listening and sharing experiences.

<sup>14</sup> As Moreno (2012) puts it, the idea of cultural preservation refers to a finished product with a sacred quality that can result in a theory of values.

to expose vulnerabilities, both from hunger and the lack of skill. In addition, there was a willingness to welcome presences, to exchange differences, and to be together. In each part of this meeting, a new recognition of oneself takes place. And more than that, a recognition of the other in its uniqueness and willingness to *be with* and not to observe *about*. And in this meeting, a mutual surrender takes place. Fonseca (1980) tells us that in the last stage of the role reversal, when we see through the eyes of the other and the other sees through our eyes, we experience a cosmic moment. There is a kind of cosmic fusion between those involved, and once that moment is undone, there is no differentiation, but a cosmic encounter. This encounter can be seen as a reconnection to the elements of the universe that live inside all of us.

## Closing or Creating New Starting Points

*How can we recognize a place of contact between these worlds which have such a common origin ... where can we discover a common place between our views that take us out of this state of unrecognition of each other?*

—Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para Adiar o Fim do Mundo*, our translation.

The return to our origins in this chapter is not, however, an invitation to the meeting.<sup>15</sup> It is a call that speaks of an inevitable and urgent commitment not only to learn with indigenous people the respect and protection of the Earth biodiversity,<sup>16</sup> but to create new starting points based on an ethics of listening and sharing. In this sense, Krenak (2020a, p. 115, our translation) reminds us that “a consciousness is beginning to emerge that the native people, in different places in the world, still have precious experiences that can be shared”. Thus, the sharing does not happen as a final stage of the psychodramatic process, but it happens in the unprecedented viable encounters with the other.

In this way, this narrative makes an invitation: to bring psychodramatic philosophy closer to indigenous knowledge, taking the place of the listener and learning from the other. In this learning relationship, psychodrama becomes dialogical, where it is less important to make a psychodramatic reading of indigenous practices and rituals, and more important to ask ourselves what Brazilian psychodrama can learn from indigenous relations and practices?

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<sup>15</sup> Allusion to Jacob Levy Moreno’s poem entitled *Divisa*, in which he utters “A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face. And when you are near, I will pluck out your eyes and put them in the place of mine. And I will pluck out my eyes and put them in the place of yours; Then I will see you with your eyes and you will see me with mine. Thus, even the common thing serves silence” (Moreno 2012, p. 9, our translation).

<sup>16</sup> In October 2020, a global agreement called the UN Biodiversity Summit, which aims to reverse the loss of biodiversity is signed by leaders from 77 countries around the world, with a commitment to contain the catastrophe brokered by the white man. The government of then President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, refuses to participate in this pact. The United States, Australia, China, Russia and India also refused to sign the pledge (G1 2020).

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**Part IV**  
**Socionomic Acts: Psychodrama, Politics,**  
**and Society**



# Chapter 19

## Psychodrama and Politics



Marcia Almeida Batista and Lucia Helena Nilson

### Moreno, father of psychodrama, and politics

Can whole cultures be “acted out”, piece by piece, in the experimental staging of axiodrama and sociodrama, with the protagonists as creators and performers? (Moreno, 2008, p. 77, our translation)

**Abstract** We present some landmarks of the political perspective of Moreno’s psychodrama, its birth in 1921, and its development in Brazil. We searched for reports of different psychodramas performed in public spaces. They are city psychodrama, public psychodrama at the São Paulo Cultural Center, psychodramas performed in important moments of the national politics and in Psychodrama Congresses. From these reports, the ethical, aesthetic, and political articulation of psychodrama is discussed and the relationship between subjective and sociopolitical aspects, creating new possibilities for social relations and the individual’s action and insertion in society. We reflect on psychodramatic practice, warm-up, technical resources, and focus of the work. We defend the idea that the public space is not only a space for passing by, but also for meeting and living together, and that, from the collective construction of dramatized stories, it welcomes different subjectivities, exchange of ideas, values, and life experiences. The participants discover their potentialities and the importance of their participation in the city’s life through a collective and co-responsible sharing. We conclude that more and more psychodramatists in Brazil are present in critical moments of Brazilian society, giving everyone the possibility to have a voice and be heard, demonstrating the importance of psychodrama as resistance.

**Keywords** Public psychodrama · Citizenship · Ethics · Subjectivity · Online public psychodrama

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## Introduction

A political perspective work understands the connection between subjectivity and collectivity, private and public, to be seen by both the director and the psychodrama group. Each problem brings economic, social, political, and cultural issues that contribute to the world in which it is inserted being seen in a certain way, with its context, history, and relationships. From looking at all these issues, other possibilities for action and insertion of the individual in society are built.

In this chapter, we present the course of the political perspective of psychodrama, its birth in 1921, and its trajectory in Brazil. Through reports of psychodrama sessions performed in open and public spaces such as city psychodrama, public psychodrama at the Centro Cultural de São Paulo, and Community on Scene from the Psychodrama Congresses, the psychodramatic practice is discussed, as a warm-up, technical resources and focus of the work, in the sociopolitical perspective.

To participate in political life is to exercise citizenship, and each individual can be the author of social transformation. For Moreno (1975), creator of psychodrama, the man, due to his gregarious condition, establishes a complex network of relationships that enables him to sustain himself as a subject, bearer essentially of emotions, to live, and establish himself in society. With this, Moreno sought to build a theoretical/practical model that would promote a break with stereotypical behavior patterns and the transformation of imprisoning social forms.

From Farina et al. (2011), we currently understand that working with psychodrama demands ethical, aesthetic, and political articulation: **Ethical** insofar as it supports the possibility of a conflict generating transformative responses, **Political** because it questions the instituted forms of social coexistence, welcomes difference, and recognizes the existence of the other, and **Aesthetic** because, by working with images and scenes, it allows an understanding beyond the verbal by taking advantage of the theatricality present in psychodramatic work.

In the aesthetic perspective of theater, Moreno eliminates the script and the division between audience and actor, proposes an active and collective position of creation breaking with the limits of the established stage, making theater everywhere. Zamboni et al. (2014) state that the proposed work with theater questions the regime of truth production. In the Morenian perspective, the truths of the dramatic text, the actor's performance, rehearsal work, and the stage as an institution are contested. The dramatic scene, in its unfolding, opens the way for what cannot be said and for the production of the new, putting into action new possibilities for social relations. According to Moreno (1984), individuals relate to each other through culturally and historically constituted roles. Thus, every society has a set of structures that order and define social relations. In other words, it questions the script of the social role. We agree with Motta (2014) when she affirms that the Morenian proposal reaffirms the relational man and emphasizes the search for sociopolitical participation.

The perspective of **politics** has been present in psychodrama since its birth: It was officially born on April 1, 1921 (April Fools' Day in Austria and April Fool's Day in Brazil), when, in the midst of a political crisis, in a scenario in turmoil with the

reign of Francisco José of Austria, Moreno directed a large group in an auditorium in Vienna. At this point, he suggests questioning the role of the king and proposes the famous “King’s chair” scene in an eminently political work. In this act, the collective commitment of getting involved in this “being with” potentiates protagonism and life in the relationship with the highest authority of the country.

## **Brazilian Psychodrama and Politics**

In Brazil, the political perspective of psychodrama has been present throughout the ages. Between the 1940s and 1950s, the Bahian sociologist Guerreiro Ramos did pioneer work at the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), in Rio de Janeiro, using sociodrama to work on ethnic issues, having as a central theme the social inclusion of Brazilian descendants of freed and illiterate black people, lacking professional conditions. Motta (2010), who studies the history of psychodrama in Brazil, states that the Morenian proposal was forgotten until 1958, when Pierre Weil (re) introduces psychodrama to the Brazilian scenario, with a new guise, when he provided a service at the Department of Work Guidance of the Banco da Lavoura de Minas Gerais (Banco Real) for the development of the workers of this institution. This service is terminated during the military dictatorship—which begins in 1964—and the research and training archive is burned, making it impossible to have the records from that time.

From 1968 on, with the intensification of the dictatorship, the freedom of assembly was suspended, the group training work was under surveillance, and professionals began to seek clinical training and opened the first offices using psychodramatic methodology. Despite being restricted to psychotherapy, focusing especially on intrapsychic issues, psychodrama at this point does not lose its sociopolitical character. Many psychodrama study groups were formed at that time, with professionals who saw in psychodrama a possibility of an airier performance, with a social stamp, and a freer methodology than the one proposed, at that time, by psychoanalysis. As Cesarino (2001a) puts it, psychodrama brings in its core a political calling allied to a therapeutic action, proposes the collective in the face of the imposition of isolation, and allows the cry where fear demands silence and paralysis.

The V International Congress of Psychodrama and the I International Congress of Therapeutic Communities, held jointly at the São Paulo Museum of Art in 1970, became a milestone in the history of Brazilian psychodrama. Cesarino (as cited in Motta, 2008) tells us that the organizers of the Congresses, a group of young people enthusiastic about the new ideas brought by psychodrama, which also aimed at society and its institutions, allowed 3000 people to participate. This participation was only possible after many meetings with government and police representatives. Remember that, during the dictatorship, the gathering of people became forbidden and any group event could be considered disrespectful to the regime’s norms, eventually generating repressive actions.

In psychiatrists and psychologists, this event awakens the importance of participating in national events, strengthening their position against the professionals who were willing to collaborate with the regime in force. From 1970 to 1980, we have no more manifestations of this size, but, even though they took place inside offices, many group treatments started to be performed and the professionals in the field began to understand the psychological phenomenon beyond the individual, valuing the group and the collective and their relationship with society.

Starting in the 1980s, the popular and political movement against the dictatorship grows. In this period, several movements and acts demanding *Diretas Já*, that is, a return to presidential elections, erupted in the country. In this environment, with the gradual opening of the dictatorial regime, a group of psychodramatists, who had been discussing the importance of their participation in society since the Congress, performed several public psychodramas in the streets and squares of the city of São Paulo. This movement was not limited only to the issue of the *Diretas Já* and extended the vindications to other demands of society. In this group, we highlight Regina Fournaut Monteiro and Ronaldo Pamplona, who worked on important political themes such as the elections in the country at the end of the dictatorship, the day of the anti-asylum struggle on May 18, 1990, AIDS, and the LGBT movement (an acronym in force at that time).

Monteiro (2004) proposed to perform spontaneous theaters in the streets, squares, and neighborhood associations without passively waiting for people to come. We understand, from her words, that the desire was to provide debate and exchange of experiences.

In this same perspective of psychodramatists' ethical-political responsibility, the Brazilian Psychodrama Congresses, starting in 1988, also resounded this movement of going out to the community. The incorporation of this practice in the congresses came to be called "Community on Scene", with performances of psychodramas in different places in the cities (squares, schools, etc.) with the function of working on the issues of the municipality during the congress according to the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama (Febrap, 2021). This practice has also been adopted in International Psychodrama Congresses.

On March 21, 2001, in the city of São Paulo, several sociodramas proposed and coordinated by Marisa Nogueira Greeb (Ethical and Citizenship Movement) took place at the request of the elected mayor, Martha Suplicy, to mobilize the population to understand their political role regarding their demands to the municipal government. The proposed theme, *What you can do to have a happy city*, was worked simultaneously in 153 points in the city (public squares, houses of culture, clubs, schools, libraries, etc.) with the participation of about 700 psychodramatists from different places in Brazil and a high adhesion from the population. An action of this size counted on the support of governmental bodies from different sectors, such as the municipal guard and professionals from the education, culture, social assistance, and health secretariats. The goal was to facilitate dialogues that would lead the population to realize their political roles and rights and awaken citizen responsibility (Greeb, 2014). Rather than dictating to the population what their role should be, the intention was to hear from the people what they understood to be a priority in their lives and

how to take responsibility for it. After a long silence imposed by the dictatorship, it was necessary to recover the idea of citizenship, understanding that to walk toward citizenship is to walk toward freedom and equality for all.

In talking about this historical moment, Cesarino (2001b) reports a moving moment in public psychodrama where a street dweller declares that someone was talking to him for the first time. One participant states that he walks by himself every day and realizes that he was a human being for the first time. In other situations, the participants discover that the public space is not just a space for passing by, but a space that belongs to them and can be a place for meeting and living together.

Complementing the words of Cesarino, we highlight some aspects of this event presented at the XIII Brazilian Congress of Psychodrama held in Bahia in 2002 by one of the authors of this chapter<sup>1</sup>.

Recognition by psychodramatists of the importance of taking a political stand: To carry out the city psychodrama, some sociodrama sessions were held with the directors and auxiliary egos where the fantasies and fears of what might happen in a job outside the protected walls of the office were worked on. Before listening to the population, it was necessary that psychodramatic professionals also find their voice in front of the political issues being experienced. At the end of all the work, many psychodramatists reported significant changes in the perception of their work, understanding that, even in situations of traditional therapeutic care, there is an implication with the sociopolitical issues in which patient and therapist are inserted.

Discovery by the participants of their potentialities and the importance of their participation in the city's life through a collective and coresponsible sharing: In a sociodrama held near an institution that assisted wheelchair users, they could express their difficulties and mobilize the group to act in defense of their rights. At the end of the session, they drafted a document to be sent to the competent authorities to put their requests into effect. In another group, directed by Ana Zampiere, and reported by her in a meeting between the directors, with the presence of the authors, a participant, when assuming the role of the mayor of the city, gets emotional and tells the audience: *It's a lot of work, you can't do it alone* and emphasizes to the audience the importance of citizen participation for the improvement of the city.

This action, carried out in the most important city of the country, had a lot of repercussions and generated, between 2001 and 2003, the performance of psychodramas in different places, at the invitation of local managers and politicians, according to the Instituto de Políticas Relacionais (2011), reaching about 27 thousand people, and became an important field of political work for psychodramatic professionals, which favored the resumption of the extramural work.

The subprefecture of the municipality of Guarulhos, for example, hired Marisa Greb and a team to work with municipal employees to value and resignify their role as public servants. The groups were made up of employees from various ranks, from top to bottom. This composition of the groups was the first impact felt by the participants, as it allowed the bosses to understand the difficulties experienced by their subordinates, created a space for horizontal dialogue about the role of the civil

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<sup>1</sup> Marcia Almeida Batista.

servant and its importance to society, not consistently recognized (Relational Policy Institute 2021).

## Psychodrama in Public Spaces

Political psychodrama can occur in open or closed spaces, in institutions, or even within the four walls of the consulting room. Here we focus on psychodrama performed in public spaces.

Since August 2003 to the present day, the public psychodrama takes place at Centro Cultural São Paulo (CCSP) following the Morenian proposal of “creating public spaces that can welcome different subjectivities, where it is possible to exchange ideas, values and life experiences from the collective construction of dramatized stories... [in these] there is no pre-fixed theme or script” (CCSP 2017, as cited in Batista et al., 2020, p. 84, our translation).

Public psychodramas are characterized by taking place in open spaces with free access to those who pass by. From Batista et al. (2012), we understand that the term public refers to the place where psychodrama is performed and the participants’ freedom of entry and exit, which requires some new psychodramatic procedures, such as differentiated work teams and revised ethics. However, the methodology remains the same. The difference is in how the director uses it to reconstruct ways of being.

These psychodramatic actions, of political nature, in public spaces, bring the discussion of how to involve passersby in the action to be developed, besides highlighting the social, cultural, and historical problems present in the sufferings brought by the participants.

Psychodrama on the street, as Davoli (2006) says, despite taking place in a passing space, must create the possibility of some intimacy when you are staging something. It is also important that it is visible to those near it and those passing by. Its impact and the possibility of new scenes will depend on these factors. Therefore, directing public psychodrama needs a team that assists the director by identifying possibilities in the audience, creating scenes as “professional actors” and as the auxiliary ego of the possible protagonists.

“Magic, this is the beauty of street theater. The street scene is in the street. It must not be imprisoned. Like water it must pass. We frame for a minute so we can see” (Davoli, 2006, p. 91, our translation).

Davoli (2006) points out that by framing passing and everyday events, we circumscribe territories in Deleuze<sup>2</sup>’s conception, and, in Moreno’s (1984) words, we create

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<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1997) understand urban space as a floating territory, defined by the experience of its inhabitants, without being reduced to a determined space. Territory is the subjective lived space, the place where a subject feels “at home”, synonymous with appropriation, of a subjectivity closed in on itself.

a stage at the feet of urban actors constituting itself as a sociopolitical action insofar as we call into question what is constituted, seeking new openings for it.

We exemplify with a public psychodrama integral to the XIX IAGP Congress (International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes—Groups in the City) held in a square in the city of Rovinj in Croatia, directed by Cida Davoli and with Marcia Almeida Batista (2015) as one of the auxiliary egos, in addition to other psychodramatists. To attract the attention of passersby, at the appointed time, at the agreed location, the first action was to play a song using loudspeakers. Simultaneously, as they walk around the square, egos display banners that call for thinking about the situation we live in the world at that moment. Those who are interested to know what is going on are invited to participate in the psychodramatic work. Gradually, the director and her team favor the construction of dialogues among passersby. The task is not simple because the tourist site brings people from different parts of the world speaking different languages. The management and staff speak English. Many other languages are spoken and are translated by the staff and by other participants.

Resources like music and banners used in Croatia were utilized in other city psychodrama sessions (March 2001) with sayings like: *What can I do to have a happy city? What do I wish? Who in me desires?*

Although the psychodramatic proposal stresses the theme's importance comes from the group, an initial theme can be proposed. Sometimes the director invokes a theme already chosen by him. In others, it takes advantage of recent events or important dates.

In a public psychodrama session at the Centro Cultural São Paulo (Relatos de Sessões, 2010), which was held in a different room from the usual one, whose name is Tarsila do Amaral,<sup>3</sup> the director begins by inviting everyone to perceive the space they are in and asks them to associate the occupation of that space with the spaces they occupy in life. The space itself is used as a working element. The participants' perception of the space and the other participants in the group is important to give meaning and context to develop the work. Another resource is the use of a famous painting by Tarsila, the *Abaporu*, present in the middle of the room and from which the director calls on everyone to appropriate the body form. The figures created were organized into an exhibit. Four groups were formed with different "readings" of *Abaporu*. Each figure in the *Abaporu* was viewed slowly to allow time for each to be grasped by the viewers.

In another psychodrama, held on September 10, 2005 (Relatos de Sessões, 2010), in the public psychodrama of CCSP, the director takes advantage of a recent fact: the arrest of a city politician, with great repercussion in the media. The participants already arrive warmed up to discuss this topic. The director needs only to make it

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<sup>3</sup> Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973) was a Brazilian painter and draftsman, one of the most important visual artists of the first phase of Modernism, concretizing all the avant-garde aspirations formulated in her work by the group. The painting *Abaporu*, painted in 1928, is his best-known work. Together with writers Oswald de Andrade and Raul Bopp, she launched the Anthropophagic movement, which was the most radical of all the movements of the Modernist period ([https://www.ebiografia.com/tarsila\\_amaral/](https://www.ebiografia.com/tarsila_amaral/)).

possible to dialogue in different positions by proposing that each one assumes the role of someone involved in the issue: the politician, the judge, the defenders, etc. In this work, the manifestations of all political positions are important.

On another occasion, the eve of a 2012 municipal election, the director of CCSP's public psychodrama asks people in the audience to describe what they consider to be the ideal politician. The multiple descriptions are grouped into four categories, and each group builds a picture. The audience is asked to choose one of them, which is dramatized on stage. This creates the possibility to reflect on the political participation of each of those present (Relatos de Sessões, 2010). This example highlights the important connection between director and current issues, between audience and dramatization, and audience and actors on stage. Having auxiliary egos in the audience helps the director to make this connection from information about what is happening in the group that can be reverberated by the actors on stage. Working from a political perspective implies creating various spaces for dialogue. Therefore, from the beginning, the director must favor them.

In Croatia, as work mentioned earlier, the auxiliary egos were aware of the movement of those watching the role-play. When they hear a comment from someone about what is happening, they invite the participant to place his or her position in the scene. Gradually, the discussions are centered on the issue of immigrants. A scene is made from the speech of a passing girl.

With the participation of the surrounding group, a dialogue begins between a refugee, the girl's role, and another participant who takes the role of the country to which she wishes to go. The refugee wants to enter the country, but he will not allow it; he creates obstacles and gives his reasons why she cannot enter.

As the scene unfolds, someone from the audience questions the relationship between the immigrant/refugee and her country of origin: "There is no use in wanting others to receive you. It is necessary to understand why you had to leave. Why don't we work on the country that expels?" The scene widens by including there the participation of this person in the role of the refugee's country of origin. The dialogue between the three (country of origin, desired country, and refugee) expands. Other people stop to listen to the dialogue, and some offer to participate in the scene by taking the role of one of the countries. No one is willing to put themselves in the role of a refugee (Davoli & Batista, 2015). Spontaneously, among those watching the scene, someone assumes the role of a country that invites the refugee to live there.

The director is attentive to what is happening in the scene and arranges those who wish to participate in a committed manner and from a chosen role. Eventually, it proposes role reversals that allow each person to hear their lines and see how they resonate within them.

The actions developed by both the director and the auxiliary egos contribute to a greater connection between the group in the audience and the actors. At the same time, the role reversal contributes to the greater involvement of everyone with the refugee issue. One does not seek a solution to the problem but committed reflection from experience (Davoli & Batista, 2015).

Theoretically, the invitation to the refugee to take shelter in another country could resolve the issue. Our protagonist is fearful. She does not trust that she might actually



be getting an opportunity in life. As Davoli (2011) says, there is a need for the psychodramatic scene to be innovative, to surprise the actors and the audience present, innovating the script. Time is passing and, even though we do not have a solution, it is time to finish the work. Many speeches are made, and none are conclusive. The complexity of the issue is clear. The passerby who proposed the question thanks, and we close the scene right after. We have broadened our scope for reflection on the topic. Some people remain in the square talking among themselves. Strangers and foreigners share what is lived. We sympathize with the refugee and go our separate ways. For those who were there, the perception of the refugee issue has undoubtedly broadened. For one of the authors<sup>4</sup> and auxiliary ego her perception was: "I certainly became sensitized by all that I experienced having greater insight into the complexity of the topic".

Eventually, as in the sociodrama with the theme *The Ideal Politician*, the audience yearns for a solution. Many politicians are presented, and each of them makes proposals for the city. One of them, assisted by a local drug lord, has few proposals, but distributes basic food baskets, T-shirts, promises of employment, and is applauded enthusiastically by everyone on the scene. The proposal was to think of an ideal politician, and the surprise, in the end, was the conclusion that an ideal politician offers favors in exchange for votes! This generated an important reflection on sharing. And it was possible to reflect on how individual solutions do not contribute to guarantee efficient municipality management for everyone. On the other hand, the scene brought reflects a sad reality present in the country.

If in Croatia the sharing took place during the dramatization, and perhaps continued in the small groups that kept talking after the public psychodrama, the session at Centro Cultural São Paulo builds, in the sharing, new possibilities for the scene. It is the director's job at this point to allow everyone who wants to express how they felt and what impact the role-play had on them. Not forgetting the important speech of those who lived through the scene. It is a moment to make one's own feelings, emotions, and ideas explicit. The director needs to help the audience to bear the different conceptions without taking sides and not fall into the trap of giving a closed answer or interpretation to what has been experienced.

Since December 2019, Brazil has been tracking the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus worldwide, which leads to routine changes, social isolation, transfer from face-to-face work to telecommuting, and the increase or prolongation of uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety and fear. In this scenario, the public psychodrama of the Centro Cultural São Paulo continues to happen weekly, now in a virtual way, named online public psychodrama. In this modality, the participation of homeless people, passersby, and psychologically compromised people is not possible, and despite these losses, there are up to 100 online participants per session. It was considered important to maintain the proposal to continue discussing the policy in the country and to keep the group of psychodramatists together for a possible resumption at the end of the pandemic.

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<sup>4</sup> Marcia Almeida Batista.

In online work, the warm-up demands strategies such as erasing the image of those who are not speaking, using the camera to enhance the presentation (closeness, distance, hands, etc.), and highlighting the actors more to favor the dramatizations that are taking place. The techniques improve for the use of the virtual. The themes are diverse, but the perspective of citizenship construction remains present, reinforcing the political dimension of the psychodramatists' work. Directors have opted for sociodramas based on a previously proposed theme.

Here are some examples of this current work:

On May 29, 2021<sup>5</sup>, the warm-up for the proposed theme, *The Garbage*, was the showing of a short video by Itapura (2021). After the conversation about the repercussion that the video caused, the audience, in subgroups, builds small stories that generate a dramatic interaction in the big group. The social theme allows reflection on the garbage in the relationship with others, with the city, and the subjective garbage: how to feel treated as garbage and sometimes even discarded (not recognized). Here we highlight the intrinsic relationship between the subjective and the sociopolitical aspects that psychodrama reveals.

On March 27, 2021<sup>6</sup>, the theme was *Clarices (but they could be Joanas, Sabrinas, Luizas, Sofias, Monalissas)*. Actresses present three different scenes, and, from this presentation, a collective dramaturgy is built using a poll made available by the platform and the chat. It is noticeable here that there is a new use of video calling software. Two stories were told: the first, Sofia's, involved the grandson, grandmother, and mother (now deceased) relationship, a plea for reparation, hope, and collective care. The second, Sabrina's, questions the necessity of having a partner or not and her decision to be alone. The participation of men in history indicates the problematization of the gender issue.

Currently, Brazil is experiencing a political situation with implications that encompass the tearing apart of the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity. In moments like these, we know the importance of group building, the feeling of belonging, and the sharing of fears and anxieties, which is favored by these public work spaces.

In all sociodrama, psychodrama, face-to-face or virtual situations, the possibility of building new bonds makes room for creativity and spontaneity in the exercise of new roles. Like Batista (2014), we reaffirm the importance of creating dialogues between participants, leading them to create something together, and propitiating people's growth. By making explicit the contradictions that exist in our society, the group can recognize different ways of dealing with them.

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<sup>5</sup> Session on 05/29/2021 (Davoli et al., 2021), an interview about the direction by Cida Davoli in codirection with Viviane Barreto and Maíra Medeiros Lima. Host: Pedro Mascarenhas. Guest participants: Valéria Barcellos, Fábio Itapura and José Calderoni. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMuLwPSgw6I\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMuLwPSgw6I_)

<sup>6</sup> Online Public Psychodrama, Session on 03/27/2021 (Fernandes et al., 2021), an interview about the direction by Cláudia Fernandes and Grupo Gota D'Água: Áurea Ferreira, Cecília Leite Costa, Fabiana Ferraresso, Martha Lemos, and Rosa Maria. Host: Cassiana Léa. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8wp4LjYrl&t=111s\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8wp4LjYrl&t=111s_)

In today's world, where all positions are polarized, working on building dialogue is becoming more and more necessary. Moreno was already proposing psychodramatic actions between the rulers of Russia and the USA as a way to resolve political conflicts. Daring or naive, he was not taken seriously by either side. However, his proposal remains valid because it allows more sides of a certain issue to be exposed and a greater number of people to be sensitized. As Moreno (1975) says, sociodrama will enable one to explore and treat both personal and cultural issues simultaneously, allowing new insight into the attitude of members of one culture toward another.

Undertaking more and more political actions like those, he envisioned at the time of the Cold War could positively interfere in world affairs. The same can be said about the issues present in Brazil today. Our political issues are no longer just about poverty, which grows every day and needs to be taken care of, or about social inequality, but, as Moreno (1999) says, about the most numerous proletariats in human society, the therapeutic proletariat, composed of people who suffer from one or more forms of misery: psychic misery, social misery, economic misery, and racial or religious misery.

## Final Considerations

In this text, we present some actions that are building a new way of doing for psychodramatists who understand today, with more clarity, that their doing is a political way of doing and must be constantly discussed and expanded, especially in the use of a robust methodology that challenges cultural conservations, making room for new possibilities. It is not enough to know the psychodramatic method for this to be done, it is necessary to reflect on the doing in an ethical and committed way.

More and more, the work of psychodramatists in Brazil is present in critical moments of Brazilian society, giving everyone the possibility to have a voice and be heard, which has demonstrated its importance as a psychodrama of resistance.

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# Chapter 20

## Ethnic Psychodrama: Perspectives from a Palmarine Clinic



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It is time for no one to let go of anyone but to look deep into the open palm the soul of the one who offers you the gesture. the lassoing of hands cannot be handcuff but rather the proper tactic, Necessary scheme. (Evaristo, 2020, Our translation)

**Abstract** This chapter consists of our reflections based on our experiences and practices as mental health professionals about possible interconnections of J. L. Moreno's Ethnodrama method and some assumptions of African Psychology that anchor our thinking in a perspective of a Palmarine clinic, as possibilities of dealing with the psychological suffering that afflicts a significant portion of the Brazilian population, who live the sorrows of a society structured by antiblack racism.

**Keywords** Ethnodrama · Racism · African psychology · Quilombo of Palmares

### Introduction

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE 2020), the Brazilian population in Brazil is composed of black, indigenous, white, and oriental races. Black people, who declare themselves as black and brown-skinned, account for 56.2% of this population. Out of the five centuries of existence of the Brazilian nation, in almost four centuries, the country lived under an official regime of enslavement of the black population and was the last country in all America to declare the end of this slavery regime in 1888. All this to say that we are a society structured by antiblack

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racism. Racism, as a system of power, implicitly and effectively, determines black and nonblack places.

It is not an officialized separation, but a perceived felt separation in everyday relationships because racism organizes the relationships in society. In its great majority, the black population lives on the margins of poverty, with low schooling rates as a result of less access to formal education, less access to health, employment, housing, and leisure. Despite the high tax rate, investments from the public authorities do not reach this racial group as they do for others. Some affirmative action policies have been implemented in the last decade, conquered through the struggles of black movements, such as the racial quota policy implemented in 2004, which aims to equalize the conditions of insertion of the black population in public university education. However, according to the IBGE (2019), in 2018 alone, we saw 50.3% of black students entering the country's public higher education, while of the students graduating in the same year, only 18.3% were black, while white students accounted for 36.1%, basically twice as many. These numbers show that there is still a long way to go regarding racial equity in Brazilian public university education because, despite the racial quota policy guaranteeing more significant insertion, there is not the same guarantee regarding the permanence of these people throughout the course, and the consequence of this is that they enter alone in the job market, which consequently lacks professionals who are "required" to answer for the performance of those who did not make it, by a system that does not provide the same chances for everyone to achieve it.

The above example is one of the unfoldings caused by racial inequality in our society. The perception of this inequality has several effects, and one of them is a psychological illness, that is, racism is a cause of suffering for the mental health of black people, psychological suffering triggered by the experience of situations in which one was the target of prejudice, insults, discrimination, and/or racist violence. The psychological damages are numerous, such as depression, anxiety, panic syndrome, insomnia, agoraphobia, stress, and others, and often may not be associated with racism by those who are suffering. From this place, as psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychodramatists, we seek to contribute, through our performances, from the perspective of Jacob Levy Moreno, the creator of psychodrama and its theoretical and practical referential, grounded in the ideology of including (Fonseca, 2018).

It is in this context of inclusion, especially of the black population, that in 1945, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the Experimental Black Theater (EBT) was created, a project idealized by Abdias Nascimento (1914–2011) that created a space for cultural and artistic experimentation to tension the situation of black people, but also had pedagogical and social objectives and rescue the values of black people, with its own aesthetic and dramaturgical contours due to the complete absence of black people, black people's stories, and ethnic-racial guidelines in the representations of Brazilian theater at the time. The first records of work with psychodrama in Brazil date from the late 1940s, with sociologist Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, within the EBT (Malaquias, 2020).

That said, it is possible to consider, according to Elisa Larkin Nascimento (as cited in Malaquias, 2020, p. 17), Abdias's widow, that the EBT is the cradle of psychodrama in Brazil and, as she points out, "this fact can be considered a paradox, since psychodrama is a racially neutral theory and proposal for therapeutic action, conceived and developed for everyone, regardless of color".

In this scenario, we will bring into dialogue with psychodrama some assumptions, starting from an Afro-perspective logic, as proposed by the philosopher Noguera (2014), building an epistemological narrative that recognizes the pluriversality in the construction of knowledge from various perspectives.

### *Afrocentricity*

When it comes to the term "Afrocentricity", it is necessary to punctuate which base we refer to. It is a proposition by Molefi Kete Asante, an African American professor and philosopher, one of the exponents in Africology studies, who posits that Afrocentricity passes through the concept of "centricity", which concerns the willingness to include oneself in one's own cultural and historical context. For Asante (2009), Afrocentricity is a practical, theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic method that considers African, continental, and diasporic beings as central subjects and agents of an agency, who will act according to their interests, in favor of their humanities, and on behalf of their cultural images. That said, Afrocentricity allows for the proper localization of this black agency that, as Noguera (2014) points out, after the displacement caused by antiblack racism, even presents itself as an anti-racist resistance.

An Afrocentric design should include the minimum characteristics (Asante, 2009, p. 96):

- Interest in psychological localization;
- Commitment to the discovery of the African place as a subject;
- Defense of African cultural elements;
- Commitment to a new narrative of African history.

Assumptions of the methodology regarding the life experiences of Africans from the Afrocentric perspective are as follows (Asante, 2009):

- What does "African" mean—a person who participated in the five hundred years of resistance to domination;
- To be Afrocentrist is to claim kinship with the struggle and pursue the ethic of justice against all forms of human oppression;
- Africans as individuals who support the fact that their ancestors came from Africa to the Americas, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world during the last five hundred years. There is an inner African connection, as well as an external connection.

In Brazil, Elisa Larkin Nascimento contributes with debate on Afrocentricity pointing us to new approaches to knowledge production through Afro-Brazilian studies, Congresses of Black Researchers, Brazilian Association of Black Researchers, and provokes new understandings of the phenomena, how they are articulated, the special contours according to the identity of the subject, its center. To define the subject's location, that is, to make explicit the place from which the view departs. She considers identity as a social issue and a political factor (Nascimento, 2009).

Alberto Guerreiro Ramos proposed a revision of national sociology and called for science guided by national themes, a Brazilian sociology. He affirmed that the foundation of his theoretical positions is found in his social praxis of EBT and anticipated the idea that would, decades later, ground a black psychology in the USA and an Afro-Brazilian approach in psychology (Nascimento, 2009, pp. 184–185).

Given this, we have an outline for the work in the clinic, mainly concerning the racial theme, especially when we consider the psychic suffering crossed by racism. We live in a racially unequal society. Although the black population corresponds to 56.2% of the total number of Brazilians, this percentage is not present in the power segments of society (IBGE 2019). On the contrary, it is the niche population most exposed to violence. According to the 2019 Atlas of Violence, from 2012 to 2017, 255,000 black people were murdered, and as a ratio, blacks are 2.7 more likely to be victims of violence than whites. Thus, there is no denying that, for black people, it is impossible to live in this society, configured in this way, immune to suffering, to some extent, even if subtly, some experience in this place, to be black in a racially unequal society with such violent outcomes.

We understand that one of the possibilities of reception, care, and treatment of these issues from the perspective of quilombization defined by Abdias Nascimento (2019) as a technology employed by the black people is still in the validity of the slave regime, as a form of resistance and liberation.

## *Quilombism*

Quilombism is a term coined by Abdias Nascimento in a sociopolitical perspective of combating racism and building a new society inspired by the experience of the *quilombos* and the cultures of African matrices. Abdias defined *quilombo* as “fraternal and free meeting, solidarity, coexistence, existential communion... a *quilombola* society represents a stage in human and sociopolitical progress in terms of economic egalitarianism” (Nascimento, 2019, pp. 289–290, our translation). They are representative spaces of freedom, of caring, and being cared for collectively.

In this sense, African psychology, as it presents itself today, potentializes psychodramatic work and the sense of quilombization of the clinical space, using the Palmarine drive as an engine in a proposal of decolonization of subjectivities, in the constitution of a social, political, aesthetic, and ethically located clinic, in a circular and communitarian movement of construction of welcoming, care, a potency



of work and life for the confrontation of racial inequalities still in force in the cultural conservation of our society.

### ***African Psychology***

African psychology is a line of study that has been developed mainly in the USA and Brazil, the first African psychology article in the Portuguese language being by Wades W. Nobles, *Shaku Sheti: Retaking and Reappropriating a Psychological Afrocentric Focus (Shaku Sheti: Retomando e Reapropriando um Foco Psicológico Afrocentrado)* (Nascimento, 2009).

Nobles proposes the discussion by taking into account the perspective of the invasion of the African continent and the consequent abduction of African peoples to various other countries as enslaved people. He sticks to the metaphor of “derailment and deafricanization” and states that: “the path of African development in terms of socialization, family life, education, ways of knowing God, patterns of government, deep philosophical thought, scientific and technical inventions have been derailed by foreign invasion and domination” (Nobles, 2009, p. 284, our translation). The researcher invites us to consider the consequences and sequels left by the African holocaust, as he himself calls it, which are still present in our contemporaneity, in society’s current relations, and African psychology proposes to understand this phenomenon, the effects of this derailing and point to ways of dealing with it, since traditional psychology, with a solid European base, has had little or no concern in contemplating this discussion.

According to Nobles (2009, p. 277, our translation), “most contemporary discussion in this field has occurred; however, in reaction to the limitations of Western (white) psychology and or the negative psychological consequences of being African in an anti-African reality”. We emphasize the importance and urgency of decolonizing psychology from a liberation perspective and including other theoretical and methodological referents (Nogueira, 2019).

## Psychodrama and African Psychology: Perspectives from a Palmarine Clinic

We defined Palmarine clinic inspired by the Quilombo of Palmares.<sup>1</sup> *Quilombo*, described by some as a place where enslaved blacks used to flee, but for us, a historical space, is a powerful reaffirmation of existence and resistance, where it was possible to create a community where they lived together and regained the sense of being African, and, as researcher Maria Beatriz Nascimento teaches us, it is “a place where freedom was practiced, where ethnic and ancestral ties were reinvigorated”. In this perspective, for us, a Palmarine clinic is guided by welcoming everyone in a horizontal relationship, with different roles, in which everyone is part of the same context and is involved in the process of treating emotional, psychic pain and, above all, looks at the whole person there with their individual and collective history, their relational and support networks (Malaquias & Santos, 1999).

It is undeniable that racism affects the subjectivity of the black population in a significant way and reflects the crossings and effects of a racially unequal society. This notion brings an ethical, aesthetic, and political contour to the psychodramatic clinic intended to imprint as a therapeutic resource the Palmarine perspective and the quilombization as a potentiator of the process of treatment and healing of this suffering.

As the channeler of this power, the director needs to be aware of these issues and, as they appear in the dramatic scenario, denounce them together with their protagonist, whether this protagonist is a single person or a group. The denunciation that the psychic suffering that presents itself is a result of racism favors that this contour is beyond the subjective, that this contour is also collective, after all, that is precisely the point. Racism is a symptom of the collective, and its confrontation, although it can be grounded in subjectivity, will not occur in this field. Confronting racism is collective. It is from the society we live in. When we denounce that the pain presented there, in the dramatic scene, has a collective crossing because it is also the expression of the pain of a racial group, the handling is transformed and gains a due political dimension. The psychodramatic Palmarine clinic is politically crossed, and there is no way it can be different.

The experiences presented here are under this aegis that racism, as a collective symptom, when presented in subjectivity, in the form of psychic suffering, brings circumscribed the pain of a people, of a racial group, next to the individual contour, and, although the handling will be directed to this individual or group protagonist in

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<sup>1</sup> Palmares was the longest-lasting, most extensive, and numerous *quilombo* in the history of Brazil. It was a community organization consisting mainly of black people. It was built in a region of difficult access, in the Serra da Barriga, state of Alagoas, with many palm trees, trees that had many uses, among them the *quilombolas*' food. Its leaves were used to make the roofs of the houses, hence the origin of the name Palmares. This *quilombo* existed from 1597 to 1694 and was an important symbol of resistance of the enslaved people in Brazil, of the possibilities to regroup, recreate, rebuild, transform, and free themselves.

the psychodramatic scenario, the dimension of this pain is more than subjective. It is also the expression of political pain.

The clinic with black people has some particularities. It is widespread, for example, the feeling of not belonging in interpersonal relationships, low self-esteem, insecurity, fear of failure, and the idea of having to prove themselves all the time. We are not saying that these symptoms do not present themselves in the clinic with white people, for example. However, we cannot look at this suffering detached from the psychic effects of racism in the subjectivities of black people, who live in a society where the ground is not potentiating their origin, their history, and the appreciation of their culture.

## Protocol

We are mental health professionals working in private practice, psychiatric hospital, and Psychosocial Care Centers (PSCCs), with bipersonal and group attendance. To illustrate our practice in the Palmarine perspective in group work, we present the protocol of an ethnodrama, which Moreno defines as “a synthesis of psychodrama with the researches of ethnic problems, of ethnic group conflicts (blacks and whites, Arabs and Jews, Hindus and Mohammedans)” (Moreno, 1974, p. 123, our translation).

Ethnodrama, held in the public psychodrama space of Diadema on 09/05/2020, with two hours duration, through the zoom platform due to the pandemic resulting from COVID-19, as a result of our physical isolation. The functional unit was composed of a director and two auxiliary egos, both black women. An audience of 37 male and female adults all declared to be cisgender, psychodramatists, and professionals in the fields of health, education, law, engineering, and others. We did not have an explicit theme. The implied theme was the song *Principia* from the album AmarElo by the Brazilian singer-songwriter, rapper Emicida (2019). The functional unit is available to work with the group resonances from the video and song “Principia”.

***Unspecific warm-up:*** Presentation of the functional unit (director and auxiliary egos), sociometric mapping aimed at getting to know the group, and establishing some group space.

***Specific warm-up:*** Everyone watched and listened to the music video of *Principia*—the rap style has a peculiar rhythm, and its melody and lyrics tend to express the reality of ghettos and peripheral populations of the big Brazilian cities (Emicida, 2019). The majority of ghetto residents are black people. At the end of the video, the participants were instructed to close their eyes and lower their gaze to get in touch with and register the present sensation. As they opened their eyes, they were directed to subrooms to share their sensations. After the sharings were finished, the group created a scene to be presented.

**Dramatization:** There were six groups. Group dramatization. At the end of each group’s presentation, the director asked for a name for the scene presented (Table 20.1).

**Sharing:** Moment in which participants talked about their feelings. The lines were: “Comforting me, comforting me”; “I was surprised by my speech. Fight scene. Love, but it is necessary to fight, to conquer my place”; “Love makes you bond in similarities. Each one of us is a piece, it builds humanity”; “Nice to be part of a group where you can say what you feel, without criticism, be yourself. Where the therapist can be herself”. The director speaks of Ubuntu—a Yoruba term that means “I am because we are”.

Moreover, the group keeps sharing: “We—the public psychodrama of Diadema. A living body. A virtual being that appears every Saturday, taking turns, fraternizing, crying, smiling, understanding each other, giving each other mutual help”; “Hope × hopelessness. If a person is happy before, they will not be happy after”; “Origin of the *Homo sapiens*”; “I leave moved by the surrender, I see the light at the end of the tunnel, even far away”; “We are at war, the army is trained for war, it learns to starve”; “Talking to others is a support group, we are in the pandemic, adaptation together”; “We love this group, it is like the sun, the sunflower”; “Here one finds the will to go on”.

The director shared about the difficulties we are experiencing in this pandemic and the science of how we treat each other, importance of self-care, of taking care of our relationships, our bonds, and she ends with the reading of Conceição Evaristo’s poem “*Tempo de Aquilombar*”.

Moreover, Abdias reassures us:

The *quilombos* of the 15–19th centuries bequeathed a heritage of quilombist practice. It is incumbent on contemporary black people to maintain and expand the Afro-Brazilian culture of resistance to genocide and affirm their truth. A method of analyzing, understanding, and defining a concrete experience, the quilombism expresses the science of slave blood, of the sweat that Africans shed with feet and hands building the economy of this country. A better-quality future for the Afro-Brazilian population can only occur through the energetic effort of organization and collective mobilization, both of the black population and their scholarly intelligences and capacities, for the enormous battle on the front of theoretical-scientific creation. (Nascimento, 2019, p. 290, our translation)

**Table 20.1** Group dramatization through the song “Principia”

Groups	What they did	Name for the presented scene
1	Hand movements	“Change of life”
2	Arm movements	“Caring for the other, being together”
3	Fast and slow movements, standing still	“All we have is we” [sic]
4	Masked and unmasked	“Adaptation, each in their way”
5	Wave, water, attitude	“We are waves, and we forget that we are also ocean”
6	Sun, heat, summer and love, protection in the bubble, Om mantra	“One in all and all in one”

The importance of Abdias' teachings is evident, especially today, when we are called upon to act toward new possible answers, given the urgency of agendas that guarantee the right to a quality life. As psychodramatists, we are called to act from the place we occupy.

Reflecting on Moreno's socionomic project (Moreno, 1975), our use indicates in which direction to use it. For us, the possibility of dramatization, the as if, the as it is, opens spaces for organization, appreciation of recognition of the self, of the other, of others, of this social, a vision of territories that takes into account the psychism in the understanding of the social, of culture.

To be Palmarine is to experience oneself in the commitment to the rescue of fragmented identity and the loosening of visible and invisible, internal and external chains (Malaquias & Santos, 1999). "It is time to form new *quilombos*, wherever we are, and may future days come, save 2020, the *quilombola* mystique persists affirming: 'freedom is a constant struggle'" (Evaristo, 2020, our translation).

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# Chapter 21

## Public Sociodrama in Brazil Without Homophobia: The Dreaded Stage



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**Abstract** The present text reflects on the contribution of socionomy to the construction of citizenship through sociodramatic practices that develop the role of the social intercessor, both of the psychodramatist director of the intervention and its participants. In the flow of affections of the relational dynamics of social networks, this protagonist-citizen seeks to recreate their history and that of the community. Considering the current Brazilian scenario, in which the conquest for rights of the LGBTQIA+ population exposes that our body is political, it becomes urgent to recognize sexual and gender diversity to understand the multiplicity of the human and respect for differences. We will discuss experiences from the project entitled “Public Sociodrama Brazil Without Homophobia”, which is based on the group ethic of making visible the relationships of belonging in social networks. Public sociodrama promotes a space for community dialogue in which the bonds of individuals weave networks of solidarity in the fight against LGBTphobia. Thus, it concretizes a pedagogy of rights by intervening and reflecting on what unites us and the place we belong. In this approach, gender violence, identified in the family and social spheres, reveals who we are in the face of the inclusion of the other, the being other, or the inability to feel the other.

**Keywords** Sociodramatic intervention · LGBTQIA+ citizenship · Gender violence

### Introduction

The political scenario agonizes over an ominous future for Brazil. At the fork in that road, we are divided as a population. An abyss separates those who are mere spectators, passive to the surprises of so many abuses, from those who challenge places of authorship of the new.

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Coexistence has never been more challenging for us. Coexistence threatens us more than it stimulates. And the collective creation risks giving in to the imposition of the same, of the traditional and of the permanent.

We witness the trivialization of violence in Brazilian cities expressed by intolerance toward what or who is diverse. This other, the different, hated or feared, seems to be, at the same time, the cause and consequence of social exclusion.

The present text<sup>1</sup> was written in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic when, forcibly, we stopped to review our biography from the perception of the relationships with ourselves, with others, and with the surroundings. As never before have we realized that responsibility for self-care is so important for everyone's safety. And we start to wonder about "who will survive?", just as psychiatrist Jacob Levy Moreno did almost 80 years ago when he developed the sociometry (Moreno, 1994). He stated that the sustainability of the planet would depend on social or community networks. Only conscious subjects survive in them, both as to their place and the solidarity, creativity, and spontaneity they exercise together.

Our reflection is directed to psychodramatists interested in the construction of citizenship to instigate them to social intercession. We understand the arduous journey in the conquest of rights as coinciding with the foundation of Moreno's socioeconomic project. Both are based on the reciprocal self-knowledge that comes from the group relationship, coercion, and coexperience. In our practice, it becomes urgent to ask: Do we know how to welcome, decipher, and make visible the protagonism of social movements?

The rights to life, free sexual orientation, and affective union are indisputable, although violation of them occurs in the phenomenon of homophobia.<sup>2</sup> Our country, considered worldwide as the country that kills the most transvestites and transsexuals,<sup>3</sup> demands to look at the socialization of social gender roles, settling violence in the family and social sphere. The people's consciousness needs to be transformed when faced with the limit between its survival and its extermination.

We, sociometrists, can weave networks of solidarity for LGBTQIA+ people and aid the perception of those who discriminate against them. To this end, we performed the "Brazil Without Homophobia" public sociodramas in five cities from 2004 to 2018. We address whether, on this stage, social networks can intervene, reflect, and change oppressive contexts. We analyze the axiodramatic intervention methodology from the description and processing of a public sociodrama that took place in the same place and minutes after the Sexual Diversity Parade.

We invite you to develop the role of the social intercessor by going beyond the walls of the private clinic and forming, in the space of the street, a citizen's theater. Thus, we emphasize the importance of social networks for the culture of peace and

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<sup>1</sup> Previously psychodrama has addressed the trajectory from gender violence to homophobia by dialoguing with authors from social psychology and anthropology (Neves, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Only on June 13, 2019, the Supreme Court ruled on the criminalization of homophobia in Brazil, equating it with racism (Brazil, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> In the first semester of 2020, the rate of transphobia-related homicides exceeded that recorded in the same period of 2019 by 39%. They result from governmental omission, the context of vulnerability, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Agência Brasil, 2020).



nonviolence.<sup>4</sup> This depends on the individual's participation and responsibility in the face of their intentionality to care. Here, Moreno's (1994) conception of community,<sup>5</sup> as the place of multiple relationships, where human rights generate mental health and social harmony, becomes fundamental.

The construction of citizenship depends on community belonging relationships.<sup>6</sup> Recognizing, including, and respecting sexual and gender diversity should be its foundation.

## Family, School, and Socioeducational Institutions: Threads Between Belonging and Exclusion

We believe that our action, as sociopsychodramatists, will be truly transformative in the face of the homophobic scenario if we consider the interrelationships present in the socialization process. The correlation between violence, ideology, and learning gender roles results from a social and psychological synchronous mechanism. Homophobia signifies the fear, hatred, and revulsion toward homosexuality, which is considered a threat to patriarchy (Borges, 2009; Lionço & Diniz, 2008; Peixoto, 2018). Social and cultural homophobia is institutionalized by keeping the LGBTQIA+ population inadequate and excluded.

The child with a gender pattern opposite to the culturally expected one recreates themselves on how to be masculine and feminine. She suffers emotional or physical punishment, internalizing her difference in the affective-sexual realm, and, thus, associates fear with shame and guilt over their preferences and attitudes. Suffering from being who you are due to feeling same-sex attraction develops egodystonic homosexuality. The daily stress of LGBTQIA+ people seems to be the component of internalized homophobia (Pereira & Leal, 2002; Sedgwick, 2007).

Internalized homophobia is as determinant as social homophobia.

Psychodramatists question their clinical practice concerning sexual diversity. Rosa (2014) suggests psychodramatic psychotherapy for the homoaffectionate role learning process, aiming to resolve conflicts of homosexual women. They must learn to give new responses to the exact situations where they have been discriminated

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<sup>4</sup> According to Weil (1998), universal values that transcend the individual, the family, the nation, and the human race relate to the awareness of an ethics of the heart. It awakens free, tolerant, and peaceful personalities.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of community materialized in the psychodramatic movement, initially, with the Public Sociodrama of Ethics and Citizenship, in São Paulo, on March 21, 2001. Brazilian psychodramatists organized it through the Internet. Soon after, two international psychodrama networks held Public Sociodramas in several countries. Reports were compiled by Bello (2004).

<sup>6</sup> The socionomic acts on ecologies reexamine personal and collective well-being regarding belonging to a given community. Addressing the group, its ideology and desire for transformation, would enhance intrapsychic and socioenvironmental relationships. Almeida (2019) who developed this methodology teaches to unveil the *cosmic man* integrated with the planet, seeking himself as a citizen.

against or where there was such fear. By transitioning from the tense field of rejection, returning to the relaxed field, they achieve a state of resilience along with spontaneity. According to Silveira (2014), generally, homosexual men question their sexual identity by seeing themselves as different and strange to their peers. This reprehensible other, who is himself, becomes the phantom character, from whom he will have to escape. Otherwise, you will be vulnerable socially and psychologically in your loneliness and silence. In the therapeutic process, you must remedy<sup>7</sup> this look to constitute yourself, from within, in a more free and spontaneous way.

Psychotherapeutic practices need to understand sexuality united with citizenship. Homophobia victims' belonging to support networks that reflect their rights provides them with mental and physical health.

As sociopsychodramatists, we have to develop a pedagogy of LGBTQIA+ rights. In each letter that this acronym and its flag represent, there is a universe of meanings. The letters LGB relate to the direction of sexual desire (for the same sex, lesbian and gay, or both, bisexual). The letters TQIA are related to gender identities (transsexual and transvestite, queer, intersex, and asexual). The symbol + is related to countless possibilities of expression of the human (Jesus, 2012; Simões & Facchini, 2009).

In this + lies the intriguing question: Will we know how to break out of the conservative, normative, and pathologizing of our psy<sup>8</sup> training, as psychiatrists or psychologists, and act in this fluid process of gender expression?

Psychosocial interventions<sup>9</sup> have defined the importance of belonging to social networks, both in the processes of exclusion in institutional dynamics and the universe of the street. Technicians and social educators, in the street approach and psychosocial care institutions, repeated a problem: the inadequate socialization of social gender roles. They were often surprised by their professional performances in the face of young people's sexual identity conflicts. Old models regarding the specific territories of men and women persisted in the socioeducational practice. Even with a progressive discourse and interest in pedagogical innovation, they made marginal sexualities invisible. Prisoners of a psychological trap, they relapsed into the exclusionary logic they criticized so much. Instead of welcoming, they seemed to exclude children and adolescents, reproducing the power of gender, class, and race relations. This is where our interest in sexual and gender diversity interventions in the field of culture comes from.

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<sup>7</sup> Moreno conceived the identity matrix as a schema of human developmental stages in which environmental, psychological, genetic, and social factors influence the child's ability to bond with their relational world. The goal of psychodramatic psychotherapy would be to remediate, imprinting new emotional patterns on the individual, from the release of past or transference charges, in spontaneous and creative acts (Fonseca, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Still, the curriculum of psychology undergraduate courses does not contemplate the discussion of gender, feminist, and queer theories. They reproduce practices in which subjects submit to the "truth" of (their) gender, enacted in international disease codes (Toneli, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Psychodrama, as action research, was developed from 1993 to 1998, in the socioeducational assistance to children and adolescents at risk. In the trajectory from home to the street, the rupture of their group ties with family, school, and welfare service expressed itself as a cartography of exclusion (Neves, 1995; Neves & Bernardes, 1998; Neves & Ormezzano, 2013).

In recent decades, agendas of the LGBTQIA+ movement are hit back with conservative and hate speech<sup>10</sup> among Internet publications. This activism of evangelical sectors intersects the media, political, and religious fields, reacting to the threat of heteronormativity. In the National Congress, they fight in the name of the “good citizen” and the “traditional Brazilian family”, consistently reinforcing homophobia (Dalmolin et al., 2019).

Two interrelated questions we must answer as socionomists: What established attachment patterns with family, school, and socioeducational, religious, and political institutions determine future participation in *social networks*? What experiences in *social networks* would transform the socioeducational, religious, and political institutions and the family and the school aiming at innovative cooperation in the dynamics of their bonds?

## The Threat of Genres: Multiple and Singular

Gender is a constitutive element of gender relations, giving meaning to power relations. The dominant position of the binary representation of gender as the only possible one results from normative concepts or cultural symbols. By defining masculine and feminine, this cultural preserve represses or rejects alternatives of identity expression (Scott, 1990; Zakabi, 2014).

In the prevailing binary perspective, the term cisgender designates people identified with the gender assigned at birth. However, the denomination transgender involves varied groups of individuals who do not identify with their bodies or biological sex. They transcend the norms enshrined by biological determinism between gender identity and genitalia. These are transvestite, transsexual, and transgender people, among others (Jesus, 2012).

The difference between cisgenderness, transsexuality, and other gender identities considered dissident stems from a social and cultural process strictly focused on sex solely as the genital organ (Butler, 2003; Jesus, 2012).

Gender identities, being diverse, are characterized by their peculiarity. There is a paradox here that challenges our perception: How to be multiple and yet singular? This telic phenomenon, as the perception one produces of oneself, others, or the world's phenomena, is made in the context of our institutions (Moreno, 1984). The LGBTQIA+phobia proves that we cannot accept or understand something we have not previously thought, seen, or experienced (Borrillo, 2010).

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<sup>10</sup> Dalmolin et al. (2019) analyzed posts by a prominent pastor and current federal congressman. His biological and racist discourse seems to control the private conduct of his voters and faithful. As an action of a biopolitical character, it uses the media to transform religious and political experiences. It constantly refutes institutional changes required by progressive collectives. At the end of the eighteenth century, the authors recall the normalization societies cited by Foucault when the state-controlled populations by uniting discipline and biopolitics. Norms imposed attitudes of people and bodies, defining which were fit to continue the species and which would die.

We must all think, see, and experience the new, the contradictory, and the unique. The Morenian belief that we are potent gods in creativity and spontaneity contains the message of the impermanence of social roles. If we live healthily, we recreate them. It is time to step out of the safe place of the norm and transition to the new reinvention of self, especially regarding the complexity of the social gender role.

Moreno (1978) states that our creative and spontaneous potential is an eternal flux, gushing out from a still incomprehensible source. The equation to solve is how much it has biological, energetic, psychological, and/or social origins. And what would be the relationship of the construction of gender identity with such a source of creativity and spontaneity?

### **Citizenship: Different Speeches for the Same Fear**

It becomes essential to contextualize the history of the LGBTQIA+ movement (Ferreira & Sacramento, 2019). As a social network, it was formed by nongovernmental organizations and collectives arising from bonding and belonging to everyday struggles. It announces and denounces the violence exercised in the nonrecognition of uniqueness and sexual and gender diversity. Such militancy is coresponsible for the scientific advancement of the study of sexualities when it replaces its former pathological condition with new research narratives in the field. This is the hope that the walls of science will yield to the pressure of social reality. However, as long as homophobia persists in academia, these theories will be little publicized.

Only in 1990 did the World Health Organization remove homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases (Barra, 2018). The same has not happened, so far, about transsexuality.<sup>11</sup> This partial achievement celebrated with public acts on May 17, considered the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, increasingly recruits crowds.

In several countries, the gay pride parade, as it has come to be defined, displays the power of attraction and repulsion toward numerous expressions of sexual identities and orientations. She leads the search for another form of citizenship: the reinvention of the micro- and macropolitics of the body.

Does the visibility intended for the free exercise of diversity, the flag of this movement, propose real dialogue with both intolerance and differences? Or is adherence to the cause of this special citizenship partial because it depends on the innovation of institutional structures to change individuals? These are our concerns.

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<sup>11</sup> Since 1990, transsexuality appears in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD 10) as a mental illness. The ICD 11, when implemented by signatory countries in 2022, will recognize the diversity of identity and sexual orientation of transgender people. It shifts gender incongruence from the mental health category to “sexual health-related conditions” (Barra, 2018).

## Public Sociodrama as an Axiodramatic Act

Moreno (1994) developed sociatry as the science of treating social relationships. It has three methods: psychodrama, which addresses individual differences in groups, sociodrama, focusing on collective denominators in groups, and axiodrama, assessing the cultural, ethical, and religious values of a given community. Our approach as action research was an axiodramatic act, though named public sociodrama.

In recent years, in Brazil, the sociopolitical function of psychodrama has been rediscovered. For Davoli et al. (2012), the goal of public psychodrama is the production of community spaces for welcoming citizens. In these, the collective creation of stories, both individual and shared, by enacting various roles, portrays everyday life, aiding the expression and realization of collaborative projects. They can intervene in the public and private sphere based on ethical reflection on such contexts. The authors mention that Fonseca Filho identifies public psychodrama as the true Morenian psychodrama. The challenge for the director is immense because the groups form spontaneously. The script is not defined, nor are the protagonist and the auxiliary egos. These will emerge from the sociodynamics of the group.

Aguiar (1988) states that the intersection of individual and collectivity is the hallmark of psychodrama. On the stage of this therapeutic theater, the protagonist exposes his drama as a spokesperson for the group. Their individuality in crisis, when exposed, breaks with the medical model. Through it, their social atom, as the core of most significant people, appears in this conflict interconnected to sociometric networks, broadly connected to the collectivity. The social weave to be resigned connects to so many other webs, like a spiral, ad infinitum. The Morenian cosmic vision regarding the resonating network of networks, demonstrating the dramatic, group, and social contexts, likewise interconnects individual–society–planet–universe. The interpersonal approach, situating the protagonist in the collective, does not aim at healing that individual, group, or society. It does propose transformation, the liberation of spontaneity, with a greater flow of creative living.

The boundary between public and private, in public psychodrama, does not exist. He ideologically questions the false equation between privacy and individualism. When the protagonist shares their world, their loneliness decreases because they experience their true uniqueness recognized and welcomed by the group. According to the author, spontaneous theater, in our case as an axiodramatic act, establishes the overlap between education and therapy. The therapy to enable a community to recreate itself is not the monopoly of any one profession. In the words of Aguiar (1988, p. 107, our translation): “Everyone should and can heal, just as everyone can and should heal”.

## **In Search of Diversity: Why, for What, and by Whom**

The project Brazil Without Homophobia, developed by REDES—Clínica e Pesquisa em Psicologia Social e Psicodrama, from Porto Alegre/RS, started in June 2004, when the public sociodrama was performed in the VII Porto Alegre Parade for Sexual Diversity. The march for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ population took place shortly after this intervention around a central city park.

We chose a historical monument of the Brazilian army as our stage. Its concrete base, higher than the ground level, made it easier to see the audience. There was an obelisk, approximately 2 m high, the symbol of the military, in front of the military school. The rainbow flag<sup>12</sup> was placed on it and tied by a rope. This was our scenario.

The team consisted of a female director and four women as auxiliary egos. Two of them were dressed entirely in black, with capes, gloves, and a neutral mask. This, made of dark, perforated fabric, covered the whole face and did not define it even though it was stuck to the skin. Its purpose was to focus the actors' attention on their process of dramatic construction. The costumes made it impossible to identify the genders.

Sociodrama, as an axiodramatic act, aimed to mobilize cultural, social, and personal aspects experienced by the community. Our invitation to the passersby was to use their creativity and spontaneity in the scenes of homophobia shared in this sociohistorical context. We set the team's circulation area in front of the stage but away from it. People traffic used to happen there. The two auxiliary egos, dressed as living, all-black puppets, provoked strangeness. This made it easy to distinguish them.

### ***First Stage of Sociodrama***

#### **Nonspecific Warm-Up**

Such auxiliary egos offered a cloth with the colors of the rainbow for passersby to counteract. They played freely, like statues, defining relationships. Afterward, the director led them to the stage. They staged the fight for possession of the colored sash, pulling it until it fell off. They took turns in the places of strength and weakness between the two. They hugged, pulled apart, and came together again.

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<sup>12</sup> In 1978, the movement's flag was first displayed at the San Francisco LGBT Pride Parade (USA). Artist Gilbert Baker created it, taking inspiration from the hippies, who represented peace through the rainbow (DiversityBBOX, 2020). He stated his intention to convey the idea of diversity and inclusion by using "something from nature to represent that our sexuality is a human right" (BBC, 2017).

## Specific Warm-Up

In the audience, the director, with a microphone, referred to the stage: “does anyone know what this is?” The answers revealed the group imaginary: “Today is the tribute to their day... the gay day, right?”; “We are transsexual, but today we are in drag”; “Today is the day of the GLS Parade and we are going to kill it. We have to celebrate gay pride. Today is our day. Let’s rock it... all of them!”; “I think it’s ridiculous those over there when they overexpose themselves, with their bodies sticking out, like the one in black... terribly ridiculous! (*uncomfortable, when referring to the drag that was interviewed*)”; “Yeah, everyone is ridiculous! (*making an expression that the two drags are weird*)”; “They are beautiful, regardless of what they want to be, men or women, they are beautiful!”.

The director, near the stage, says, “Let’s get closer, here, to what psychodrama is!” A man (1),<sup>13</sup> relatively young, comes to the microphone (*with a trembling voice*): “These are two people who have the same ideal... They want to live their lives with more respect... Both sexes, both male and female”.

The director asks the woman who had commented on them being beautiful, “what would they say?” She **enters the role, giving voice to them**: “We’ve burned a lot of bras, in the 1960s..., but now we’re in the moralization of love. Homosexual love, yes, why not? With respect and dignity!” (*speaks strongly*).

A man (2) approaches the director in a calm voice: “I think quadrupeds are more respectful than bipeds. They give us a lesson in citizenship. They even respect themselves more than bipeds do”. The director asks if he wants to see this image on stage. He promptly accepts.

## Second Stage of Sociodrama: Dramatization

### Scene 1

In front of the audience and close to the stage, he explains the image. The director leads the actors to get down on their knees and hands on the floor. The scenario was formed with two dogs.

The director sought an echo from the audience: “So Sunday is the citizenship day for quadrupeds!”; there were dogs there with “their owners”, just like in the entire park.

Man (2) explains: “In the conception of the family, there is more control. It even causes embarrassment because not everyone has this perception. Animals are even more aware of this than humans. They can be of the same sex and without the problem at all and without embarrassment. There is a false premise of respectability”. The director thanks him, and he returns to his seat in the audience.

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<sup>13</sup> Participants in the dramatic scenes have been identified here by numbers for better understanding of the experience description.

Meanwhile, another man (3) emerges, determined, asking, “Could I change?” The director: “Yes, let’s go on stage”. He walks up, excited.

## Scene 2

Director: “Where does your scene take place?”

Man (3): “I am inside my house witnessing something that to me is perfectly natural, but there are two family members who are hiding something. There is a person who would like to follow her professional ideal, but is afraid because the people around her would not like her to be what she is”.

The director asks him to choose one of the auxiliary egos to **be that person**. He must give them a voice. He picks and, placing them at his side, speaks “as if” he was the character.

Man (3) (**protagonist**): “I want to be a musician, but my father wouldn’t like me to be a musician”. Comes out of that role and says again, “I would take her mask off. But I can’t take off the mask like that, break the links of that chain, in an abrupt way”. Explains that the other relative keeps her in that place. The director asks him for a statue with the two characters. Must model how they would be being clay dolls, recalls that the two are accomplices of “nonvisibility”. Put **that other relative** who is hiding something as well. And continues. “I, for example, worked in a studio. And when I tell people that I put sequins on it, they react by going like this: Humm?!!! (*makes a startled and suspicious expression*). So, if you have inside of you the desire to have a profession... said by the normal people, but normal put in quotes, male, and you happen to be born female, you get blocked there. This can be a threat to what would be a standard family”.

He creates the image in which the other family member (**antagonist**) is with one arm stretched out in front of him, touching the protagonist’s face with his hand. With his back slightly arched forward, the latter’s shoulders are hanging in a clear posture of fear and entrapment. The image demonstrates the relationship of domination–submission. The **conflict** is slowly unraveling.

Now he talks about the image, addressing the antagonist.

Man (3) (**antagonist**): “This character is telling the other character... that I’ve been through this... busted some links in this prison”. He explains the scene again, stepping out of the role, pointing at the antagonist. “He’s been through it all, broken some links in this prison, and says it’s not impossible to do this”. Pointing to the other character. “The other one is still a little withdrawn, afraid. That’s the other guy’s chance to try to show... only he doesn’t have the support he needs. Maybe they are behaving like quadrupeds because they can’t stand on only two legs”.



### Scene 3

The director puts the other two auxiliary egos, formerly dogs, back on their knees and hands on the floor. The quadrupeds move pretty expressively. Ask: “What is it like to be a quadruped in this family?”.

Man (3) (**dogs**): “We are feeling free because we can act as we please. Animal instinct is above what we call rational. And these bipeds can’t. By a series of dogmas and prejudices that have been created through the ages, usually with the intention of grouping goods between families”.

Director: “I want you to talk like you are that mask” (*touching the masked protagonist’s face*).

Man (3) (**Protagonist’s mask**): “I feel in the moment useful because I am covering the essence that is inside the person. I am a hard thing, so the essence is hidden behind me. And people say like this: how nice it is to have personality!”.

Director: “I’m going to talk to the dogs here (*while approaching them and touching the head of one*). They say that dogs are their owners’ best friends (*bend to look at the dogs and ask them*). Since you know your owners so well, would you have something to say to them?”.

The director comes down from the stage and goes to the audience.

Director: “I ask that someone here **give voice to these dogs**”.

A man waves that he wants to talk.

Director (*inviting him with the microphone*): “Puppy, what do you think of your owners?”.

Man (4) (**Dog**): “Cool. Only they do things that I wouldn’t do. They are the ones who are leading a dog’s life”.

An older woman who has difficulty walking goes up to the director and says: “I think this family is mistreating the animals. Nowadays people are killing many little animals, cats, dogs”.

Director: “Yes, they are. What do you want to tell them?”.

Woman (*touching the head of one of the dogs*): “Oh, I wish they were treated very well”.

Director (*showing the two “masked” family members*): “Have you seen that this family, besides not taking care of the animals, is mistreating themselves? How do you feel about that?”.

Woman (*looking at family members*): “I feel sad!”.

Next to the director, in the audience, stands the very young man who had previously spoken about the two acting characters.

Man (1) (*gesturing with one hand, agitated, while the other takes the microphone*): “I think they have to take off their masks and face this barrier which is the barrier of homosexuality.<sup>14</sup> If he came and said like this—no, I am, and I will help you face this barrier. I will help you face the world as it is. I will live for you. And I will move heaven and earth for you to be free and so will I. I want to be happy. And the dogs

<sup>14</sup> Since the term homosexuality suggests a pathological condition, it has been replaced by heterosexuality since the ICD 10.

must have been sad because they saw that one didn't help the other to cope with this tendency. I think that has to change".

Director: "So this character, besides wanting to be a musician and not being able to, would be a homosexual person who also can't be what he wants to be. Is that it?".

Man (4): "Yes".

Director walks on stage with him. Ask the masked family members to come further ahead, next to this young man.

Director: "At that point I wanted you to tell the mask how it is going to be pulled out of there?".

Male (4) (*talking to the mask*): "I think it would be ripped off if she could take, to take notice, that she had the awareness to say like this—I am, I am homosexual and I want to release what is inside her (*places hand on chest*), this sadness, this oppression that the family member, that had a family member who knew they were and stayed on top of it, and the other one had to help face that situation, the two of them together".

Director: "Now we are going to try to get some volunteers here in the audience. They will be the force to tear off this mask that is being held by this hand. You're going to be a link in that chain that will make that person break free from the mask, okay?".

The man (3) asks the director to speak again.

Man (3) (**mask**): "I as mask still". It is tough to take off the mask because inside me, sometimes, there is also prejudice. As an essence, I can't get rid of the mask, because I also have prejudice. I think that when we talk about prejudice, we have to be very careful. Even for this reason, we put ourselves as a minority and we want to have our space. In this initiative to have your own space you end up closing the door to the space of others.

The same man who had spoken as the dogs from the audience comes on stage.

Man (4): "I have come to help release the mask".

Director: "You have entered this family, is that it?".

The three men answer yes.

Man (3) (**mask**): "We came into this family and we're going to take off our mask first. I don't think it's fair that we take off their mask. We have to take off ours and allow them to follow our example and take off their own mask, on their own, without us imposing it".

Director: "I would like each of you to take off your mask slowly. One at a time. And the audience can make sounds, by the way".

The director comes down with a microphone to give to the two women in the audience. They made guttural sounds, from clicking with their tongues, to a sad wail. This soundtrack took place during the naming of the masks. They were three links in the chain of imprisonment.

#### Scene 4

Director (*to the man* (Barra, 2018)): "What are you pulling off with your mask?".

Man (4) (**mask**): “My prejudices!”.

Director: “What is the prejudice that has to be uprooted?”.

Man (4) (**mask**): “Prejudice of the least-value about himself”.

Director: “So least-value, what do you do in that person to occupy such a safe place?”.

Man (4) (**mask least-value**): “My friend, you know that me acting on you makes you not take out your stuff. You don’t have the strength to express your feelings. Don’t be a musician, don’t express your qualities, stay in your corner, don’t talk to anyone. Then you have this path that is how I am”.

The other mask manifests itself.

Man (1) (**mask prejudice**): “I am the mask of prejudice. I decided to release you because I knew that if I stayed inside you, you would be nothing. I decided to give you this chance to be happy. I am changing my life and I would also like to change yours. You have to be happy and free yourself from this sorrow and tension. So, I’m leaving and you go make your way”.

The last mask is revealed.

Man (3) (**mask fear**): “I am part of the other two parties. I am mostly fear. I have spent almost all my time saying—look how it will be, what will people say if you assume this side of yourself that you are a musician and a homosexual? If you assume this, have you ever thought about how much you will suffer? This fear of suffering that I transfer to you is just my suffering. Because I couldn’t break free. That is why I pass on this fear to you, even out of envy. Because if you can say ‘I am what I am’ you will free yourself and be superior to me. But the most fear can do is what it is doing inside our heads. If it doesn’t exist, why should we live in fear of an abstract thing? So, I set you free, I materialize this fear into courage, so that from now on you can take off your mask and face the world”.

Director: “I would like you to start taking off your masks, giving a new form to this family relationship that was complicit with invisibility. It showed exactly where homophobia begins: in the family, in places where someone doesn’t recognize what the other person is”.

In the “as if” the masks least-value, prejudice, and fear were taken off. The man (3) finally unties the masks of the family members. The protagonist and antagonist then turn to each other and help each other to remove them. The scene was impactful. Everyone was thrilled. The actors automatically joined in, intertwined by their arms, making their **soliloquies**: “Strength, happy, courage, authenticity, free”.

## Scene 5

The director tells everyone on stage that they have formed a support network for the protagonist. She asked them to imagine this as a network of strength, and that it could become a more extensive social network. She invites them to come down from the stage and join together like a chain. She proposes that they walk past people, from the audience and the surrounding area, to invite them to be a part of it. They got down and walked arm in arm. This network was becoming more extensive. Those

who adhered to it showed themselves to be happy. At the end of that march, they returned to the front of the stage.

### ***Third Stage of Sociodrama: Sharing***

There was an emotion overflowing with complicity. In a circle, many shared how they felt. One line sums up this moment.

Woman: “All of us here are educators. Either we are fathers, mothers, teachers, uncles, grandparents. I worked 40-something years in the school. I can affirm the great suffering of children within the context among friends, who have been rejected, discriminated against. Parents who hid behind situations, without giving their children the proper support. Without the deep respect for that individuality. We educators have to help the child and young person to be that which is their character, deeply, their being. And we, as educators, are not going to isolate ourselves and tell our children ‘don’t play with this fag, he is a faggot’. Love your children. Respect your children!”.

### **Processing the Creation**

Our intervention proposed to the community a dramatic representation of the resonances of homophobia in their daily lives. Until then, in this context, only the festive manifestation of the LGBTQIA+ universe occurred. The spontaneous theater produced by the participants in this sociodrama could only be associated with an improvised performance. However, the scenes created by the audience demonstrated their therapeutic and pedagogical potential.

The common drama, presented by characters and scenarios, focused on the problems of the community. The universe of human sexuality contrasted with animal sexuality, comparing them in the embryonic scene of the dogs in the family, described by man (2). The cocreation of the plot identified the conflict experienced by everyone, translated into the conflicting relationship between protagonist and antagonist: invisibility of homosexuality and denial of the protagonist’s subjectivity. As a central theme, the investigation of homophobic reality took us to its genesis, in the family universe, and the consequences on the learning and reproduction of social roles. The masks of least-value, prejudice, and fear have revealed the damage done to their victims in the performance of the social gender role. The social relations implicated in homophobic violence required a creative act. The support network emerged as a solution to the solitude and vulnerability experienced by those who threaten heteronormativity. She brought out the resilience of the community and its power of transformation.

The new possibility experienced in social network dramatization may, at first glance, appear to be a happy and superficial ending. This is not what we witnessed.

The sharing showed the strong mobilization of some participants' individual and community history, portrayed by the scenes. They identified that they understood them differently from the recreation that took place. The impact of the reparative effect of joint creation, attributed to its truth and strength in spontaneous manifestation, was considered by two actors in the drama. The man (3) in the voice-role of various characters realized that he was each of them in this performance: protagonist, antagonist, dog, and mask of fear. He thanked us for his dream come true: to do theater. He believed it was impossible to make it happen. Man (1) was surprised to have faced, in an unprecedented way, so many difficulties of his daily life addressed in this show. He discovered his strength and determination to overcome homophobia. He was even very secure in his decision to participate in the diversity march right afterward. It would be the first time that he would walk together with the march. He only watched it from the sidewalk, fearing that he would run into colleagues at work who would identify him as gay.

These reports prove the spontaneous theater acting on the subjectivity of the participants when the dramatic context of axiodrama portrays the culture of the community.

The presence of many people, the interaction achieved, and the themes discussed defined this work as suitable for future interventions. By 2018, 16 more sociodramas of this theme were performed in five Brazilian cities. His filming made possible the technique of videopsychodrama<sup>15</sup>: the union of video and psychodrama. After the screening of this video, depicting sociodrama on the day of the LGBTQIA+ Parade, the axiodramatic act of the new audiences watching it took place. Thus, new networks were woven when such participants, sensitized, dramatized other scenes and main themes.

It is urgent to build the place that would belong to all: the community. This sharing space influences the perception that each one has of themselves, others, and the recognition of these bonds. It may or may not promote citizenship.

Our understanding of social intercession has changed. It has previously been described as the action of the director of public sociodrama (Neves, 2006). As action research, it is cocreated by the totality of those present at the axiodramatic act. Therefore, we redefine the social intercessor would be both the sociopsychodramatist, with or without a team of auxiliary egos, and the public sociodrama participant. Those involved in the experience come face to face with their creative and spontaneous potential and with others, becoming aware of the intentionality of this joint doing in the here-and-now. The flow of the force of the new for the construction of a possible culture of peace and nonviolence emerges. In that instant, each one perceives themselves *another*.

The Morenian work warned us that planetary survival would depend on the exercise of care to answer: Who are we in the face of the inclusion of the other, the being other, or the inability to feel the other?

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<sup>15</sup> Previously, the videopsychodrama was conducted in psychodrama workshops with at-risk children and adolescents. In addition to providing a detailed record of group dynamics, it is a valuable sociotherapeutic resource in learning participants' social roles (Neves, 1995).

Becoming another is an act of courage. To stop being what you were and go be different, there, ahead. This is perhaps the citizen who will find the rainbow only after enduring the rain!

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# Chapter 22

## The Use of Psychodrama as a Pedagogical Strategy for the Implementation of Public Policies in Health and Education



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**Abstract** Public policies are the state's actions through actions, programs, projects, regulations, laws, and regulations to manage different social interests more equitably and reduce inequities. A central aspect for implementing public policies in health and education is the training of professionals who need to understand the needs of complex systems, intervene in an interdisciplinary way, and commit to democratic ideals and the guarantee of rights. Psychodrama has a lot to contribute to, providing the experience of producing meanings linked to the professional role and opening up the possibility of reflecting on reality and one's performance in a protected context. Still, it facilitates the emergence of central issues for change. This chapter presents the report and processing of a sociodrama included in a training program for health and education professionals, responsible for promoting comprehensive health care for adolescents in conflict with the law.

**Keywords** Sociodrama · Socioeducational measures · Adolescent · Educators

### Introduction

Public policies are actions, programs, and government regulations related to the population's interests to ensure more equitable management of social issues and the reduction of inequities. It must have popular participation, direct or indirect, to guarantee social control, characterized by the population's involvement in monitoring the implementation of the policy and the definition of priorities.

Implementing a public policy occurs in at least four stages: agenda formation, formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Franzese, 2011). In all these stages, participatory processes are essential for priorities to be defined by different actors. Including education and health in public policies is to designate care and new forms

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of relationship between workers and the beneficiaries of these services, one of the main challenges in developing and implementing public policies in a Democratic State.

Because public policies are developed in a scenario of relationships characterized by disputes of interests and ideologies, they can become an important field for developing knowledge and interventions (Polejack et al., 2015). In this process, psychodrama becomes important, among others, to guarantee social participation and to facilitate the training and education of professionals responsible for implementing these policies. In this text, we discuss the complex interface between public policies and psychodrama and present a sociodrama as a resource for training professionals who implement public policies aimed at adolescents in conflict with the law, illustrating the work in this area, usually with large groups.

## **Psychodrama and Public Policies**

The basic principles of psychodrama refer us to the dimension of the relationship and the necessary care for the realization of professional performance in public policies committed to integrality and humanization.

In psychodrama, spontaneous action favors the performance of roles and articulation of responses, known or even standardized, as if it was the first time we were performing them. Furthermore, based on originality, it makes it possible to develop the ability to formulate a similar response, but with a very own mark. Thus, in spontaneity, we can formulate an unprecedented response, so far, within the reference universe of each participant or group (Diniz et al., 2000; Vieira, 2017).

Another significant contribution is the role theory. The development of roles is prior to the development of the “I” and the result of a matrix process, in which there is an articulation between psychosomatic, psychodramatic, and social roles that, articulated, bring about a singular subjectivity in a given historical and social context (Dedomenico, 2013). The development of roles occurs in the identity matrix, the child’s experience concerning his/her caregivers in the process of defining himself/herself as an individual. Thus, the development of a professional role, such as that of a manager, needs to be understood based on this articulation in a certain historical, cultural, and social context.

Based on all these concepts, psychodrama can be an ally in all stages of the development and implementation of public policies, from the stage of agenda formation, policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Franzese, 2011), offering the possibility of discussing the roles played by the actors involved, favoring the capacity for role reversal and the understanding of different realities, assisting in the role of minorities that are not always valued and giving voice to important social issues for the respect of human rights.

In the field of practice, we highlight the use of psychodrama as a pedagogical approach in the training of professionals with a greater capacity to put themselves in the place of the other in the development of participatory research that considers the

role of different actors in their social roles. The main method of psychodrama for working with groups is sociodrama, a scientific instrument of social action, which may have a preventive, didactic, or social reconstruction character, facilitating the discussion of themes that emerge from the community (Costa et al., 2020; Marra, 2004, 2020; Nery & Gisler, 2019).

## **The Training of Professionals in the Implementation Phase of Public Policies: The Contribution of Psychodrama and Permanent Education as a Political–Pedagogical Option**

One of the most central aspects for implementing public policies in health and education is the training of professionals. It is a great challenge to improve the quality of these professionals' training to understand the needs of complex systems, intervene in an interdisciplinary way, and commit to a democratic proposal and guarantee of rights.

Despite recognizing the need for change in the process of training and continuing education of professionals who work in the implementation of public policies, this process of change in education poses numerous challenges. One of the main ones is breaking away from traditional teaching models, with a format centered on content and a pedagogy of transmission, disconnection between thematic nuclei, and excessive workload for certain contents (Ferracini & Ruiz-Moreno, 2017; Silva, 2013). Qualification presupposes knowledge, experience, authority, and material conditions so that the worker performs the task with a comprehensive understanding of the problems to be solved (Freire, 2000).

Technical training based on theoretical content, which still forms the basis of most health degrees, has been questioned, causing the challenge of offering training processes that allow the continuous development of the professional role (Ceccim & Feuerwerker, 2004; Fernandes et al., 2003). The professional training process needs to include aspects of subjectivity, production of meanings in constructing a professional role committed ethically and politically to the principles.

The Unified Health System (UHS) is a public and universal system instituted in Brazil. It determines that health is a right of all and a duty of the state and brings as its principles: universality (access for all), comprehensiveness (assistance at different levels of care throughout the life cycle), and equity (recognizing the collective needs and reducing inequities) (Brazil, 1990a). Psychodrama becomes important for the training and education of health professionals, which is one of the axes that make up the UHS.

The proposal of Permanent Education in Health (*Educação Permanente em Saúde*, EPS) adopts as a pedagogical assumption the notion of meaningful learning, that is, learning something that makes sense to the subjects involved so that the training processes are structured based on the problematization of work processes. Therefore, EPS does not express a didactic–pedagogical option but a political–pedagogical

option (Ceccim & Feuerwerker, 2004; Ceccim, 2008). This option materializes as a public health policy proposal through the National Policy of Permanent Education in Health (*Política Nacional de Educação Permanente em Saúde*, PNEPS), focused on the training and development of UHS workers and understood as an action proposal capable of contributing to the necessary transformation of training processes and pedagogical and health practices, also encompassing the organization of services. It constitutes an articulated work between the health system, in its management spheres, and the training institutions, with a view to the identification of everyday problems and the construction of solutions (Brazil, 2005).

Given the challenges of health education that are in line with the principles of UHS, pedagogical strategies consistent with our political–pedagogical focus are needed, which values the subjects, knowledge, relationships and which is guided by comprehensive care. Thus, in the field of care in health education, the action/intervention takes shape in this meeting between the health professional and the subject of care (Carvalho, 2018; Marra, 2009; Silva, 2013).

The use of psychodrama and sociodrama in educational contexts provides the experience of producing meanings linked to the professional role and opens up the possibility of reflecting on reality and acting in a protected context but facilitates the emergence of central issues for the change. The hypothesis is that the psychodramatic method can be an important pedagogical tool for permanent education and teaching in health because knowledge results from simultaneous learning to life experience (Diniz et al., 2000; Polejack & Seidl, 2015).

## **Example of a Training Program for Health and Education Professionals**

Socioeducational measures are actions defined by the Statute of Children and Adolescents (Brazil, 1990b) aimed at the inclusion of adolescents and consist of: warning, obligation to repair the damage, provision of service to the community, assisted freedom, semi-freedom, and hospitalization. These measures are directed at the adolescent's social context: the family, the community, and the public authorities, demanding initiatives from different fields of public and social policies.

Primary healthcare professionals who work with socioeducational measures have the function of providing adolescents with access to rights and opportunities to overcome their situation of exclusion, reframing and the formation of values necessary for participation in social life.

This training program was contracted by the Public Ministry to be developed by the Family, Group and Community Laboratory, a university extension project at the University of Brasília, Federal District, Brazil, aimed at professionals responsible for promoting comprehensive health care for adolescents in conflict with Federal District law. It illustrates a sociodrama with large groups and processing, which is

the theoretical and methodological understanding of what happened in the action and the meaning of the participants' images and scenes (Aguiar & Tassinari, 1999).

An important resource for this program was the resonance group, which increases the feeling of sharing the experience. The first author adapted the concept of resonance to the relational dimension, related to the phenomenon by which a sound body vibrates when required by vibrations produced by another body when their period coincides with yours (Ferreira, 1989). In this sense, resonance allows us to broaden the frontiers in understanding the processes experienced between professionals and the people they maintain contact with (Elkaim, 1990). The group comes into contact, through resonances, with meanings that were not present but that start to emerge from the experiences of different people, as occurs in Andersen's (2002) reflexive processes, which allow other understandings of aspects not yet recognized.

Resonances are made up of similar elements common to different intersection systems. When perceiving these points of intersection, the participants experience feelings and different emotions, which makes them feel represented by the resonance group, favoring the experience of participation in understanding the concepts and attitudes, in the consensus, in the synthesis and the closing of the sociodrama.

## The Sociodramatic Experience

The reported experience was a sociodrama, applied as a strategy for changing the paradigm in the view that professionals had of the adolescent and his context. It was based on the principle of action research, in which sociodrama is used to investigate the problem that the group is experiencing and make participants aware of the problem, all acting as participant observers. This research is proposed as a social and political activity and, therefore, ideological (Tanajura & Bezerra, 2015).

The group's warm-up began on arrival at the large auditorium. The rapprochement between them began to form a network of relationships. Concomitantly, the warming up of the coordinator, and the two auxiliary egos (management team) began, talking with the participants in small groups, marking the welcoming of the group, followed by a moment of fraternization: talking with each other, greeting each other, speaking freely with anyone who wishes, an experience that animated the group, allowed for a good laugh, and promoted expectations.

After a brief presentation by the professionals, the coordinator clarified that the activity aims at the organization of the group, with the identification of the different dimensions involved:

1. Knowledge and recognition of the team responsible for the direction of sociodrama: identification of the team's potential and needs, possibilities for integration, complementarity, and cooperation at work.
2. Knowledge and recognition of sociodrama participants: identification of the relationship with the theme.

3. Personal dimension: personal aspects of the professional's subjectivity in his relationship with work, deconstruction, and reconstruction of the adolescent's internalized image.
4. Dimension of the institution: socioeducational measures and their relations with the team and professionals' network in the social context.

The group began to walk through empty spaces. At the same time, the management team mapped the group's identity cutouts (Knobel, 2008) by grouping them into subgroups in response to certain criteria: men, women, married, and single people, with children and adolescents, working time with socioeducational measures and different workplaces.

Taking as a reference the principle of the evolution of groups, the sociogenetic law, which comprises groups evolving from simpler to more complex forms, goes through three stages of differentiation of relational structures: organic isolation, horizontal differentiation, and vertical differentiation (Knobel, 2020); the coordinator began to organize these relational structures.

Starting the specific warm-up, the coordinator introduced the theme with words that, at first, seemed loose, allowing the participants and the management team to think and hear about the group they were in. After each word, people disorderly spoke to others, allowing the identification of the levels of demand and understanding, essential elements for the recognition and respect of the adolescent and the identification of the image they make of themselves as educators. These words were: conversations, learning, life, relationship, fun, educator, conflict, institution, law, health, freedom, and adolescent.

The coordinator presented the next step, referring to the contradictions or the contrary units (Demo, 2000) present in everyday life. She then started to form pairs, asking each one to look for another participant with whom they feel comfortable experiencing these moments of contradiction. The pairs were exchanged, experiencing different proposals such as: health/illness, peace/war, conflicts/measures, construction/deconstruction, individual/team, protection/violence, life/death. In the sequence, each pair looked for another pair to form a quartet. Then, the quartet sought another and so on until subgroups with 16 members were formed, ending the warm-up stage.

Beginning the dramatization, each of these subgroups started to have autonomy and responsibility to create experiences, feeling and thinking about them. The space was large, allowing the subgroups to spread out to maintain a comfortable distance between them. Ten subgroups were formed, and each chose a coordinator/reporter.

The first slogan was to present their role in their workgroup, in their institution, focusing on their role as an educator, for example, how their presence and participation qualify and modify this workgroup. Subsequently, each subgroup made a synthesis of the feelings, thoughts, and perceptions about the lived experience.

Each subgroup was divided into two small subgroups with eight participants: representing the adolescent and the educator. Interestingly, most chose to represent the teenager but were encouraged to experience both roles. As an adolescent or educator, the small subgroups talked freely about this role, how they place themselves in this educator-adolescent relationship, how they feel, etc. Next, they were asked

to pose for a photograph that reveals who and how they are, as a scene containing all the elements present in the subgroups' discussions.

When everyone was ready for the photograph, the two small subgroups faced each other. At each constructed complementarity scene, the auxiliary egos photographed the relationship and invited the participants to leave the scene for an outside view to understand what each scene expressed, identifying the meanings represented. Each small subgroup told the other what and how they see themselves in that relationship and how they see and perceive the complementary role expressed in the scene/photograph. After everyone experienced this analysis done as a teenager or educator, they returned to the subgroup of 16 members and talked about the experience.

Then, the coordinators/reporters of each subgroup were invited to group together to form the resonance group, to exchange experiences. The task was to build a unique scene representing the synthesis of what was discussed and experienced in the subgroups.

While the resonance group worked on this construction, the subgroups dissolved, and the participants organized themselves as an audience in the Morenian sense, preparing for the production that was being built. The audience formed a chorus and sang songs related to what they were experiencing, reaching its peak when the resonance group was ready to present the synthesis scene.

The completion of the dramatization stage consisted of the presentation of the synthesis scene by the resonance group. The management team deepened the scene by applying psychodramatic resources to clarify, approximate, and distance concepts and attitudes, reframing perceptions and seeking to differentiate new conceptions of adolescent and educator roles. Actions specific to protective measures, characteristic of this socioeducational process, were strengthened on the scene.

In sharing, the participants identified the importance of promoting respect for the adolescent's uniqueness, a necessary condition in the educational action and in the functional organization of the socioeducational care units to guarantee the possibility of the adolescent's personal and social development. They ended by clapping hands, touched by the protagonists' development and recognizing the ability to experience situations, emotions, and perceptions experienced in the various subgroups.

## **Sociodrama Processing**

The objective of the sociodrama was to train the health and education work team, responsible for the application of socioeducational measures, organized with a focus on the role of educator.

The coordinator started her personal warm-up and that of the two auxiliary egos with the recognition of the environment, the occupation of space and the fraternization of the participants, favoring the setting and the group. The objective of this stage of the session was to prepare the group for cocreation by expanding the theme and building the group context. The beginning of the group process involved: self-perception,

perception of the other (context), and perception of the situation (objective proposed to the group).

Taking as a reference the social trichotomy, recognizing the sociometric matrix of these groups of educators started with identity cuts: gender, marital status, parents of children and adolescents, working time with socioeducational measures, places of professional practice.

The theme was introduced in words, with each group allowing others to flow, in a collective construction of words that signaled the group's moment and suggested levels of demand and the ability to understand important conditions in the educator–adolescent relationship.

The experience shared by the participants in the groups causes the development of interconnected unconscious common experiences, the coconscious, and counconscious states (Knobel, 2016). In group interaction, the contents in a counconscious state allowed the expression of the group's sociometric matrix, favoring the beginning of the group process, which evolved in three stages: mobilization, participation, and organization (Marra, 2009).

In the mobilization stage, the participants formed pairs to experience an affective approach to the theme: moments of contradiction. The difficulties and individual expectations, that is, each participant's subjectivity, were building, in the exchange of peers, the group's relationship with the theme. When the subgroups were formed, with the external reality already modified, everyone was co-responsible for the following production, transformed by the coordinator into groups of autonomous educators.

The participation stage followed, whose objective was to integrate cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial contents brought by each participant's sociocultural background. Sharing experiences increased the feeling of belonging, strengthening the group to research the educator–adolescent relationship. The preference for the role of adolescent signaled conflicts in the role of educator. Taking the sociogenetic law as a reference, at this point, the group expressed the evolution from the stage of horizontal differentiation to vertical differentiation, when conflicts may emerge.

The coordinator/reporter of each subgroup presented the experience's evolution, reflecting the social reality expressed in the constructed scene of the educator–adolescent relationship. When invited to look at the scene from the outside, the participants could get to know and apprehend this interrelation's complementarity.

The organization stage starts when a representative/reporter from each subgroup forms the resonance group, and the subgroups dissolve, forming a large group with the function of an audience. The task proposed to the resonance group was constructing a scene-synthesis of the previous experience, whose objective was to revise the group's referential on the theme. The resonance brought the points of intersection, triggering feelings of belonging.

The resonance group was preparing to produce the integration of experiences in a synthesis scene, playing the role of the social sounding box. Meanwhile, the coordinator kept the audience warm to work on this scene, aiming to expand the understanding of educators' roles and the complementarity in adolescents' actions and the responsibility of the role of educator for the implementation of public policies.

With the audience warmed up, the handling of the synthesis scene began. All psychodramatic resources were used, aiming at recognizing the content of the group's counconscious. The elaboration of this content occurred in applying the available resources of the group's powers and competencies, creating the necessary conditions for a competent professional performance to promote the adolescent's personal and social development.

The result was the realization of the revisited roles of adolescent and educator. When the coordinator stated that the resonance group allows us to go beyond the concept of symptom since resonance constitutes a common point for the different interrelated systems, she also confirmed this device as a facilitator of group cohesion. This feeling of being represented in the multiplicity of situations, emotions, and perceptions experienced throughout the sociodrama unified the group, guaranteeing the support of future actions by the participants.

Thus, it was confirmed that sociodrama, understood as a socioeducational or sociotherapeutic intervention, promoted group participants' development by explaining common identity elements dispersed among all and experiencing the action–reflection–action process (Marra, 2004).

We identify the social reach of sociodrama as a methodology for learning and treating social health. All of them become observers participating in the coconstruction of the sociometric matrix, favored by the empowerment of sociodrama. The stages of mobilization, participation, and organization favored the feeling of belonging and the group's strengthening, making them co-responsible for the result.

Resonance occurs when an oscillating system receives an excitation with a frequency equal to one of its natural frequencies. The resonance group allowed us to go beyond the symptom concept. As a common point for different interrelated systems, resilience has become an intervention instrument and has broadened the field qualitatively (Morin, 1994). In this aspect, the group interaction made possible by sociodrama proved to be a gateway to the real and symbolic contexts from which the participants lived their stories and played their roles.

The resonance group created the synthesis result, representing the elaboration by the cohesive group of the contents of the scenes, expanding the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral references related to the group concept on the theme, categories applied both in the intervention with groups and in the teaching of sociodrama, making learning to learn.

## **Final Considerations**

This text brought the psychodramatic methodology's contribution to promoting the transformation and changes in practices that do not favor citizens' fundamental rights. For these aspects to be effective, an organized civil society capable of influencing the political system and public bureaucracies is needed, strengthening citizenship's associative dimension.



In this group, it was clear how these issues appear in the educator–adolescent relationship in socioeducational measures. There was difficulty in understanding their role and contributing to the change and transformation of those young people. The educators, who in a way represent the institute and are complicit in this system, look little at the teenager and have difficulties in helping him, which was clear in the scene represented by the resonance group. The educators themselves were perplexed by what they saw, expressed discomfort with their actions and wanted to remake the scene in search of composing themselves for seeing the need for changes in this process.

The patent weakness of institutionalized mechanisms and control over public policies indicates the distance between the competencies established legally as the mechanisms for implementing social processes are very complex, and public control over governmental action is always distanced from citizens. Public policies are part of a collective field in which all citizens are part of the same endeavor and tools for their execution.

The issue of resources controlled by agents such as time, information, technical capacity, and professionals training is a central element and its potential to develop new and more effective public policies. Psychodrama as a training resource for professionals and potential as an instrument is a bridge between citizens and the government.

The resonance group in the reported sociodrama played the role of organizing the content in coconscious and counconscious states for the group to broaden the understanding of the relevance of its role in the implementation of public policies. When realized by the psychodramatic resources, it brought power to the participants, preparing them for a performance renewed by their professional practices' spontaneity.

The process experienced by the group represents a miniature version of what society could experience for the implementation of public policies, with the coconstruction of processes in which everyone participates in small groups (unions, classes of workers, etc.), and the conclusions are organized by resonance groups, with representatives of the origin groups. Thus, the community's proposals are created through its representatives, bringing a sense of participation in the organization process.

In this context, psychodrama collaborates to promote great solutions or commitments of the state with the populations. As Moreno thought, in small groups, we manage to make the big revolution, the creative revolution. Everyone participates in the process in different roles and is therefore committed to the new reality.

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# Chapter 23

## Brazilian Organizational Psychodrama: Paths, Practices, and Reflections



Andréa Claudia de Souza, Alcione Ribeiro Dias, and Rosely Cubo

**Abstract** The sociometry practiced in Brazilian organizations, whether public, private, or third sector, follows the nuances of the labor structure in the country. Since the first records of psychodrama in Brazil in the 1950s, we have identified sociodramas, axiodramas, sociometric acts, research and interventions with multiple applications of methods and techniques in corporate education inspired in group functioning, role-playing, and spontaneous theater. In this chapter, the three authors, psychodramatists, present samples of psychodramatic actions in people management—in the areas of selection, in actions to change organizational culture, in the preparation to welcome refugees in the country, and in research with immigrant women. The article presents organizations as sociometric structures—politically and economically contextualized networks of workers that, from their production model, define whether a society will be more or less sustainable. We gathered examples from this scenario to demonstrate the power of the different psychodramatic methods and exemplify how the psychodramatist's work can gain relevance since it contributes to the awareness of the social actors that compose and transform the world of work.

**Keywords** Organizational psychodrama · Business · Work

### Introduction

Human labor is a category of study in several areas of the sciences. For Moreno (2020), the human being is a role-player, an interpreter of roles—among them that of worker. Work activity, as socially experienced, takes up part of most people's lifetime and can be seen as either degrading or dignifying. The groups of working men and

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women form a living set of role and counterrole performance and are organized to produce, and the resulting human interaction in this production mechanism is quite defining in the construction of the identity of individuals and society, making it more or less healthy, partially inclusive and relatively unequal (Datner, 2014; Moreno, 2020).

The quality of the production structures of the capital-labor connection has a substantial impact on group relations, the performance of the professional role, and the health of the worker; as a consequence, it influences his sociometric family group, his social composition, and the planet's ecological system. By transforming nature, the human being transforms himself, changes his psychic constitution, builds his subjectivity, and affects the historical path of humanity. Herein lies a great responsibility of the psychodramatist: to go beyond the focus on the mission, vision, and organizational values and the proposition of "creative practices". Its praxis will favor reflection, bonding quality, collective construction, and the necessary awareness to face the contradictions of the world of work, sometimes precarious or in subhuman conditions.

We are talking about the possibility of serving a large workforce—Brazil today has around 140 million economically active people, 63% of the population, where we incorporate the productive workers in agriculture, industry, services, and the unemployed and discouraged workers, who do not generate added value but make up a labor reserve, almost 20 million (Antunes, 2014; IBGE, 2020).

Brazil, given its extensive territoriality, the diversity of its biomes, the colonization and population migration processes, and its own history of wage-earning, reveals varied work modalities: from family-based rural production to agribusiness, from the handmade manufacture of goods to the technological industry, from mineral extraction to processing, from domestic service provision to the service industry and teleworking. Another characteristic of labor in Brazil is informality, which goes from slave labor to the exportation of qualified labor, which abroad works informally. In the 1940s, formal work was regulated. Still, the legal changes, effected in recent decades, have generated a loss of rights, numerous contract modalities, and an increase in informal work in the wake of the capitalist world economy (Antunes, 2014).

The conceptions of work result from a process of historical creation. Their development and propagation are concomitant to the evolution of the modes and relations of production, society's organization, and the forms of human knowledge. Organizational psychodrama is inserted in this process, proposing transforming practices and at the same time updating itself, following the nuances of the work structure in Brazil.

## **The First Steps of Psychodrama in Brazilian Organizations**

The known framework of the application of the Socionomy of J. L. Moreno directly in companies dates back to 1955, with French psychodramatist Pierre Weil, in a training activity at the National Service of Commercial Learning (*Serviço Nacional*

*de Aprendizagem Comercial*, Senac) in Rio de Janeiro. In the 1960s, Weil worked with psychodrama in a financial institution and wrote the first psychodrama book in Portuguese, where he describes training conducted with young people for the choice of profession (Weil, 1967). However, the psychodramatic practices in Brazil began to take shape in 1968. The climate of counterculture, political processes, new conceptions of society and human relations encouraged university-trained professionals—psychologists, administrators, educators, psychiatrists—to seek alternative ways of working with groups. In the 1970s and 1980s, the first psychodrama training schools appeared in Brazil and socioeconomic actions intensified, especially the use of the role-playing method in selection processes and team training in companies (Antunes, 2014; Cepeda & Martin, 2010).

The 1980s were characterized by troubled political–economic times and the organizations had excessive working hours, increased job insecurity, generating the intensification of accidents and worker illness (Antunes & Praun, 2015). Companies have begun to worry about worker health and the need for healthy work environments as a valuable individual and collective assets. At this time, thematic psychodramatic works are developed, many of them linked to worker’s health issues. Occupational health has come to be treated as an essential strategy for ensuring worker satisfaction, productivity, and quality of care. The authors of this article worked with prevention of accidents at work and used as methodological format the sociodramatic experiences instead of lectures, addressing issues such as smoking, chemical dependency, quality of life, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the production environment, as recorded by Souza and Gomes (2020). Even when faced with the need to use PPE, the worker may not attach importance and act differently than recommended. An action method for sensitization work, such as sociodrama, produces cognitive and affective gains, highlighting the cultural conserves that make it difficult for the worker to understand the importance of the equipment or other health and safety actions to minimize risks, and gives people the opportunity to see themselves acting and become aware of their choices. The replacement of a catalog of safety rules with dramatic actions that, on the stage of *as if*, allow the worker to live and feel the consequences of their actions has been quite effective in transforming behavior. Thematic socioeconomic acts and public psychodramas were also common at this time (Wechsler & Monteiro, 2016).

In the second half of the 1980s, Brazil began the first organizational and technological changes in its production and service processes. The singular format of Brazilian production gave way to universal traits of the global production system, and people management professionals sought fundamentals and technical resources to support them in this new labor market reality (Antunes, 2014). The leader–employee relationships, the interactions with clients, and the tensions in the personal and professional relationships present in the work environment needed treatment, and the human resources areas resorted to various schools of psychology that proposed alternatives to the needs installed within the contradictory relationships of that moment—where repression, dictatorship, and the need for creation, adaptation, and collectivization coexisted. This moment favored, even more, the application of psychodrama in training and development, since Moreno’s science includes in its foundation themes

such as roles, bonds, and social reality, as well as various technical and methodological instruments for the construction of creative educational formats and application in the various human resources subsystems.

The transition from the 1980s to the 1990s was complex. The ideals of emancipatory labor have come up against maximizing productivity and increasing competition. The question that began to be a point of discussion for a whole society was: How to achieve productive goals less unfairly? As for the socionomy, if on the one hand psychodramatic methods can be used to transform everyday relationships into more effective and productive ones, and thus achieve effectiveness in production, how could psychodramatists act with companies so that the achievement of better performance would not lead them to careless acts with workers, society, and the environment? (Drummond & Souza, 2008).

## **Organizational Psychodrama: At the Turn of the Twenty-First Century**

In the 1990s, the country experienced total openness to the international market, blocking popular savings in the banks, impeachment of the president, privatizations, economic plans, and currency change. The deregulation of world trade and the international division of labor impacted Brazilian organizations with a wide variation of corporate actions, ranging from simple layout changes to mergers and bankruptcies (Antunes & Praun, 2015). The working mass needed to adjust to new technologies, changes in management systems, and production processes, which included flexible working hours, outsourcing, and multifunctionality of the worker. Social roles, among them the professional role, are articulated from socially determined contexts: the environment in which the individual lives and his relationship with others. When this environment is heavily altered, as it was in the 1990s, it significantly impacts the identity, expectations, and performance of this worker role. In this scenario, sociodramatic methods and techniques have intensified in selections and training, seeking a new worker profile in the face of the changes required in functions and positions. The authors started to use psychodrama in a more strategic format, in surveys of culture (set of norms, values, and behaviors) and organizational climate (level of satisfaction and quality of relationships)—which generally defined policies and actions for people management, encouraging productive bonds. The need to act creatively to operate with structural changes in the world of work has further expanded the possibilities for psychodrama. Old themes in people management, such as selection, and positions and salaries, began to be carried out with more participatory formats; research of all kinds was implemented using psychodrama, and projects that required creativity and adaptation to new realities were strengthened with the support of socionomy. Planning work for the scenario of uncertainty and the construction of action plans and organizational goals have been carried out—some of them with the participation of grassroots employees and managers—by psychodramatists

who have developed, in an action–research format or with their own tools, action maps for areas and companies (Antunes, 2014; Barros & Dias, 2019; Datner, 2014; Drummond & Souza, 2008).

Thus, psychodrama has been consolidating itself in the Brazilian work world, inviting psychodramatic professionals to create and review its principles constantly. The productivism context has precipitated the need for proposals for actions to improve conditions and interpersonal relationships in groups of workers, and we know that psychodrama offers alternatives for this—as we will see in the examples brought by the authors. The questions to be answered are: to what extent are psychodramatic practices proposed in the direction of what Moreno advocated about the usefulness of the social sciences? Can the application of sociometry in social life strengthen democratic forms of organization? How can corporate education contribute to emancipation and human transformation in the organizational environment? It is up to each psychodramatist to choose their ideological path (Moreno, 2020).

## Two Selection Practices Based on Sociometry<sup>1</sup>

Working in companies since 1985, I have had opportunities to work with the methodological resources and techniques of psychodrama, especially psychodramatic pedagogy, in the varied processes of people management in different branches (Romaña, 2019). I will present two experiences from the selection subsystem, a process that I consider important in the scope of organizational needs.

The first experience is a project implemented by a state-owned bank, intending to renew its management system through an internal selection process. Throughout the country, workshops were held to evaluate the profile of its leaders to fill the people management and business management positions—each position with specific profiles and requirements. Psychodrama methodologically grounded the process of choosing these professionals.

Individual interviews were conducted with the use of symbolic resources. Using small objects on the office table, the director asked—for each candidate’s presentation—that he or she build a kind of model, using the objects, which represented the important stages of their personal life and professional trajectory synthetically. From the narrative, the director made interventions. For example, in some moments, the director would propose a dialogue between *the people* who were symbolically present in the mock-up and the interviewee; in others, he would ask the interviewee to alter the described stage, possibly changing the objects to some other continuity or outcome, thus examining the interviewee’s planning, imagination, and flexibility perspectives.

Since the future employees would be working in teams, after the interviews, the behavior of the candidates in the group situation was known. For this, a group meeting

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<sup>1</sup> Sociodramatic practice conducted by the author Alcione Ribeiro Dias.



was held, 8 h long and up to a maximum of 16 participants, where integration games and role-playing were held to experience possible role conflicts, especially decision-making situations. Another procedure used was role-playing, where the participants imagined themselves in crises in the future job—feared scenes that the selector worked on with psychodramatic techniques (soliloquy, double, mirror, role reversal). The activities were distributed throughout the day, and each one was structured to follow the steps of the psychodramatic method: warm-up, dramatic action, and sharing.

In the last group activity, the participants individually proposed three names they would nominate for the office they were running for—writing down the justifications for each choice and nominating themselves. This material composed the result, bringing information about the criteria of choice and decision of each candidate to the vacancy and favored the creation of a *sociogram*—a scheme that, by the sum of the results, evidenced the compatible characteristics for each position to be filled by the selection process (Moreno, 2020).

At the end of the process, each participant, in a feedback interview, was informed about their favorable points and points to be developed for ascending to the position they were applying for and were informed about whether they had been approved or not. This process was very important because the candidates would remain in the company and could develop and return to participate in internal selections at another time if they were not approved at that opportunity. Furthermore, even those who were approved received feedback on the aspects they should improve to perform effectively.

In selection processes, sociodramas and sociometric methods favor choices that are better suited to the profiles outlined for the positions and are considered more humanized because they give candidates the condition of choice and the perception of their suitability or not for a given vacancy.

Another practice that I developed using sociometry was conducted in a clinical analysis laboratory to select its service manager. It was a position that presented a high turnover, qualified people selected in the market stayed a short time in the company, and complaints of dissatisfaction in the service were frequent. Sociodramatic sessions were held with the company's main teams—customer service, nursing, and laboratory analysis technicians. The performance of these areas depended on the quality of interaction with the service manager. In the sessions, after an integration activity (conversations in pairs to share what it meant to each one “to be well attended”) and a specific warm-up (in which the group created in theatrical scenes the performance of an “ideal manager”), each participant filled out an individual sociometric survey where they indicated three people from the company's staff for the attendance position, presenting their justifications (attraction criteria) and a name they would not indicate for that same position (rejection criteria). From the records, I built a sociogram<sup>2</sup> and, analyzing the frequency and quality of the indications, I

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<sup>2</sup> According to Moreno (2020, p. 37, our translation), “the positioning of each individual and the positioning of all the interrelationships of the individuals can be shown in a sociogram”.

presented the selection result to the company's board and owner, who validated the name indicated in the process (the most accepted person and without any rejection).

The professional chosen sociometrically by the group decided to take over the position and remained there for almost eight years, improving the quality of service and reducing internal conflicts. The process also generated an action map for the new service manager, who got to know the vision and interests of the entire team that would work under her command. The selection process generated greater adherence to the new manager's work plan by originating from the stakeholders' participation in the process. The methodology favored the inversion of roles, the quality of team relationships, and the integration of the company's areas. The company's management attributed the good results of the experience to the possibility of participation, engagement, and group cohesion that the sociometric method made possible.

In the two experiences described, the sociograms were not shared with the whole group; their results and criteria were inputs used by the psychodramatist to compose the results, feedback, and plan the integration of the people selected for the new positions.

## The Organizational Sociometry Applied Continuously and Procedurally<sup>3</sup>

Potenciar Consultores Associados is a consulting firm focused on organizational sociometry, which has been active for more than 30 years in companies and organizations of the most varied, and of which I have participated since 1997 as a consultant, teacher and senior in the follow-up in *coaching* and *assessment* of executives and entrepreneurs. In the psychodramatic movement since 1997, I am currently president of the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama (Febrap), helping in the organization and dissemination of psychodrama.

I will use two examples to demonstrate possibilities for applying organizational Sociometry, particularly in changing organizational culture. The first deals with a family business started by the father and managed by him alone for years, which experiences a crisis when it includes one of the partners in the management—since the CEO (father) has great difficulty in delegating and trusting the work—both because it is a woman and because she has graduated in another area that, at first, seemed very distant from the company's needs. The family comes to us for individual support for the partner, who feels harassed because she is not seen as a skilled professional. Since the first meetings, the proposal was to work with the perspective of an expanded social atom and the inclusion of different points of view. We address how the CEO (father) builds his story, family life, and all the social influences received by all. We work with the role-play and role reversal technique with all the social actors involved. In a second moment, we worked on the relationships, starting with two of the partners and gradually including the others. We continue to use our own consulting tool, called

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<sup>3</sup> Practices performed by the author Andréa Claudia de Souza.

competencies, abilities, attitudes, reflection, and metrics (CAARM), to value each person's expertise and define their roles within society (Drummond et al., 2012). We promoted the company's organization with the creation of a new organizational chart and constituted the short and medium-term planning, with the involvement of the CEO (the father) and the inclusion of the wishes of new projects. We promoted the strengthening of that "female core" to understand and better manage intergenerational conflicts. This work continues with our procedural follow-up, broadening the participation of employees and other company leaders.

The second company is a cooperative, where we worked for three years with different areas, dealing with various themes—such as team development, marketing and sales, and stress in the work environment. The common point is that these themes are behavioral, which psychodrama favors since they impact the relational issue. The overall objective of our work was to help the groups of professionals in this company understand their individual, group, and social contexts. We use the CAARM tool to address aspects of role performance and strengthen the bonds between everyone by extending the support network between the company's areas. The psychodramatic methods and techniques allow the treatment of one's own frustrations. Especially with the inversion of roles, one seeks to understand the other better, thinking healthier proposals for everyone.

We try to structure the specific warm-ups and dramatic games considering the reality of the company we are working with and the constitution of the participant group. We can cite an example of warming up for the purpose of the presentation. Each worker is presented as an object of professional use, and so in the real estate company, each one may be a type of property, in the retail food company, each one may be a type of product or machine used in the company. A resource we have been using since the 2000s is "everyday life mapping" and refers to the use of sociodramas to research the everyday life of companies playfully, working with the conserves and unveiling the conflicts of the day-to-day work (Drummond & Souza, 2008). Thus, when the goal is to train people or accompany teams in a company, one has procedural and thematic planning whose main difference from other approaches is the inclusion of sociometry in all phases, favoring bonds, managing conflicts, coexistence, and aggregating the differences between participants. All work is processed with reflections on the theme developed, and understanding is facilitated by feeling and noticing yourself acting. In the closing, participants strengthen bonds through games, symbolic exchanges made with objects, giving feedback to their coworkers about the partnership and joint responsibility for facing day-to-day conflicts (Souza & Gomes, 2020).

The procedural work within a company enables a continuous reflection of its paths and repositioning in the social and group context and welcoming individuals promoting what is best in each one, strengthening positive and productive sociometry.

## Psychodramatic Sociodynamics in Scientific Research Contexts<sup>4</sup>

As a researcher–collaborator in academic and corporate areas, we applied the psychodramatic methodology as a foundation of scientificity in the performances with target groups and consequent international publications, providing the opportunity to disseminate their experiences: (a) in academic research contexts according to models conceived and validated between the years 2007–2017 incorporated in the master’s degree in psychology held at the University of Fortaleza, Brazil (Almeida, 2008) and in the doctoral dissertation developed at the University of Deusto in Bilbao, Spain (Almeida, 2015), concomitant with cultural studies by the University of Aveiro, Portugal; (b) in institutional support and advisory projects involving the well-being and quality of life for workers in the trade of goods, tourism and services sector (*Serviço Social do Comércio & Sesc*, 2017) operationalizing training and capacity building for professionals working in hosting processes for immigrant, expatriate and refugee women in São Paulo/Brazil and publications in international scientific journals.

Considering the scientific-methodological standards of psychodramatic sociodynamics, we highlight the pertinence of applying experiential experiences that unveil and confront broad value frames in search of transforming preconceived ideas into innovative intersubjective implications of human being in the world. In the perspective of interrelating the meanings of “work and leisure”<sup>5</sup> as shared dimensions in integration settings of immigrant, expatriate and immigrant, expatriate and refugee women in the country of reception/destination, we make use of the axiodramatic procedures to study and analyze the entrainments of representative gender values and performances that apply in the construction of each sociocultural role experienced since the departure from the country of origin; through the development of therapeutic groups and protagonism, we enable immigrants, expatriates and refugees, as well as professionals who work in welcoming these groups to unveil in spontaneous-dramatic form “*the actor in situ*” (Cukier, 2002, p. 38, our translation) dramatic creator–interpreter of the ethical–citizen aspirations immanent to beauty, goodness and fairness (Salis, 2004) representative of the individual–collective psychic processes of incorporation to a dual nationality.

Considering in psychodramatic scenario the underlying consciousnesses of presences–pertainings,<sup>6</sup> real–virtual, analogical–dialogical that integrate the dramas that resonate in the depths of gender relations in the face of work–idleness as factors

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<sup>4</sup> Practice by the author Rosely Cubo.

<sup>5</sup> In the territory of social times and the regulatory spaces of production that characterize work, leisure is an area that demarcates the potentialization of spontaneity–creativity, restructuring the different forms of “feeling, thinking, acting” (skills/being) and revitalizing the culture of belonging (competences/being).

<sup>6</sup> Presence is represented by the state of conscious being that recognizes its experiential and experiential characteristics and potentiates the feeling of vitality and strength (Basso & Pustilnik, 2000); it locates the human’s ontological journey through “attention”, consonant with life drive through breathing and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005) of active concentration, creativity, and absorption

of integration in cultures of origin-acquired, we act as director of dramatic action and/or therapeutic agent in training, formations and/or group interventions with a focus on the transition between thinking–feeling–acting of women in contexts of amplification–amplification of senses of being immigrants, expatriates and refugees.

- I. In academic research contexts: we provide the opportunity to create–develop–record–publish the frameworks of studies, research and processing/sharing of psychodramatic sociodynamics.

Through the transversal “dramatic keys” work and leisure we open the core scenes played by immigrants, expatriates and refugees seeking to bring to the scene the sensations felt in the face of the performance of sociocultural roles from “been”, “being” and “coming-to-be”<sup>7</sup> in the country of origin–destination in consonance, resonance or dissonance with the body–mind narrative expressions. In the thematic associations between the (in) adequacies in the way the women in the drama groups come into contact with the forms, verbal–corporal expressions and the ways they experience relating to the psychosocial category “work”, reflective learning and appreciative experiences of leisure result; that is, in the face of the (in) satisfaction in creating strategies to deal with the (in) differentiations in/of work, they favor transcending their meanings, from the emptiness of meaning to transpersonal states of *flow*.

As a methodological resource, we applied the leisure workshops<sup>8</sup> that influence and are influenced by the living/dwellings of women considering the resignifications to the spheres of integration of experiential senses of origin–destination of immigrants, expatriates and refugees. Through a set of socio-economic procedures of qualification role-playing, appropriation role-taking and creation role-creating of roles allow them to restructure innovative responses to representations and performances in the host society.

In the warm-up stage in search of the group emergent and/or protagonism, the topological zone or focal space triggered to reach the status

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of experience. Belonging is portrayed by the condition of being manifested by the perception of affective sensitivity (Berne, 1995) and awakens to the establishment and alignment of bonds of compassionate trust; it locates the ontological journey of the human via “intention”, that is, harmony and awakening to the essence of a specific experience.

<sup>7</sup> Systemic process of encompassing the “been”, “being”, and “coming-to-be” correspond to the embodiment of consciousness in the experience of being an immigrant, expatriate, refugee between the country of origin–destination and not only through the perception of thoughts, words, and actions, but through the sensation–feeling body–mind–emotion–spirit (Basso & Pustilnik, 2000). The being-in-the-world, according to Heidegger (1991) “is one-with” the we and the others in which the body is the representation of the encounter.

<sup>8</sup> Group experiences that favor reinterpreting the traditional spatiotemporal postulates of work–idleness, bringing out perspectives to transform them: (a) by mapping the psychosocial processes that interfere, impact and trigger distortions in the systems of (in)satisfactions, psychic sufferings and learning (knowledge, skills and abilities) of work, (b) by manifesting the playful and aesthetic procedures of leisure associated with gestures of interruptions, suspensions and automatisms of everyday life towards the unspeakable–sensible.

nascendi spontaneous—creative work—idleness of the group, we used for potential/emergent/tempered/resisted/impossible role reversals, three types of intermediate objects, such as: (a) canvas painting that evoke the memories they bring of the “been” in the country of origin, (b) clay sculpture that articulate the experiences resulting from the “being” revisited by knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in the host country, (c) plaster mask that propitiate the projections of the “coming-to-be” in the destination country.

In the step of dramatizing the subjectivized internal and objectivized external scenarios of the group and/or protagonists, we interrelate the realities to the dramatic “as ifs” in work—idleness contexts in the country of origin—destination. From the scenes on the psychodramatic stage, it is possible to identify what each person brings from themselves in different situations and contexts.

In the sharing/processing stage, the communications of *insights* personal-group happen; by recognizing the integration of immigrant, expatriate, and refugee women, the experiential work—idleness sensations favor (a) the achievement of transpersonal maturity, (b) the processing of the links and networks between the home-acquired cultures, (c) the expansion of senses of autonomy, (d) the representation of perceived feelings of freedom—happiness, (e) the maintenance of intrinsic motivation toward self-knowledge and self-development.

In sum, we have that the leisure workshops as a psychodramatic approach integrate life stories and stem the perception of the intrinsic motivations of exit—welcome—aspirational in terms of the resonances and dissonances to the work—idleness integration process; this model proposed by Cubo (2020) aims to resignify the representations that women construct of themselves, of others, and of their ecosystemic surroundings.

- II. In support and institutional advisory projects: we operationalize the training, capacity building of professionals acting in processes of welcoming immigrant, expatriate, and refugee women.

As well as by the transversal “dramatic keys” work and leisure, we act to propose role reversals between real and imaginary life stories; from the postulates in which ecosystemic and human contexts are connected and embodied by ambivalent choices of (in) differentiations, we propose in the leisure workshops the creation of scenarios in which breaking territorial boundaries represents crossing the demarcations of the (un) known world for the encounter of the self in transpersonal instances.

As a result, we have that the achievement of transpersonal maturity, the processing of the links and networks between the cultures of origin—acquired, the expansion of senses of autonomy, the representation of the perceived feelings of freedom—happiness, and the maintenance of intrinsic motivation in view of self-knowledge and self-development produce a self-fulfilling function since they imply articulating transpersonal thinking—feeling—acting in the exercise of citizenship.

## The Story Continues: Reflections by the Authors

We can say that a great contradiction of the first two decades of this new century is that: if the world gained in terms of globalization, technological advances, worker's flexibility and mobility, and encouragement to worker's qualification and education, it also increased precariousness, labor deregulation, social inequality, and ecological imbalance. If the psychodramatist has expanded his work possibilities, he is also faced with more complex ethical dilemmas. Thus, the work of psychodramatists in organizations, as the microsocieties they are, must go beyond the vision of economic management and of the human being as a resource and consider the worker as a subject, the company as a participant in an economy that should claim to be social and solidary, and the planet as the finite matter it is.

In the last decade, sociodramatic experiences have been conducted in companies dealing with diversities and adversities and seeking to equalize quality of life, production, and social relations. Many schools of psychodrama training in Brazil are dedicated to work that deal with the themes of social roles, education, and health, including the search for healthy and humanized answers in work relationships. The job market has never stopped demanding the psychodramatist's work in the field of organizations, and it seems that psychodrama has managed, over time, to act within the national production networks—in the gaps between fantasy and reality, trying to maintain Moreno's counterhegemonic way of breathing. Being a real and action proposal, in psychodrama one does not live on interest or speculation but on the living work of practices. With the world of work becoming more transnational every day and millions of people unemployed, with the modalities of telework, work at home, and the industrialization of services becoming more consolidated, with social inequality widening, the challenges for the world society and for psychodramatists are significant.

Therefore, it is essential that we move “fearlessly”, armed with powerful and dynamic social inventions, into the midst of all cities, all regions, counties, and states, daring to shake them out of their dreams of individual psychic existence. Only through direct and immediate practical demonstrations of the utility of the social sciences can faith in science be recovered and cemented (Moreno, 2020, p. 276, our translation).

The invitation is for more people in the world to continue working creatively, grounded theoretically and methodologically in socionomy for a more inclusive society, for a network of work with higher link quality, in the effort to develop respect for the social actors involved in the production processes. Perhaps this is the meaning of Moreno's small group revolution.

It is worth pointing out that high productivity and abundant organizational results alone will not bring more happiness and better living conditions to the human being—not while there are people in subhuman conditions in the world. This productive model, which generates technological advances and comfort, brings with it intense power games, sickness, and social inequality. When discussing contemporary fascism, Vieira (2020) states that “Moreno aimed at the utopia of the restitution of vital factors, the dissolution of the crystallized aspects of subjectivity, in short, the

rupture of a system that treats people as objects of a social gear, which produces homogeneous and impoverished individuals” (p. 19, our translation). To work in business is to be in a struggle to build the collective, it is not to abolish the political, it is to deal with the whole of humanity.

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# Chapter 24

## The Future of Psychodrama



**Heloisa Junqueira Fleury, Marlene Magnabosco Marra,  
and Oriana Holsbach Hadler**

**Abstract** This collection of multiple practices confirmed that psychosocial and socioeducational interventions enable the rescue of ethical values for humanity. They approach different aspects of psychodrama, with a predominance of the application of sociodrama, a scientific instrument of social action, with preventive and didactic dimensions, which can rebuild a community since its productions and solutions originate in the group itself. Many of the group practices presented focused on vulnerable populations and valued group interaction and creative dialogue, providing an atmosphere of reflection based on the group's own culture and values. For the future, the great challenge will be to expand the socioeducational practices to groups with new demands and from different social strata, taking ethics, in the sense of developing values, and aesthetics, with a new design for psychodrama, probably taking the group as the methodology itself. The group is considered the generator of resources, transformations, and resolving emergency issues. The psychodramatist will promote the fermentation of interactions in a continuous movement to build diversity, equity, and inclusion. These references will be mandatory, defining new horizons for psychodramatic practice and for the training of a new generation of psychodramatists.

**Keywords** Psychodrama · Sociodrama · Group intervention · Group · Vulnerable population · Diversity

Almost a century ago, Moreno developed the conceptual basis of practice for social transformation. He aimed to make it easier for humans and groups to find their spontaneous tendencies through a method based “on the affinities between people and on the patterns resulting from their spontaneous interactions, patterns which

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are used as a guide for the classification, the construction and, when necessary, the reconstruction of groupings” (Moreno, 2008, p. 44, our translation).

He developed a group intervention method in which everyone is a therapeutic agent through spaces of intersection and resonances present in the interaction. The techniques of this approach favor a spontaneous group production based on the principles of spontaneity and freedom. In the face of contradictory and conflicting psychological currents, the resources of action balance the spontaneous social forces, conferring unity on the whole.

Moreno termed this unity in the process of organization “organic and social unity of humanity”, a state necessary for applying a therapeutic procedure (Moreno, 2008, pp. 46–47). Considered sociodrama a scientific instrument of social action, with preventive and didactic dimensions, it can rebuild a community since its productions and solutions originate from the group itself (Marra & Fleury, 2010).

Nowadays, the diversity of applications of group interventions confirms the mobilization of society to solve problems that the state is unable to face. Group practices increasingly stimulate public policies. Because they deal with collective issues, policies need to aggregate different systems, institutions, and professional practices.

Psychodramatists have reinvented the social and educational insertion in the therapeutic context and vice versa. We witness, in the different chapters of this book, the importance and the strength of group protagonism in the transformation of reality. Professionals assume the role of articulators of new fabrics and meanings in relational life (Marra, 2004).

The interaction among the group participants promotes the group’s potential, with the expression of its organizing forces that will influence the micropolitics of coexistence of groups, institutions, and communities.

The psychodramatic stance generates a dimension of reflexivity that has been highlighted in postmodern ideas (Grandesso, 2000). With postmodern proposals, we lose our expert status to gain a status of reflexivity such as psychodrama by emphasizing the power of social interaction in generating new meanings that arise from the action–reflection–action process. The sense of what is real and good emerges from relationships. The therapist’s job is increasingly to create new realities with the client, reflect on their ways of being in the world, and not direct or advise them, but to reflect with them.

Both theories work with relational and collective responsibility for a change of culture. An interest arises in how the narratives that organize people’s lives are generated. There are no longer any solid realities, only points of view. We see it as just one of many potentially valuable stories. Culture, in general, has become more pluralistic.

The creative cycle (Pakman, 2003) enables everyone to learn from their own experience through action–reflection–action, which points us to a “theory-in-use” linked to transformative actions. Reflection triggers knowledge by propagating a resonance in space, creating a movement of developing consciousness. The proposal of group practices emphasizes the importance of encountering local knowledge for the construction of collective knowledge.

For the future, psychodrama is consolidating the valorization of the collective dimension, as originally advocated by Moreno, with less focus on individualistic issues and with more defined biases for a practice committed to current demands. Social or community practices have an interventional proposal. They promote changes and organize groups, demonstrating effectiveness as a tool for social intervention and basic health care, valuing prevention and quality of life. Every social situation that generates an expansion of consciousness from an action–reflection–action is a form of intervention.

The groups are privileged contexts for prevention, articulation, and transformation, as creating opportunities implies human development. They require available professionals who are not fixed in their specialties and open perspectives for the “care” of the other, enabling the creation of a fertile ground for social development. The more we have partners of sharing and experiencing, the more society will be self-sustainable (Marra, 2004).

The working context of the socioeducational intervention is configured as a preventive and protective safety net of social initiatives aimed at all levels of the population. It can be considered a community therapy because it expands the opportunities for emancipation and the transformation of the group’s human, social, and productive capital.

The recovery of people’s quality of life, the emancipation of citizens, the sustainability of their demands, the expansion of the network, and the access to justice form a dense fabric for the effectiveness of programs, projects, and action plans. They range from those that deal with the subsistence of the population, through the formation of multipliers or social agents, to those that promote the subjects, developing critical vision, resilience, and the capacity to face different situations.

The socioeducational interventions are formative expedient par excellence because they cultivate autonomy and the ability to think critically and creatively, always allowing participation. We know that the spontaneous and creative capacity of the human being needs renewal in education, which is made possible in the social interactions experienced in these interventions, which are in themselves potentially therapeutic.

For the socioeducational interventions, it is essential to value the subject in their culture, as well as the meanings given by them, should be the source of what is taught or learned. They assume a continuous education, proposing that the actors in group interaction become the generators of their functioning and development.

Freire (1976) relates popular education to the doing and knowing of popular organizations. Through their action–reflection, it seeks to strengthen them as collective subjects, contributing to the strengthening of civil society and the necessary transformations, both for the democratic construction of our countries and for economic development with social justice.

Considering the multiple practices presented in this book, we believe that the psychosocial and socioeducational interventions will be increasingly valued as they make possible the rescue of ethical values for humanity, basically the appreciation of coexistence, of being together.

Today, many of the group practices presented focus on vulnerable populations. Psychodramatic education is included in what has come to be called “transdisciplinarity”. Thinking transdisciplinary is the way to think by new paradigms, such as complexity (Marra, 2020). Transdisciplinarity, as the prefix *trans*—indicates, refers to that which is at the same time between, across, and beyond any disciplines. Its goal is the understanding of the present world.

The professional also is in a constant process of education. Their formation, readiness for change, and not fixating on any specialism are fundamental elements for any educational practice. This conjuncture permeates different areas of the educational process. It confirms that each professional must recognize the specificity of the various practices and the different spaces where they take place and care of their quality of life.

Thus, the intervention is not an end in itself but a possibility to expand the participants’ knowledge and awareness and to allow limits to be transformed into challenges since belonging, involvement, and participation, among other aspects, are present in this interaction.

We are witnessing the opening for spontaneity and creativity of the psychodramatist of the future with online interventions, configuring a new model of teaching and working characterized by greater horizontality.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, the first Brazilian Congress of Psychodrama was held online. Although there was general apprehension about the feasibility of the new format and the challenge to promote emotionally meaningful scientific activities, the enrollments of many students, potentially a new generation of psychodramatists, began to herald important advances. The diversity of the participants was surprising, with the participation of students who once could not afford the transportation or hotel facilities. With this new audience, the discussion of racism, homophobia, and social inequality took the virtual stage of the congress, demonstrating how the twenty-first-century psychodrama is in the process of opening, of changing itself and its practices, in an ethical–political commitment.

The great challenge for the future of psychodrama will be to extend the socioeducational practices to groups with new demands and from different social strata, taking as main goals ethics, in the sense of developing values, and aesthetics, with a new design for psychodrama, probably taking the group as the methodology itself. In this case, the group is considered the generator of resources, transformations, and resolving the emergent issues of the group’s moment. Our challenge now will be to introduce methods of working with groups to other areas of practice, a model we call multiple practices in different contexts, with various disciplines and areas of application.

The focus in this developing modality is on group interaction. It will be up to the psychodramatist of the future to promote the fermentation of interactions in a continuous movement for the construction of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Fleury, 2021), the main challenge for the next decade. In this new context, these references become mandatory, defining new horizons for psychodramatic practice and for the training of a new generation of psychodramatists.

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