
PhD²

Personal and human Development, Psychodrama to help Disadvantaged

PSYCHODRAMA & VIDEO-THERAPY Methodological Manual



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1. The combined method of psychodrama and video-therapy: the approach

Psychodramatists and film-makers contribute to the development of the project by supplying, through an integrated method of group management comprising action methods, video-filming and cinema workshops, the “key competences” to integrate or re-integrate people who are marginalised or disadvantaged in the personal and professional world.

These two figures are always a **joint presence** during their work: the first takes care of the group’s relational aspects in the psychodrama workshop while the second is responsible for the transmissions of technical competences during the audio-video production and for the filming of a great part of the production of the psychodramatist and the group.

The aim of the project is to develop a path in which **psychodrama** and **video-filming** are both complementary and transversal.

The production of an audio-visual is achieved by activating all language tools (words, visual representation, sounds, music etc) first by imagining them (idea, subject, script also as a pretext, plot following the psychodramatic method) and then developing them to reach, through editing, a sum of the various language expressions recreating a universe coherent and “metaphorically adherent” to life experiences.

An important element of video production is linked to the many collective dynamics of its phases on which lay the foundations of the identification process including:

- the participants' role and attitude
- interpersonal dynamics
- importance of adherence to the jointly set up rules
- determination of the influence of the contribution given by each single group member

2. Didactic and work methodology: approach towards the group and the individual; work organisation in groups and sub-groups; workshop contents (e.g. body language, non-verbal communication, self-expression etc); activities and objectives of each step.

The use of the classic psychodrama method and techniques largely used in training is very helpful also in psycho-educational processes. The psychodrama method quickly creates a group climate which encourages the participants to share their personal experiences and come out clean from the very first meeting.

The **spontaneity** of the interventions, the **symmetry** and the relaxed spontaneity **in answering** which characterises the psychodrama method reduce the initial feeling of anxiety and the difficulty of expression of the newly formed groups.

It is in fact a **group itinerary** leading to the acquisition, the re-discovery and the consolidation of relational and communication competences indispensable for interpersonal relations which help people to adapt or re-adapt to both a social and work context.

As far as group management is concerned the method refers to **Moreno's classic psychodrama** in which the concepts of **spontaneity and creativity** are central together with the **role theory**, the value of the **session** and the **sociometrical**

connotation of relations, groups and organisations.

Psychodrama has some very interesting technical, methodological and ideal cornerstones within the path presented in the PhD2 project:

- the operational and evolutionary concept of the human being whose spontaneity is activated by favourable situations.
 - the close link between spontaneity and creativity and the importance set on the individual as a creator of new roles in a situation of cultural standstill.
 - the exploitation of the group's potential as the best environment to bring about change.
 - alternation between the actor and the auxiliary egos. The ability to move from the level of experience to the one of reflection or self-reflection is one of the elements that makes the individual an active part in the living world.
 - Role reversal has in itself important elements for the emotional/affective re-structuring process.
1. The path develops spontaneity and creativity both in the individual and in the group. Spontaneity is intended as being ready to mobilise all intellectual, affective and physical energies to interact with reality supplying in this way new answers to the situation. The body remembers what the mind forgets.
 2. There is an improvement in expression and communication skills. Through psychomotor games, non-verbal techniques and spontaneous stage performance the participants experiment with new communication skills which may bring about better interpersonal relations in a spontaneous way.

3. Psychodrama is known as a therapy of relationships.
4. There is a widening of the range of psychological and social roles. Through role reversal, there is an exploration of both personal and social themes. In the “here and now” group experience, the participants can take on difficult, conflictual or unknown roles in a spontaneous way. Psychodrama can be defined as a way of practicing living without being punished for making mistakes.
5. It is a path that enhances understanding, interaction and cooperation within the group.

While directing the group the psychodramatist uses several techniques used in the action method (role reversal, the double, mirror, soliloquy, sociometry etc); this favours the positive outcome of repetitive and crystallised situations, the solution of critical problems, the search for and the discovery of alternative solutions with due respect for oneself and the others.

It is also a path along which emotional and cognitive aspects intersect; new emotions surfacing bring about the acquisition of new cognitive competences.

The work aims at the handling of communications and the proposed activities have a rehabilitation value as well as being an opportunity to join the employment world.

The path focuses on two different aspects:

- the transferability of practical actions to “everyday life” encouraging and promoting the participant’s ability to socialise

and to act autonomously in view of future life situations, through the recovery of their social and relational skills as well as their professional and personal competencies.

- Acquisition of "practical" competencies through video-therapy in order to strengthen the participants' know-how abilities and also to allow them to see themselves as capable people.

What to film:

All exercises proposed by the psychodramatist which have been jointly agreed upon in real time with the film-maker so that the camera has a role shared by all members and is not just an indiscrete eye capturing the scenes from the outside.

Non-stop filming is not necessary but the relationship with the psychodramatist and the group is fundamental.

Make the group members feel part of the operation and give them a sense of awareness.

The participants, regardless of the type and the level of their disorder, must as soon as possible be made aware and be part of the operation and also part of the technical aspects of the project.

It is therefore desirable that they acquire some basic elements of filming techniques and language (quantity and quality depend on the type of participants).

Review the images with the group.

Contrary to other types of filming, in this project reviewing the images is not mere editing but carries a video therapeutic value in itself.

Images store the memory of what the film-maker, the psychodramatist and above all the participants have not caught at the time of filming or have had a distorted perception of, or what may be an element for further reflection. Psychodrama is about what doesn't happen in life as well as what does.

It is important that throughout the experiment some meeting be dedicated to the **collective viewing of the material filmed** and that this be followed by a debate. In fact, video-therapy is neither a mere film production operation nor the vision of oneself in a video.

The project's activities imply a growth path in which to meet and re-view ones' self. The image becomes the participant's counterpart thus facilitating self-confrontation.

Editing:

The first step is to find a way to give a precise idea of what was said and what was enacted during the psychodrama sessions without showing all the images.

Psychodrama is both verbal and non-verbal expression, 'words in action', therefore the film language must adhere to the structure of the verbal language.

The time stretch covered by the psychodrama must be replaced by a filming time which does not miss the essence of what has happened and above all must reflect the intensity of the emotions and of the group spirit evoked during the session.

The final result of the project's filming activity is the editing of each country's workshop production as well as the production of a single video including all the material.

The criteria by which the single production will be regrouped into one document will be decided at the end of the filming.

3. Participants

The experimentation will be carried out with about **15-20 participants, young and adult**, with differing degrees of social disadvantage or marginalisation and will focus on a **specific area**.

The group will be **pre-selected** and then **selected** among people already under the care of public or private social service structures.

The selection will be preceded by a meeting first with the social service staff and then with the prospective participants.

4. The scenario

This will be the result of the group's work and, after the first meetings organised to familiarise, one or more ideas will be "put on stage".

The premises must have enough room for the participants to move about without hindrance (walking, gait, fluid sculptures, mechanic sculptures, work in pairs and in sub-groups etc) allowing also for some empty space, **a stage area** and room for the audience partly made of participants themselves.

5. Psychodrama and video-filming: length, time, organisation.

The length of the workshop will be 60 hours split into 15 meetings of 4 hours each or 20 meetings of 3 hours each (at the psychodramatist's discretion or according to the group's needs).

The session will take place once or twice a week (also according to the group's needs).

The workshop will start in September/October 2009.

The 60 hours could be distributed over three phases:

- Group **warm-up**: Reception, introduction and encouragement to develop a sense of belonging.
- Enactment: "An **idea** is born", with study and development.
- **Sharing: Closing** session, elaboration, assessment, "what I leave behind and what I'm taking with me".

These three moments have no clear cut borders apart from the days of beginning and end and are continuously interacting with the group's life.

They are reproduced, exist and have their own time and space in each meeting and during the whole length of the path: reception (warm up), "idea" (enactment), closing session (sharing).

It is advisable that a hand camera be used for filming.

The film-maker is both a spectator and actor. He/she must record all the meeting's topical moments (reception, opening, exercises, closing of the session) and interact with the psychodramatist when the participants need technical explanations.

At least 15/20 minutes of each session should be a lesson on technique and film language.

6. The role of the psychodramatist and the video-maker

Psychodramatist: the term recalls the theatre language often used by Moreno.

The group conductor is called “director” and is a kind of **coordinator/director/activator** of the performance and also “action promoter”, director, analyst of the emotional and cognitive material which comes to the surface.

The term “director” represents the active role played by his/her presence in the action (Boria, -Tele. Manuale di psicodramma classico-Franco Angeli, 1983).

The director and the group are therefore the persons who make the application of the method possible. Rules and structure allow the surfacing of the protagonist’s inner feelings and thoughts in a safe context. However, there must be someone trained and capable, who applies theory and structured techniques, to trigger the act and make the performance begin to unwind, guaranteeing at the same time, through his/her presence, a safe and containing therapeutic environment in which to work.

By conducting the session on “the borderline between fiction and reality” (*surplus-reality*) the director is the witness of the fact that a psychodrama is being played out and that beyond the room’s walls, the reality of every day life still exists.

The director must be a qualified group conductor who is able to act as a stimulus for each individual participant’s growth and enrichment in the group.

He/she must also be a facilitator in therapeutic and reciprocal learning processes which are taking place in the group.

6.1 How the film-maker should operate during filming.

The people behind the camera and those in front of it should always be on an equal level. However, trust is not enough; it is also necessary to be prepared to learn from the others while taking a discrete attitude.

The film-maker should always be in the middle of the action but should also be able to fade into the background and mingle with the "actors" on the scene trying to maintain contact with the group's spontaneous truth without modifying it.

This "self-effacement" operation while filming should be directly proportional to the level of sympathy (in the etymological sense of the word) and of knowledge of the group's behaviour.

7. Resources and equipment

For the workshop see point 4 on space definition.

Costumes, scene equipment and lights are a good but not indispensable resource.

Filming equipment

1 digital camera (dv o HD)

1 microphone for the psychodramatist

1 directional microphone mounted on the camera for the best possible recording quality of the voices.

1 tripod in necessary

2 or 3 lights (if necessary)

8. Monitoring

It is important that the activities carried out in cooperation with the structures (public or private) already caring for the participants be monitored (doctors, social workers, coordinators etc).

Within the 60 hours of experimentation there should be at least three meetings (one at the beginning, one intermediate and one final) during which the psychodramatist and the film-maker will express their impressions on the groups activities and on single participants.

The staff employed will then be able to help in better understanding the participant's "answers" and amend the meeting procedures if necessary.

9. The tools and the roles of the psychodrama laboratories

The tools set out for the method of psychodrama are as follows:

- a director
- the group
- a protagonist
- auxiliary egos
- a stage

9.1 The director

In most therapies this is the therapist, facilitator or group leader. The director is a trained person who helps guide the action. The director is a co-producer of the drama taking clues from the perceptions of the person seeking help. The following are some of the director's tasks:

- (a) To build sufficient cohesion and a constructive working group climate.
- (b) To stimulate individual group members sufficiently and warm them up to action.
- (c) To consider group dynamics and measure group, interaction at the beginning of a session.
- (d) To guide the appropriate selection of a protagonist and take care of others in the group who were considered but not chosen to be a subject of the session.
- (e) To make a treatment contract for the session which is an action-preparation negotiated with the protagonist.
- (f) To establish a therapeutic alliance.
- (g) To prepare the action-space or stage on which the therapeutic drama takes place
- (h) To intervene to give the protagonist sufficient freedom to select the focus of exploration.

- (i) To identify non-verbal messages of the protagonist as well as the verbal.
- (j) To anchor each scene setting in the appropriate time and place.
- (k) To help put auxiliary egos into role.
- (l) To identify central issues in the enactment and to help the protagonist show the group what happened rather than talk about it.
- (m) To use psychodramatic techniques such as role-reversal, to move the action from the periphery of the problem to the core of the issue.
- (n) The core of the issue may involve a catharsis of emotion, insight catharsis, catharsis of laughter or catharsis of integration which the director maximizes appropriately.
- (o) To create sufficient safety for the protagonist and the group.
- (p) To ensure confidentiality in the group and physical safety.
- (q) To ensure that the psychodrama is a group process and not one-to-one therapy in a group,
- (r) To create sufficient closure where the protagonist and group integrate the material presented in the session.
- (s) To help the protagonist to re-enter the group after the session.
- (t) To facilitate role feedback from group members who played auxiliary roles in the session.
- (u) To allow catharsis and integration of group members who identify with the protagonist and can share from their own experience.
- (v) To protect the protagonist from distorted responses or analysis of the group and to attend to each member sharing similar experiences or moments when they were most involved in the session.
- (w) To share from his/her life history, if appropriate.

9.2 *The group*

The average size of a psychodrama group is between ten and twenty people. The emotional material in large groups seems to transcend the numbers and often people feel the group shrinks in size and are astounded that in a group of twenty-five they are able spontaneously to be themselves.

There are many societal roles represented in any given group. If, for example, the protagonist is an alcoholic, there may be a mother, sibling, partner or therapist in the group who, in the sharing, can present their own view of what happened to them. This feedback from other roles, in relation to the problem enacted, can be invaluable insight for the protagonist. The socially investigative dimension of the problem is better researched in the session when many roles are represented. One of the aspects of a psychodrama group which sets it apart from other groups is the multiplicity of roles that are represented by each person in the group. We each play a staggering variety of roles in one day: parent, son or daughter, professional, friend, lover, citizen, boss, student, not to mention all the somatic roles such as sleeping, eating, and crying. Separate from the many roles we play in our own lives, we may be asked to play a role for someone else in the group - a dying mother, for example. If the person selected to play the dying mother has previously been seen as the group scapegoat, the role-structure can change drastically in a psychodrama group, allowing a positive alliance to form between protagonist and person playing the dying mother; an alliance which previously didn't exist. This constant change of role structure in a group disallows the role rigidity that may occur in other groups. The role repertoire is expanded by each group member playing a different

kind of role from that which s/he may be seen to play in the group. A member of the group with low self esteem may be stretched to play a courageous role, surprising both themselves and the group by the release of creativity hidden, problematic, learned behaviour. This glimpse of courage motivates the player to produce more and encourages group members to relate to them in a different way.

9.3 *The protagonist*

The protagonist, meaning the first in action, is a representative voice of the group through which other group members can do their own work. The protagonist simply states an aspect of life s/he wants to work on; my fear of death, my relationship with my daughter, my authority problem at work. The director, with the protagonist, sets out to create scenes that give examples of the problem in the present, looking at possible behaviour patterns. Seeing the problem in the present, seeing the problem as it exists in the past and trying to resolve the problem by establishing the core or roots of the issue, is the aim so that future behaviour contains a more adequate approach. The "spontaneity" that is sought is defined as a fresh response to an old situation or an adequate response to a new situation. The idea of throwing away the script was crucial to the conceptualization of psychodrama as an action method. The protagonist has a chance to review the life script that s/he is using, which may have been handed down for good reason but fails to be adequate for present life requirements. A person who was handed a script not to cry may no longer feel that serves them in present-day functioning. One who has never grieved for the loss of a parent because they bought the 'brave' script may feel the relief of letting go of tears with a new definition of brave - one who has the courage to face what really exists within.

That courage to be may not have been within the role repertoire of one's parents, but within this new family group bravery may find a new climate to encourage self-expression, which may have lain dormant for years.

9.4 The auxiliary ego

The auxiliary ego is anyone in the group who plays a role representing a significant other in the life of the protagonist. This may be a role external to the protagonist, such as a family member or colleague at work. It may be an internal role such as one's fearful self, child self or one's inner voice, as in the role of what is called the double. The double helps express that which isn't being expressed, with or without words. Because Moreno felt that the royal route to the psyche is not the word but non-verbal expression, the auxiliary ego can express, by-gesture, posture or distance, those unspoken secrets in relation to the protagonist.

Often people are more spontaneous in the role of someone else than in their own role. Role-reversal is the engine that drives the psychodrama. The role of significant other in the group is modelled by the protagonist and a group member then moves in to play that role. Through crucial role reversals the protagonist experiences a shift in role boundary by playing another person. The person being the auxiliary ego holds the role that has been set and creates within it, as they imagine the person in that role would play it. The role is played through the perception of the protagonist.

9.5 The Stage

Psychodrama is based on life itself. The space a person lives in is reproduced on the stage. If a conversation takes place in the kitchen, we set out the table and chairs and give imaginative space to a window, sink, door, fridge, etc.

Constructing the reality of an individual's space helps the person to really be there and warms them up to produce the feelings that do or do not exist in that space., When someone remembers a conversation that took place at the table, in childhood, it is important to have the people in the scene played by members of the group. We can often learn more by looking in this way at a person's living space than we can in months of interview.

10. The phases of the combined method (psychodrama+videotherapy)

Every psychodrama has three phases:

- Warm-up
- Enactment
- Sharing

10.1 Warm-up

The warm-up serves to produce an atmosphere of creative possibility. This first phase weaves a basket of safety in which the individual can begin to trust the director, the group and the method. When the room has its arms around you it is possible to be that which you thought you couldn't, to express that which seemed impossible to express.

There are many ways to warm up a group. Moreno did it by 'encountering' everyone and getting people to talk easily to each other. A person who had a theme was accepted by the group as their protagonist. Another way is for the director to select a protagonist; one whom s/he thinks is ready to work. Another alternative is through creative group exercise from which the subject of the session emerges. This is called a protagonist-centered warm-up. In a self-nomination warm up, people can put themselves forward to be the subject. These suggestions are ways of protagonist selection which come from the warm-up whilst the warm-up itself makes it possible for people to feel freer to trust the group, feel the cohesion and safety in the group and to present their problems in an atmosphere of love, caring and creativity.

10.2 Enactment

In this part of the drama, the director and protagonist move the work forward from the periphery of the problem to the core. Psychodrama means literally action of the mind, and it brings out the internal drama, so that the drama within becomes the drama outside oneself. The director uses the group members to play auxiliary egos who are significant people represented in the drama. The original psychodrama stage was three tiered, concentric circles. The first level was for the audience, the second for soliloquy and represented the space outside the heat of the drama, and the top level was for the drama to be enacted. The design was for the work to go from the periphery to the core of a problem. Enactment in most psychodramatic sessions takes place in a designated stage area. During the drama other group members do not sit in that space unless they are playing a role. The stage feels like a ritualized-space once the drama begins. That is to say, the event that is meant to take place in that space takes place only there. Psychodrama which is attempted within the group space with no designated stage area often falls flat because there are no boundaries spatially or methodologically,

10.3 Sharing

Sharing is a time for group catharsis and integration. It was meant as a "love-back" rather than a feedback, discouraging analysis of the event and encouraging identifications. Points of most involvement by individual group members are identified, and each member finds out how he or she is like the protagonist. Often, as in Greek drama, the audience member is purged by watching the enactment of another's life story.

The sharing is meant to capture this learning process and allow the group members to purge themselves of emotions or insights gained. It is also aimed at normalizing the protagonist's experience by hearing how others are similarly involved at different levels of the same process. Sometimes the effectiveness of the overall session can be measured by the depth of the sharing session. A further function of the sharing is a cool-down, a way of re-entering our individual realities after the group enactment.

For directors in training, an added part of the session is called processing. This is where clear rationale, theoretical assumptions and contract are discussed as part of the directing. The technical aspects are reviewed by the director, trainer and group members. How the director got from scene to scene, how aspects could be maximized, what worked and why, and what could have been done differently, are generally discussed. Feedback for the trainee, director and self and peer assessment are invaluable.

11. The outcomes of psychodrama and videotherapy combined method

Some studies have shown that, employed by trained professionals with awareness of its limits, psychodrama can make a contribution either on its own or as an adjunct to many branches of psychotherapy, whether these be behaviorist, psychoanalytic or existential-humanistic (Kellermann. 1992).

There are many cautions regarding the use of psychodrama and many of the individual techniques. First and foremost, it is important to have a purpose for using a specific technique, for using a technique without purpose and forethought, can be dangerous for the protagonist.

Some techniques may be too powerful for a particular individual, some may be too esoteric and some too frightening.

It is important to be aware of the ease with which an individual may be opened up using these techniques, as well as the difficulty and necessity in achieving closure and the psycho dramatist must be careful not to provide a fantasy happy ending for a session when the reality base is not present.

There are scenes that require extreme sensitivity in their enactment. We are faced daily with issues like abortion, rape, incest and sexual molestation. In order to accomplish what is necessary for the protagonist and still keep him/her intact, we must use care and discretion (Goldman and Morrison, 1984).

A large body of literature has been published on therapeutic factors in group psychotherapy (Bloch and Crouch, 1985). In 1955; Corsini and

Rosenburg reviewed over 300 articles on group psychotherapy and made three broad categories to discuss the results emotional, cognitive and actional.

Yalom (1975) found that interpersonal learning together with catharsis, cohesiveness and insight were the factors most valued by subjects.

Peter Felix Kellermann (1992) found in two studies that insight, catharsis and interpersonal relations are therapeutic factors central to psychodramatic group psychotherapy.

Grete Leutz, a German psychodramatist, suggests that making a conflict tangible, concrete and visible also makes it dispensable and thus the person can change (Leutz, 1985). This making a process that is unconscious conscious helps the person gain control of their own behaviour.

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