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Psychodrama with the Elderly

SHERYL R. NORDIN

ABSTRACT. Elderly persons are vulnerable to the same emotional disorders as younger adults, but the prevalence of both functional and organic disorders increases with age. The application of psychodrama to the special needs of the elderly is particularly useful in drawing them out of their isolation and encouraging them to interact with each other and their environment. Psychodrama also provides a format that allows elderly persons to draw on past experiences and coping techniques to solve current problems. This article considers the use of classical psychodramatic techniques as well as warm up, role reversal, role training, and future projection in working with the elderly and helping them deal with their special life issues.

THE PRESENT POPULATION of elderly persons (those over 60) will more than double by the year 2030, when more than 50 million Americans will be in this age group, according to the National Institutes of Health Second Conference, 1980.

The elderly are vulnerable to the same emotional disorders as younger adults, but the prevalence of both functional and organic disorders increases with age (Pfeiffer, 1977). The stresses and losses inherent in old age tend to exacerbate existing affective disorders and also increase problems associated with personality disorders such as withdrawal, suspiciousness, and hostility. As Butler and Lewis (1982) have shown, however, the most prominent psychiatric symptom among the aged is depression. Certain personality predispositions—coupled with loss of control of the physical and social environment through impairment, loss of spouse and friends and subsequent dependency—may generate depression or intensify existing depressive tendencies.

The severity of this problem can be attested to by the fact that adults 65 and older comprise approximately 11% of the total population, but they commit 25% of the reported suicides (Miller, 1979). In spite of the increase in depression and other psychiatric disorders in the aged, this

population receives only four percent of services provided by community mental health services (Gatz, Sawyer & Lawton, 1980).

A subpopulation of elderly who have historically received little or no mental health services are those in nursing homes (Butler & Lewis). Chronic physical problems, plus institutionalization with resultant loss of home, friends, and pets, make these elderly men and women extremely vulnerable, or at risk, for emotional disorders. Yet when psychiatric services are provided, treatment takes the form of medication for symptom control and alleviation of disruptive behaviors.

In recent years many of the stereotypes regarding the elderly have been challenged, and more therapists are willing to work with older patients. Conventional therapeutic approaches such as individual, family and group therapies have demonstrated effectiveness with the elderly (Eisdorfer & Stotsky, 1977). However, only three published articles explore the therapeutic application of psychodrama with the aged (Burnell, 1977; Buchanan, 1982; Carman & Nordin, 1984).

The increase in the elderly population thus creates a need for innovative and effective methods of treatment of their life issues. Some of the benefits of using psychodrama with the elderly have been reported by Buchanan (1982) and Mazor (1982). The "action" is particularly useful in drawing elderly persons out of their isolation and encouraging them to interact with each other and their environment. Through psychodramatic techniques, they confront fears and anxieties and are encouraged to become more spontaneous and creative in their interactions with others. Psychodrama also provides a format that allows elderly persons to draw on past experiences and coping techniques to solve current problems.

Butler and Lewis (1974) have defined some of the special needs and necessary tasks of the elderly as the "life review process." Life Review, according to Butler and Lewis, is a mental process that is

characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences, and, particularly, the resurgence of unresolved conflicts. . . . There is the opportunity to reexamine the whole of one's life and to make sense of it, both on its own terms and in comparison with the lives of others. Identity may be reexamined and restructured. There is a chance to resolve old problems, and to make amends, and to restore harmony with friends and relatives. . . . The success of the Life Review depends on the outcome of the struggle to resolve old issues of resentment, guilt, bitterness, mistrust, dependence and nihilism. All the truly significant emotional options remain available until the moment of death—love, hate, reconciliation, self-assertion. (pp. 165, 168-69)

The psychodramatic process outlined in the works of J. L. Moreno (1951, 1953, 1969) can be used to facilitate the life review of the elderly. By helping them make amends with others, process losses, overcome

fears, and regain aspects of self, the psychodramatic process can help meet their special needs and necessary tasks.

Application of Psychodrama to the Elderly

A classical session with an elderly person is similar in many ways to a classical session with a nonelderly person as shown by the example of Louise.

Louise

Louise, age 70, begins the session by identifying “feeling anxious” as the presenting problem. Louise is asked by the director for a recent scene in which she is experiencing feeling anxious. She says, “I always feel anxious when I get up in the morning.” From this cue we go to a scene in her bedroom. Louise sets the scene by placing cushions and chairs, producing this space where she feels anxious. As she warms up to this time and place, she says, “My daughter-in-law’s mother died one week ago. When I think of her, I remember all the people I have lost in the past year.” She then identifies others in her life who have died in the past year, including “my sister, my brother-in-law, my husband, my mother-in-law.” With the assistance of a double (an auxiliary who assumes the physical stance of the protagonist and speaks of thoughts and feelings the protagonist has not expressed) Louise continues, “There is a part of me that wants to be strong and not face these losses [denial], but another part of me that becomes very anxious and afraid.” The double helps Louise say, “I miss my sister very much. It’s not fair that everyone has left me. I am very sad” [anger, depression].

It becomes apparent to the director that this woman has to do a lot of grief work over cumulative losses. The protagonist chooses group members to play the auxiliary roles of husband, sister, brother-in-law, and mother-in-law. In this session auxiliaries are also chosen to play the roles of Louise’s two living children. The rationale for this choice is that it is necessary to see what yet remains of Louise’s social atom, the smallest number of persons required by an individual to achieve sociostasis and to support creativity (J. L. Moreno, 1953). When working with a protagonist who is dealing with multiple losses, it is necessary to see what living relationships remain to give support in the grieving process. The session continues with each scene reenacted in the “here and now.” Louise describes her husband as “kind but domineering. We were divorced seven years ago but have been close since the divorce.” Her sister is “sensitive and kind; we are very close.” Her brother-in-law, she describes as a

“good man. We are friends.” She says her mother-in-law is “a sweet person; we care about each other.” She describes her son as “a good son” who cares about her. Her daughter, she says, is “a fine person. She cares about me.”

The next step in the session is the use of an “action sociogram,” a symbolic representation of the protagonist’s social atom. People are placed so that space, body, facial expression, and messages indicate the dynamic of those individuals at that time. In this action sociogram, Louise places her son and daughter next to her with their messages of “I care about you.” Her sister is placed next to her children. Her brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and husband are placed behind her children and sister. We are able to see that Louise does have support from her children in dealing with these losses.

The auxiliaries are instructed to state their main message to Louise. To her husband, she says, “We had some good years. I want to remember only the good things. I miss you.” In turn she responds to the messages of her mother-in-law, saying, “You are very special to me. I miss you.” But when Louise faces her sister she begins to sob. “I miss you so much. We were always so close,” she says. This catharsis of grief allows Louise to move toward the final stage in the grief process—acceptance.

In the beginning of the session, Louise was denying the grief process by presenting “feeling anxious.” She admits to feelings of anger and depression but is finally able to move toward acceptance of these losses in this session.

In a role reversal as her sister, Louise states: “Yes, we were close. You need to go on with your life.” In role reversal, the protagonist exchanges the posture and position of a significant other and speaks from that role (J. L. Moreno, 1969). The role reversal in this final scene allows Louise to focus on the advice from her sister that she can take with her, that is, “You need to go on with your life.” As Louise returns to her own role, she turns to her children and allows them to comfort her.

Specific Psychodramatic Techniques

In addition to a full classical session, many specific psychodramatic techniques can be used in working with the elderly, including the techniques of warm up, role training, role reversal, and future projection.

Warm up

Moreno defines the warm up process as “the operational expression of

spontaneity. Warm up and spontaneity lead to creativity” (1969, p. 42).

Each session is a new group of people. Many things have happened since the group met, and it is essential to build a group again. For example, warm up with inpatients in a psychiatric hospital might open with: “What is the feeling that you are most in touch with at the present time?” As group members share their strongest feelings, they become more warmed up to themselves, the group to each individual, and the director to each group member. Warm up continues throughout the session and encourages spontaneity and creativity. Because elderly persons may have limitations in mental capacity, social skills, or physical functioning, specific warm-up techniques can be adapted to the situation and used when a full classical session is not possible.

Evelyn

Evelyn is an 84-year-old widow confined to a wheelchair because of a stroke. She was referred to the psychodrama group because of depression and anxiety. She cried frequently, had many physical complaints, and had difficulty sleeping. Extensive denial and repression were her primary methods of dealing with stress and loss; her depression resulted from cumulative losses and inadequate coping mechanisms.

Her first two months in the group, which met in a nursing home, revealed that Evelyn would participate only when a topic was nonthreatening and dealt with some positive event. She withdrew both emotionally and physically whenever the topic was potentially distressing to her. Her withdrawal usually took the form of rolling her wheelchair backward so that she was no longer physically a member of the group. She also attempted to distract other members when she became anxious and repeatedly tried to change topics when anyone was dealing with painful material.

After the group had been meeting for several months, the director used as a warm up “sharing a significant Thanksgiving from the past.” This sparked Evelyn’s interest and she finally agreed to participate. Evelyn carefully set the scene, giving direction from her wheelchair. This scene included a big table, the minister and his wife, her husband, her son (who was then an infant), and the turkey. Group members were chosen to play auxiliary roles. The director assisted Evelyn to warm up to age 25, her age at the time of the scene, by posing questions such as, “What do you look like? What do you like the most in your life right now? What do you like the least?” As Evelyn relived this scene, she began to recapture and reintegrate her role as hostess, nurturing parent, and supportive spouse. In future sessions, she maintained aspects of these roles as she began

bringing religious or humorous sayings that she had clipped from newspapers or magazines as gifts for the group.

As Evelyn recaptured and reintegrated some of the roles she had earlier in her life, she gained a sense of dignity and self-worth. The psychodrama group offered her the chance to regain the roles and, with them, self-esteem. With the group she was vulnerable about her own depression, and the group supported her. As Evelyn's depression gradually abated, the staff reported increased spontaneity, less crying, and fewer complaints.

Edna

Another example of the warm-up technique was used with Edna. A full classical session was not possible, but the use of this specific technique was helpful.

Edna was a 60-year-old single woman who was referred to the psychodrama group because of compulsive behavior and excessive timidity. She rarely made eye contact with group members or the director, isolating herself in the group as well as in her life. She had lived with her 84-year-old mother throughout her life. Although educated as a teacher, she had been forced into early retirement because of inadequate performance. She was extremely reluctant to share anything from her life with the group. She did respond to the warm up exercise of sharing a significant incident from her life, but she refused to leave her chair. Allowing a group member to play her own role, she agreed to direct a scene from her past without leaving the seat. She chose a scene from the days when she taught school. The classroom was staged, and she chose group members to play roles. The group member chosen to play Edna made exaggerated attempts to play her role. After attempting to correct the auxiliary's attempt to play her role, Edna stood up and announced that she would play her own role. Both she and the group were surprised that she was able to become involved in the action and to share an important time in her life with them. The use of a significant event as a warm up was useful in helping Edna become less isolated from the group, as well as facilitating the life review process.

Dealing with grief and loss is a task of persons of all ages. However, the elderly are particularly vulnerable to having experienced loss—especially multiple losses. A warm-up technique that can be used to deal with losses is an "empty chair." The structure of the empty chair has been described in detail by Goldman and Morrison. "(1) Place empty chair in front of the group and invite them to focus on the chair. (2) To visualize someone in the chair—someone in own life with whom they have 'unfin-

ished business.' (3) It can be someone: in past, present, no longer alive, self. (4) Give group a few moments, then ask 'Who is in the chair for you?' (5) Choose someone to 'show' individual in empty chair. (6) Get descriptions and then have person say what they have not said in life. (7) Director can role reverse, use double, interview in either role, etc. When individual is warmed up, director can ask if he/she would like to continue working. If the answer is no, it is essential to close whatever has been opened in the empty chair'' (Goldman & Morrison, 1984, p. 114).

Variations of the empty chair can be effective with the elderly. If a group member is dealing with the death of a significant person in his or her life, the empty chair can assist the group member in becoming focused on that person and doing the necessary grief work.

Role Training

Role training is another psychodramatic technique that can be adapted to working with the elderly. Role training is "reenacting an old scene or a new scene where the protagonist practices 'change' " (Goldman & Morrison, p. 114). Its use with the elderly is similar to the use of this technique with the nonelderly.

Ruth

Ruth, age 71, is referred to the group because of depression. She is frequently tearful through the session and shares feelings of loss over the death of her mother, father, and a fiancé fifty years ago, as well as her own sense of isolation. In grieving these losses, she focuses on the future and realizes that she has a long-term friend to whom she has never been able to express "caring." She also states: "I really have never been able to share my feelings with anyone. I'm not sure if I can do it here."

In order to see the "old" behavior, Ruth is asked to set a scene that would demonstrate the behavior she would like to change. She sets a scene in the living room of her own home, where she is with her friend. Her friend's main message to her is: "We have been friends for years. Let me know if you need anything." We first see Ruth's old response to her friend's main message. The old response is "That's nice." With the assistance of a double, she says, "I wish I could tell her how important she is to me, but I've never been able to tell anyone that I care about them because I'm afraid."

Two auxiliaries are used to present these two parts of Ruth. She struggles with the two messages: "I want to tell her that she's important to me," and "I'm scared." After moments of feeling pulled apart by these

messages (the auxiliaries are physically pulling her arms), she says, "I want to tell her how I feel; I want to be different from the person that I have been in the past." We then see Ruth in a future scene with her friend using her "new" response. She states: "I have a difficult time telling people how important they are to me. I want you to know that I've appreciated your friendship over all these years. I will let you know if I need anything from you."

In a future projection, Ruth is able to role train a new response to an old situation. Approximately three months later, the partial-day hospital program receives a lengthy letter from Ruth telling how much she appreciated the help of the program, including psychodrama.

Role Reversal

The psychodramatic technique of role reversal is the basis for Moreno's therapeutic method. It can be defined as the existential "meeting eye to eye," the "exchange of eyes" so that an individual might see with the eyes of the "other" (J. L. Moreno, 1969, 241). In a role reversal the protagonist exchanges posture and position of the significant other and speaks from that role. The following is an example of the use of role reversal with Roy.

Roy

Roy, age 86, had been ravaged by losses. A stroke left his left arm and leg paralyzed. Diabetes and gangrene destroyed his right leg and resulted in an above-the-knee amputation. His wife could no longer relate to him as she once had and gradually withdrew, making only dutiful visits once a week.

In one of the weekly psychodrama sessions, members of the group were asked to introduce a significant person from the past. Roy chose to present his maternal grandfather, a very prominent person in the state who had founded an institution of higher education and had become a successful publisher. Roy was also named after this favorite ancestor, whom he held in awe and greatly admired. His attributes were made clear to the group as Roy chose a group member to play the role of his grandfather and described him to the group. One of the significant moments in the session came when the director asked him to role reverse and become his grandfather. He straightened in his wheelchair and lifted his head as he assumed the role. "What do you think of your grandson?" queried the director as she pointed to the auxiliary who had assumed the role of Roy. He was quiet for a moment and then, putting his hand on the aux-

iliary's shoulder, said, "Roy, I am really proud of you." He then went on to list his positive attributes and achievements during his life. "Becoming" his grandfather enabled Roy to see himself in a different, more positive light.

This example demonstrates the use of a psychodramatic technique to enable elderly persons to gain positive aspects of previous roles and see themselves from another person's point of view in a role reversal. In the weeks following the session, Roy was more assertive, more able to support other group members, described himself as being in a good mood, and displayed a noticeable improvement in self-esteem.

Future Projection

In the technique of future projection, "a person portrays in action how he/she thinks the future will shape itself. He/she picks a point in time—the place and the people, whom he/she expects to be involved with at that time" (J. L. Moreno, 1969, p. 241). The following vignette with Martha demonstrates the use of a future projection.

Martha

Martha, age 76, was referred to the group because she was "verbally abusive to staff and residents of the nursing home where she lived." Martha's tall stature, rather regal appearance, and air of self-confidence belied the underlying anguish and history of emotional problems. Although she had a degree in music and had taught for 23 years, her life had been periodically shattered by episodes of severe psychotic depression. She was hospitalized at 45 but was not responsive to the available treatments of the day. Self-mutilation and suicidal tendencies, along with severe agitation and hostile behavior, had resulted in a prefrontal lobotomy. Following this she was released and apparently functioned marginally for 30 years, until she was admitted to a nursing home because of blackouts.

In the latter months of the group, Martha's health deteriorated and she began to share fears and anxieties about her own death. She requested that she be allowed to "work on" her own funeral. Although this created some discomfort for the group members, they did support her in doing this. She set the scene in great detail, even presenting the scripture and hymn she wanted at the service. As the scene unfolded, it became evident that she greatly feared that no one would miss her. Following a session, members of the group and staff shared with Martha the positive feelings for her and the sense of loss they would feel if she should

die. She was able at this time to tell group members how important they were to her. This expression of caring and closeness was unique for her and was the first time she had directly stated that she “cared deeply” for the group members.

In the two months following this session, Martha became increasingly ill. She continued to process her fears in the experience of her “funeral” with her individual therapist. She died two months after the last session with the group.

Psychodrama and the Special Life Issues of the Elderly

The use of psychodramatic techniques to facilitate the Life Review Process allows the elderly to reminisce as well as resolve old problems, make amends and restore harmony with friends and family. Reliving past positive moments and reintegrating these roles is an important aspect of the use of psychodrama with the elderly.

Psychodramatic techniques help the elderly to grieve losses, say good-bye, and let go of the past. They become more spontaneous in their current situations and deal with the future more creatively. Role reversal allows the elderly to gain access to former roles in their life and increase their sense of self-worth, while role training a future event reduces anxiety and allows them to explore options that may be open to them in the future.

Frequently the elderly suffer from a sense of inertia and isolation. The action of psychodrama enables them to become more involved and move from inertia to action. They can confront the isolation that they experience and use specific techniques to facilitate openness with group members as well as resolve issues from the past.

Psychodrama techniques are especially useful in alleviating depression by allowing members to “relive” and grieve for unresolved losses and express repressed feelings, such as anger, abandonment, and fear. The experience of grief also allows group members to provide support and comfort, which has a positive effect on both the protagonist and the group members. The latter also benefit by increasing their levels of self-esteem related to their assuming the roles of supporters or nurturers.

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Young Children's Attention to Dyadic Conversation as Modified by Sociometric Status

ANN M. BERGHOUT AUSTIN

ABSTRACT. Forty-eight American children, 12 popular and 12 rejected children from Grades 3 and 6, were paired with same-sex friends and nonfriends on an interactive task. Children were videotaped and their interactions judged for the amount and type of attention each child in the dyad gave to each other and the conversation. Main dependent measures included mutual engagements, acknowledgement of the partner, getting the attention of the partner, attention to the conversation, and social impact of the utterances. Both rejected and popular children attended to the conversation and the partner, but rejected children appeared to overattend in several ways. The interactions of rejected children and their matches involved more mutual engagements, conversational initiators, facilitators, terminators, and nonverbal attention-getting devices. Sex and development effects were also found.

WHEN THE INTERACTIONS of popular and rejected American children are considered, researchers often assume that any differences found between these sociometric groups indicate a lack of social skills on the part of the rejected child and hence are one reason for the rejection itself. Ladd (1983), however, has argued that rejected children form friendships just as popular children do, but the way in which they interact with their friends differs significantly from the way popular children interact with friends. Thus, the interactional styles of a rejected child may not necessarily be dysfunctional within the child's own social group, although they may not be universal either; that is, they may not transfer well when the child interacts with someone from another social network.

If we assume that this theory is true, then we need to examine evidence for its viability, that rejected children effectively participate and cooperate in social interactions with other unpopular children but may be dysfunctional with popular peers. A question such as this is critical because,

as Blyth (1983) noted, it is important to determine whether rejected children can form social relations and how functional those relations are to survivability outside their own unique social system. Nonetheless, before interactional evidence may be weighed, the conditions that define the existence of an interaction in the first place must be established.

Discourse theories, liberally applied to verbal and interactional exchanges, may offer an explanation of the requirements of a cooperative interaction. Discourses, or "talk exchanges" as Grice (1975) called them, are semantic and interactionally cooperative ventures, during which there is agreement, usually tacit, on the common direction of that exchange (Grice, 1975; Keenan, 1974). According to Grice, concomitant with the agreement of direction is another assumption during conversation, also generally tacit, that each discourse partner will work together to move the talk exchange in a mutually accepted direction.

Discourse theorists further argue that even after conversation begins and proceeds with a common purpose, it does not exist idiosyncratically from the social milieu in which it is uttered. Rather, social context and uttered speech are inextricable because each contributes to the definition and character of the other (Austin, 1975; Bates, 1976; Bernstein, 1966; Searle, 1970). Likewise, Bates has indicated that individuals may use conversation to establish their identity with a social community or to distance themselves from it. Thus, if we use discourse theory to determine whether rejected children can and do formulate friendship networks of their own, at least two conditions may be apparent with regard to their verbal and nonverbal interactions: They reflect the character of the social matrix in which they occur, and they proceed as discourse partners cooperate to move the dialogue toward a common end.

Research has indicated that separate social systems operate for popular children and unpopular children, with popular children interacting predominantly with popular and average-status children and unpopular children interacting predominantly with other unpopular children (Benson & Gottman, 1975; Ladd, 1983; Putallaz & Gottman, 1979). Although these studies addressed a more global notion of social interaction than just discourse, it may be argued that children's conversations seem to be linked in many cases to a milieu prescribed by social status. In support of Condition 1, that speech reflects the character of the social matrix in which it is imbedded, research has indicated that the conversations and interactions of sociometrically defined youngsters are different from each other.

Although few studies have explicitly addressed the conversational elements of popular and rejected children, global measures of their interactions are available and may be applicable. For example, popular children

engaged in more positive conversations and cooperative interactions with their peers than unpopular children (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Dodge, 1983; Gottman, Gonso, & Rasmussen, 1975; Renshaw & Asher, 1983). They received more positive input from others and were involved in longer lasting interactions (Dodge, 1983). Unpopular children, on the other hand, exhibited more aggressive behaviors, emitted more hostile vocalization, and engaged in less social conversation and positive interactions than their more socially accepted peers (Dodge, 1983; Gottman, Gonso, & Rasmussen, 1975). In addition, Austin and Draper (1982) found that rejected children reacted to even benign commands from peers with more hostility and defiance than popular children.

Considering interactional strategies, Dodge (1983) found that popular children approached their peers less often per play session but were more often approached by peers than any other status group. Neglected and rejected children, on the other hand, approached peers with great frequency during initial get-acquainted play sessions, but tried to initiate social interactions much less frequently during later involvements. Children with high peer status also tended more often to make comments directly related to ongoing group activities when attempting to enter a peer group and were more likely to try to mesh conversationally with the play theme of the group (Putallaz, 1983). Thus, with regard to the affective tone of an interaction, length of interactive bouts, and approach and entry strategies, children's communications seem to reflect a child's sociometric status and thus may color the social matrix in which the child typically interacts.

The second issue as related to sociometric status, that discourse implies cooperation between conversational partners, has received less attention. Ladd (1983) wrote that unpopular children are not necessarily without peer contacts or the ability to interact with peers, which implies some cooperative efforts between rejected children and their peers, but their interactions differ from those involving children with higher social status. Rejected children, for example, tend to be involved more often in parallel play with their peers than popular children, and they interact more often in small rather than large groups, forming what Ladd termed intensive rather than extensive networks.

If Ladd's (1983) data even tentatively suggest tacit mutual agreement between popular and rejected children and their respective peers regarding play style and extent of peer social systems, then the theory that social communication implies cooperation between communicative partners may receive some support as it is related to the interactions of sociometrically different children. Nonetheless, Ladd's data suggest that although within-group cooperation may be found, it varies significantly

between groups. The present investigation sought to explore Condition 2 further to determine whether interactional cooperation does occur as rejected children interact with their friends and, if this is found to be true, how this cooperation varies from the interactions popular children have with their peers. The analyses also considered discourse between the target child and an age mate, called the nonfriend. This interaction may approximate an exchange outside the child's immediate network, but because extensive analyses of the children's immediate and nonimmediate networks were not conducted, such a possibility remains only a possibility. A reciprocal issue, not often addressed in the literature, was also part of the analysis: The study also explored the involvement and attention that friends and nonfriends, paired with the popular and rejected target children, gave to the talk exchange as well.

Method

Subjects

Third and sixth graders ($N = 240$), consisting of all the children who had obtained parental permission in both grades at two elementary schools, were used as the initial sampling group. The children attending these schools were predominantly white, with some Chicanos and native Americans. The children were administered the Peery (1979) sociometric measure, an instrument designed to separate children into the categories of popularity, amiability, isolation, or rejection. Forty-eight children were selected from this group for further study: 12 popular children (6 boys and 6 girls) and 12 rejected children (6 boys and 6 girls) from both grades, with third graders ranging in age from 8.3 years to 10.2 years ($M = 9$ years) and sixth graders from 10.3 years to 13.1 years ($M = 11.3$ years).

Instrument

The sociometric measure consists of six questions: "Whom do you like to play with? With whom don't you play? Whom do you like to sit by? By whom don't you sit? Whom do you play with outside? Whom don't you play with outside?" The children provided written answers to these questions but were asked to nominate only same-sex peers. Although there is some discussion in the literature regarding the appropriateness of using positive and negative peer rating, Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982) have emphasized the importance of this convention of clear status delineation.

After the sociometric measure was tallied, each child received a visibility and an acceptance score placing him or her in one of the four previously mentioned categories on the sociometric circumplex. A visibility score was obtained by summing the number of times a child was mentioned both positively and negatively on the sociometric measure. An acceptance score was obtained by subtracting the negative mentions from the positive ones. Both visibility and acceptance scores for each classroom were divided by the total number of children participating in that classroom. When circumplex placement was considered, a popular child had high visibility and high acceptance; an isolated child, low visibility and low acceptance; and an amiable child, low visibility and high acceptance. In addition, children who placed on the ordinate of the circumplex rather than in one clear sociometric category or another were classified as neutral, a category not present in Peery's (1979) original model. Preliminary attempts to validate Peery's model have indicated significant differences in social comprehension between children in each of the four categories, $F(3, 21) = 8.187, p < .001$.

Procedure

The 48 target children were paired with same-sex children who were matched for achievement on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). One pairing involved a match of all target children with one of their positive choices on the sociometric form. This dyad was labeled the *friend match* and involved mutual choices almost entirely because children were matched with those who had mentioned each other on the sociometric instrument. It was not possible, however, to match any of the sixth-grade rejected boys or any of the sixth-grade rejected girls with mutual choices because they were not chosen by anyone else. Instead, they were matched for achievement with one of their friendship choices who in turn had not rejected the target child on his or her own sociometric form. These matches were made in consultation with the child's classroom teacher. In addition, one sixth-grade boy named no positive choices on his sociometric schedule. Through consultation with his teacher, he was matched with a child with whom the teacher believed he had a close relationship; he had not rejected the boy on the sociometric schedule.

The subjects were then matched for CTBS achievement scores with an amiable or neutral child who had not been mentioned either positively or negatively on the sociometric form of the target child. This child was designated the nonfriend. Achievement was used as a matching device to minimize any differences verbal facility might make in conversation. The order of the target child's involvement with the two partners was random.

As described in Austin and Draper (1982), the dyads were taken to a carpeted workroom in the school media center where they sat on a large mat on the floor. Both wore lapel microphones that recorded onto a cassette tape recorder. A third microphone placed on the floor recorded onto a reel-to-reel Sony video recorder. All interactions were videotaped. The children were given an interest basket and told that they could look through it and provide feedback about those items they liked the most. There were two versions of the interest basket so that the target child used a different version in each pairing. The order of exposure to the baskets was alternated. The baskets contained parallel forms of over 20 small items. Each session was 5 min long. The children received instructions from the experimenter after which the experimenter left the children alone in the room.

Data Analysis

All utterances of both children during the 5-min sessions were transcribed and analyzed. Two judges, naive to the research design, analyzed these data through a simultaneous examination of utterance transcriptions and videotapes. To assess the child's attention to the conversation and to the peer, four general categories were used for analysis.

Mutual engagements or instances when both partners verbally or nonverbally cooperated in the same play or conversational theme was scored by noting the frequency with which the children moved into or out of mutual engagements for each dyad. The bouts of mutual engagements were timed and divided by total session time.

Acknowledgement of the partner included all instances when a child, target or match, directed verbal or nonverbal reinforcers toward something the other peer said, did, knew, or did not say, do, or know. Reinforcements were generally acknowledgements of a child's action, vocalization, or state, and were categorized as positive, negative, or neutral. To measure reinforcers, frequency counts were taken of positive, negative, and neutral reinforcers uttered by both children. Data included raw measures of reinforcers, number of positive and negative reinforcers for each child in proportion to the total utterances for the dyad; and total number number of reinforcers for each child in proportion to the total utterances for the dyad.

Getting the attention of the partner included all verbal and nonverbal attention-getting devices, including such verbalizations as "Hey, look at this," "Watch me," or nonverbal devices such as touching or shoving with the obvious goal of soliciting the partner's attention. Measurement

included verbal, nonverbal, and total attention-getting devices of both participants divided by total utterances in the session.

Speech interruptors were also considered attention-getting devices and were defined as occasions when one partner who did not have the conversational floor initiated speech. Total interruptors were measured as well as successful and unsuccessful speech interruptors. A successful interruption was defined as one which resulted in a change of the conversational floor in favor of the person who interrupted. Successful and unsuccessful interruptions were calculated for both children and divided by the number of utterances in the session.

Attention to the conversation included conversational initiators, facilitators, redirectors, and terminators. Initiators were defined as remarks which began a conversation or initiated another one after a 5-s lapse of conversation. Facilitators were utterances which corroborated what the other child was saying, followed up on a play or conversational theme previously introduced, or otherwise continued the ongoing theme. Terminators explicitly ended the interactions. All conversational attendors were figured separately for both children in the dyad and divided by total utterances in the session.

Social impact of the utterances determined the impact of one person's speech on the other person. This was measured in terms of which child's speech elicited the most mutual engagements, successful speech interruptors, and initiators, facilitators, redirectors, and terminators.

Inter- and Intrajudge Reliability

Two judges naive to the research design analyzed all of the data. An analysis of variance indicated no significant difference between judged ratings for all the independent variables and on all the dependent measures except the successful and unsuccessful interruptors of both target and match. For this reason, the occurrence of successful and unsuccessful interruptors will not be further discussed. Intrajudge reliabilities computed on three randomly selected pairs ranged from 88% to 100% agreement for the separate dependent measures.

Results

Data analysis involved a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Social Status $\times$ Friend or Nonfriend $\times$ Judge) split, split plot, with separate univariate analyses performed for each variable. To equalize the relationships, the total occurrences of each variable for each dyad was divided by the total number of utterances the dyad emitted during the ses-

sion. Significant relationships involved variables within the categories of mutual engagements, acknowledgement of the partner, getting the attention of the partner, attention to the conversation, and social impact of the utterance.

The number of mutual engagements was significant for the main effects of sex, status, and match, for the two-way interactions of Grade $\times$ Sex and Status $\times$ Match, and for the three-way interaction Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Match. Boys ($M = 1.938$) changed mutual engagements more frequently, $F(1, 40) = 13.02$, $p \leq .001$, than girls ($M = .9557$). Rejected children ($M = 1.778$) also changed mutual engagements more rapidly, $F(1, 40) = 5.949$, $p \leq .025$, than popular children ($M = 1.1159$). Interactions with friends ($M = 1.7509$) involved more changes than interactions with nonfriends ($M = 1.427$), $F(1, 40) = 5.111$, $p \leq .05$. When the Grade $\times$ Sex interaction was considered, third-grade girls had the least change in mutual engagements and third-grade boys the most, $F(1, 40) = 6.258$, $p \leq .025$. Regarding the two-way interaction of status and match, $F(1, 40) = 4.136$, $p < .05$, rejected children and their friends initiated the most mutual engagements of all. The three-way interaction of grade, sex, and match, $F(1, 40) = 7.120$, $p \leq .025$, indicated that the number of mutual engagements tended to increase from third to sixth grade for girls and their friends and nonfriends and for boys and their nonfriends; however, from third to sixth grade, the number of mutual engagements for boys and their friends dropped substantially. There were no differences for the main effects or interactions with regard to the length of mutual engagements.

Acknowledgement of the partner included the reinforcement variables for target and match. The utterance of reinforcements was a significant occurrence for the main effects of grade and sex and the interactions of Grade $\times$ Sex and Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Status. Grade effects were significant for the reinforcers the target extended to the match, $F(1, 40) = 4.86$, $p \leq .05$, with sixth-grade target children using reinforcers more ($M = 27.906$) than third-grade target children ($M = 23.240$). Grade effects were also significant for the reinforcers the match uttered to the target, $F(1, 48) = 17.58$, $p \leq .0005$, with sixth-grade matches also reinforcing the partner more ($M = 29.990$) than third-grade matches ($M = 22.458$). Total reinforcers, $F(1, 40) = 10.2293$, $p < .005$, were also significant for sixth graders ($M = 56.990$) compared to third graders ($M = 46.073$).

With regard to sex effects, female target children ($M = 92.063$) used more total reinforcers than male target children ($M = 72.438$), $F(1, 40) = 5.149$, $p \leq .05$. When Grade $\times$ Sex was considered, sixth-grade female matches, both friends and nonfriends, were the most positively and negatively reinforcing in the conversation, $F(4, 40) = 11.198$, $p \leq$

.005. When positive and negative reinforcers were considered separately, no significant effects were noted.

Regarding the three-way interaction of Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Status for the number of positive reinforcers the match, either friend or nonfriend, directed to the target child, $F(1, 48) = 6.758, p < .025$, the number of positive reinforcers matches gave popular children, both boys and girls, changed little from third grade to sixth grade. Rejected third-grade girls, on the other hand, received the fewest positive reinforcers, but for rejected sixth-grade girls, the number of positive reinforcers received increased significantly. On the other hand, rejected third-grade boys received a high number of positive reinforcers from the match, but this decreased significantly for rejected sixth-grade boys, who received the fewest positive reinforcers of all.

The overall category of Getting the Attention of the Partner was significant for the main effects of sex, status, and match. When the main effect of sex was considered, male target children ($M = .145$) more often used nonverbal attention-getting devices than did female target children ($M = .098$), $F(1, 40) = 4.8554, p \leq .05$, and total verbal and nonverbal attention-getting devices ($M = .617$), $F(1, 40) = 9.530, p \leq .005$, than female target children ($M = .432$). Likewise, the matches, friends or nonfriends, of male target children more often used nonverbal attention-getting devices ($M = .135$), $F(1, 40) = 7.2216, p \leq .025$, and verbal attention-getting devices ($M = .156$), $F(1, 40) = 9.0644, p \leq .005$, than the matches of female target children ($M = .088$ and $.103$).

When status was considered, the friends and nonfriends of rejected children more often used nonverbal attention-getting devices ($M = .130$) than the friends and nonfriends of popular children ($M = .092$), $F(1, 40) = 4.650, p \leq .05$. Match was a significant main effect for the occurrence of nonverbal attention-getting devices presented by the match, $F(1, 40) = 5.864, p \leq .025$, with the friend trying to get the attention of the partner ($M = .131$) more often in nonverbal ways than the nonfriend ($M = .092$). Components in the overall category of attention to the conversation, including conversational initiators, facilitators, and terminators, were significant for the main effects of sex and status and the interactions of Grade $\times$ Status, Sex $\times$ Status, and Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Match.

Conversational initiators were used more often by the friends and nonfriends of boys ($M = .067$) than the friends and nonfriends of girls ($M = .039$), $F(1, 40) = 6.303, p \leq .025$. Total initiators were used more often by boys ($M = .132$) than by girls ($M = .0897$) in their conversations, $F(1, 40) = 4.968, p \leq .05$. Initiators were used more often by the matches of rejected children ($M = .064$) in their interactions, $F(1, 40) = 4.33, p \leq .05$, than by the matches of popular children ($M = .041$). Remarks which

facilitated or continued the conversation were successful for the interaction of grade and status, $F(1, 40) = 6.857, p \leq .025$, with sixth-grade rejected children more often using this device. Remarks which terminated a mutual engagement were significant for the interaction of Sex $\times$ Status, $F(1, 40) = 5.869, p \leq .025$. Rejected girls and popular boys of both grades were more often responsible for issuing terminating remarks than any other children. Terminating remarks uttered by the target child were also significant for the three-way interaction of Grade $\times$ Sex $\times$ Match, $F(1, 40) = 7.780, p \leq .01$. From third to sixth grade, girls with their friends decreased the use of terminators in a conversation while boys and their friends increased the use of terminators.

Discussion

The data offer tentative support for the discourse condition that both popular and rejected children cooperate with their peers to carry on conversation. Nonetheless, differences also appeared between social status, thus supporting Ladd's (1983) contention that rejected as well as popular children can maintain social interactions but these interactions differ in quality and type of behavior. The data also suggest developmental differences in children's interactions as well as differences between gender and friend/nonfriend matches.

It seems appropriate to conclude that in this study both popular and rejected children and their peers worked cooperatively with each other to elicit conversation. For example, there were no main effect differences in the amount of conversational facilitators the children used with each other. Keenan (1974) has argued that a speaker expects some sort of acknowledgement to his or her comments. If an appropriate acknowledgement is forthcoming from the listener, then Keenan calls the dialogue a "happy one." From these data it seems that despite conditions of social status, gender, match, and grade, both target child and match equally acknowledged the other's comments which facilitated the talk exchange.

When two-way interactions are considered, an important exception is that of rejected sixth graders, who uttered the most facilitating comments of all. An explanation for this could be that it was not possible to pair any of the sixth-grade boys nor one of the sixth-grade girls with a mutual friendship choice since no one had selected them as a friend on the sociometric form. Their interactions with the friendship match may not have been typical of the same kind of friendship network represented by most other pairings of target child and friend. Nonetheless, this explanation becomes more problematic when it is realized that for third-grade popular and rejected children no differences in the amount of facilitating

devices were found even with their nonfriend matches. It is possible, then, that we may be seeing an important beginning of network differences between popular and rejected children with sixth graders beginning to overcompensate during discourse with devices they know are important in maintaining conversation.

A similar explanation may be viable when considering the number of mutual engagements the children initiated. Mutual engagements did not differ in length between groups, but they did differ in number. Rejected children initiated more mutual engagements than popular children and the engagements were more often with the friend than with the nonfriend. Again, this signals heavy attention or perhaps even overattention to the conversation. It may be that rejected children are very aware of the discourse requirement to engage mutually and cooperatively in the conversation to the extent that they overinvest in their intentions to follow the requirement.

Dodge (1983) also found that rejected children approach peers with greater frequency than popular children during initial sessions with youngsters they had not previously known. Rejected children seemed to understand interactional requirements and worked concentratedly to fulfill these requirements, at least during Dodge's initial sessions as well as in our sampling periods. Blyth (1983) has emphasized the importance of examining the interactional strategies sociometrically different children employ. The present study suggests one differential use of strategies between popular and rejected children; namely, that rejected children pay more specific attention to the interaction through verbal acknowledgement of the partner and initiation of mutual engagements than popular children, at least during short play periods or get-acquainted sessions such as those used by Dodge.

Ladd (1983) has called the networks of rejected children intensive rather than extensive. These data imply an intensive relationship between a rejected child and a peer in terms of the number of cooperative exchanges initiated by the child in the course of the interaction.

As indicated, status differences were apparent between target children. They were also present in the matches of the target children. When interactions involved the friend, the children were more often mutually engaged than when interactions involved the nonfriend, suggesting that intensive social interactions are found not only between rejected children and their matches but also between both popular and rejected children when paired with their friends. Perhaps the rejected child, understanding that mutual engagements are part of an interaction between friends, multiplies this phenomenon when interacting with friends and hence forms a more intensive or perhaps overly compensating relationship.

Another interactional convention which seems to distinguish the networks of popular and rejected children may be the manner in which peers solicit each other's attention. In this study the matches of rejected children elicited attention more often in nonverbal, rather than verbal, ways. Although these nonverbal behaviors were emitted by the match of the rejected child, their occurrence suggests that different interactional styles exist between sociometric status groups, and when individuals interact with a member of a given group, their interactions reflect discourse conventions of that group regardless of the interactant's own social status.

Nonverbal means of getting attention was also a significant dependent variable for the main effect of match with the friend more often than the nonfriend. Again, it is possible that an intensity effect is operating. Nonverbal attention-getting devices are a phenomena found among friends, and they are also used significantly more often by age mates who interact with rejected children, again suggesting that interactions involving rejected children and their peers may be characterized by an exaggeration of interactive strategies found in the relationship of popular children regardless of whether they are initiated by the rejected child or by the interactional partner.

Other findings suggest that during interactions with rejected children, the peer was more likely to take an active role in initiating new conversational topics than with interactions involving popular children, suggesting that more conversational control is either relinquished by the rejected child or assumed by the peer participant in order to mobilize the interaction. From other findings in this study it is apparent that rejected children were able to engage the peer in conversational mutuality and offer comments which kept the conversation alive once it had been initiated, but seemed less likely to initiate conversations themselves. Putallaz and Gottman (1979) also found that rejected children had difficulty initiating interactions when attempting to enter peer groups, although they may be able to maintain an interaction once it begins. If rejected children have a difficult time initiating conversation, they seemed to be faced with a different problem in terminating them; at least rejected girls were more likely to terminate mutual engagements than popular girls or the peer matches of either groups of girls.

The results offer tentative support for the discourse theory that rejected children as well as popular children have the ability to engage in conversation with a peer and to create a happy interaction or one characterized by mutual interest in the movement of the dialogue. How well the happy exchanges endure as the interaction matures across longer play periods or across time is an issue for further study. It seems clear that

although rejected children are able to cooperate with a peer to keep a conversation alive, they are less able to initiate dialogue.

The data also offer some support for the proposition espoused by Ladd (1983) that rejected children form relationships that are more intensive than popular children's, or intensive in the sense that certain interactional strategies are used more heavily in the interactions of rejected children. Although it seems that rejected children can form friendships, the issue of universality is still an important question. As Blyth (1983) wrote, we must determine whether the rejected child's skills are functional enough to enable survivability in other social networks.

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NOTE

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Echoes of Moreno

The *Journal* would like to print descriptions of examples of general applications of Moreno's principles in daily life. Send them (typed, doublespaced) to the Editor, *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama & Sociometry*, HELDREF Publications, 4000 Albemarle Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20016.

A Proposed Definition of Psychodrama

PETER KELLERMANN

ABSTRACT. Psychodrama does not have a consistent definition, which tends to cause problems, especially when conducting empirical research. This paper discusses some of the reasons for this and suggests a definition that may be agreed upon by a majority of investigators and practitioners. The definition suggested is procedural, rather than theoretical, which allows for a wide range of views about psychodrama, including those of people who are not purely Morenean.

FEW WORDS ARE AS AMBIGUOUS as the term *psychodrama*. It is so multifaceted and complex that reviews of the literature show little agreement on its definition. The term is loosely used to connote, for example, clinical role playing, behavioral rehearsal, action analysis, creative dramatics, improvisatory theater, and even spontaneous happening. Simple definitions of psychodrama, such as the “science which explores the ‘truth’ by dramatic methods” (Moreno, 1972, p. a), or the “theory, philosophy, and methodology of J. L. Moreno” (Fine, 1979, p. 428), are insufficient. By the same token, stating that psychodrama cannot be clearly defined because of its reliance on personal experience is unacceptable.

A brief and precise definition of psychodrama is important for a number of reasons. First, when investigating the process or the outcome of psychodrama, a precise definition is necessary in order to distinguish this approach from others. Second, when introducing psychodrama to clients and to society at large, a brief definition would help clarify what one may, or may not, expect. Third, a commonly agreed-upon definition would facilitate discussions between practitioners of diverse persuasions.

The present paper draws attention to the problem of definition, discusses some of the reasons for this problem, and suggests a comprehensive definition that may be agreed upon by a majority of investigators and practitioners.

I believe there are five main reasons for the problem of defining psychodrama. They will be discussed here under the headings of history, triadic system, eclecticism, application, and theory.

History

The problem of definition has its origin in the formulations of J. L. Moreno. While brilliant in their creativeness, Moreno's definitions of psychodrama are often inconsistent and contradictory. For example, psychodrama was defined by him as a theology with religious postulations (Moreno, 1920), as a dramatic art form with aesthetic ideals (Moreno, 1923), as a political system with social values (Moreno, 1953), as a science with research ambitions (Moreno, 1953), as a method of psychotherapy with curative goals (Moreno, 1959), and as a philosophy of life. Even when taking the various phases of development in the genesis of psychodrama into consideration, nothing close to a consistent psychodramatic paradigm remains. It is my position that psychodrama should be defined not as a theology, a dramatic art form, a political system, a science, or a way of life. Psychodrama is a specific method of psychotherapy, a treatment approach to many psychological problems.

Triadic System

A second source of confusion is Moreno's frequently quoted "triadic system," consisting of sociometry, group psychotherapy, and psychodrama. One may question whether sociometry and group psychotherapy are inherent parts of the psychodramatic system or are separate methods that may, or may not, be employed, according to the orientation of the practitioner. It is my position that while sociometry and group psychotherapy often represent important elements in psychodrama therapy, they are not inherent parts of it and should therefore be conceptually separated from psychodrama proper.

Eclecticism

A third obstacle when defining psychodrama is its eclectic character and its similarity to treatment approaches such as fixed role therapy (Kelly, 1955), social model learning (Bandura, 1965), gestalt therapy (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1973), encounter group (Schutz, 1971), and other related action methods. It is my position that many approaches may include one or another ingredient from psychodrama, but none of them encompasses the entire system, as described below, and so cannot be defined as psychodrama.

Application

A fourth reason for the ambiguous definition of psychodrama is the failure of many practitioners to distinguish between therapeutic and nontherapeutic applications of this approach. Therapeutic applications would include professionally trained clinicians who attempt to treat more or less disturbed individuals. In contrast, nontherapeutic applications would include some experiential activity for healthy people who participate for growth, pastime, training, or some other reason. While drama may be a healing experience, and while psychotherapy may be dramatically entertaining, psychodrama cannot be characterized simply as theater. No matter how much we attempt to dilute what is done in psychodrama, it is definitely a form of treatment.

Theory

The fact that most definitions of psychodrama include some reference to theory is a fifth cause for disagreement. The terminology of psychodrama remains obscure, and practitioners lack a coherent theory to aid in their struggle for conceptual existence. It is my position that psychodrama should be defined in a way that does not assume a specific theoretical orientation. Such a definition should include not what the intentions are or what is achieved, but a procedural description of what a psychodrama director actually does.

Operational definitions are necessary, particularly in empirical research. According to Kipper (1978), such definitions may be either narrow or wide. A narrow definition requires the enactment of at least one scene or the use of at least one technique. A wide definition requires the enactment of at least three scenes and the use of more than one technique. Furthermore, operational definitions may be supplemented by a description of the psychodramatic process.

Kipper (1986) proposed a solution to the problem of definition by defining psychodrama as the clinical application of a general model that he called the behavioral simulation model. Briefly, this model claims that psychodrama is a method in which the client is placed in a new environment where real-life situations are presented and inner experiences are made concrete. According to this definition, the essential characteristic of psychodrama is the reproduction, by the client, of his or her day-to-day world in a therapeutic environment. While this is one of the more successful attempts to construct a definition to which most practitioners may agree, it lacks the phenomenological aspect of psychodrama as the existential experience of being in the here and now.

A Comprehensive Definition of Psychodrama

With the above-mentioned issues as a point of departure, I propose the following as a comprehensive definition of psychodrama:

Psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, role playing, and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and nonverbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example, memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, dreams, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or simply unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes approximate real-life situations or are externalizations of mental processes from within. If required, other parts may be taken by group members or by inanimate objects. Many techniques are employed, such as role reversal, doubling, mirroring, concretizing, maximizing, and soliloquy. Usually, the phases of warm up, action, working-through, closure, and sharing can be identified.

The main advantage of this definition is that it makes it possible to characterize various applications and styles according to the following dimensions:

1. Setting—individual, group, family, or milieu;
2. Focus—person, group, or theme centered;
3. Location—in situ, stage, school, hospital, clinic;
4. Adherence—Morenean, Freudian, Adlerian, Rogerian;
5. Underlying theory—psychodramatic, psychoanalytic, behavioral, existential, humanistic;
6. Therapeutic goal—symptom reduction, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, personality change;
7. Therapist's intervention—directive, supportive, confrontative, reconstructive, expressive, interpretative;
8. Therapeutic factors emphasized—emotional release, cognitive insight, interpersonal feedback, behavioral learning;
9. Time and frequency of sessions—periodic, continual, single session, marathon, time-limited;
10. Population treated—age, diagnosis, sex.

Unfortunately, psychodrama has become a field in which some who call themselves practitioners of psychodrama cannot accept others who share the same label. Not only are there conflicting underlying theories, there are also different therapeutic goals and interventions to reach those goals. It is my hope that the definition suggested here will help unite practitioners of diverse persuasions within one common framework.

This framework would allow for a wide range of theoretical views about psychodrama, including those that are not purely Morenean.

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BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: *Invisible Guests: The Development of Imaginal Dialogue*

AUTHOR: Mary Watkins

PUBLICATION DATE: 1986

PUBLISHER: The Analytic Press, Hillsdale, NJ

PRICE: \$24.95

There is practical value in reconceptualizing the psyche as containing many subpersonalities rather than continuing the present psychological tradition of viewing the mind as a relatively monolithic structure. The concept of self is being written about in so many ways that it may be more an obstacle than a heuristic idea in its role as an organizing idea in dynamic psychology. Dr. Watkins presents a scholarly, well-reasoned, persuasive, and clearly written theoretical challenge to the prevailing theories that treat imaginal dialogues as primitive, regressive, or merely derivative. She argues for actively cultivating the mental capacity for receptivity to the imagination to the extent that the characters we encounter are granted enough autonomy to serve as a source of creativity and healing.

The author notes that many novelists and other creative persons utilize the ideas derived from imaginal dialogues. Indeed, the figures who are the source of the dialogues are often experienced as fully autonomous, and the creative person serves as a witness or a reporter. For example, Carl Jung had an imaginal relationship with an archetypal figure, Philemon, with whom he would engage in internal dialogues. The key issue is not simply to entertain these images but to learn to direct them subtly to encounter each other and the interviewing part of the self. More spontaneity is acquired when the imaginal figures are encouraged to speak their minds, rather than remaining relatively silent or stereotypical. The author points out that hallucinations are really not sources of dialogue but rather are rigidified representations. In Morenean terms, hallucinations lack spontaneity while, on the other hand, the conscious evocation of imagination promotes spontaneity.

Dr. Watkins advocates a type of controlled dissociation and, in so doing, invites us to reconsider the nature of dissociation itself. This phe-

nomenon has by no means been fully appreciated. Furthermore, the resurgence of popularity of Ericksonian and other types of hypnotherapy highlights a continuing exploration of this frontier in the behavioral sciences. The author's approach is also consonant with the recent emergence of imagery therapy, as presented by a number of innovators. Of course, these trends were foreshadowed by Roberto Assagioli's method of psychosynthesis and J. L. Moreno's method of psychodrama. In the latter approach, Moreno described the multiple double technique in which the patient is helped to play different parts of himself and to have encounters between those parts (sometimes aided by auxiliaries in the role of doubles). A number of other therapists have also used variations on this technique. One criticism of the book is that the author apparently has insufficiently credited her fellow pioneers. In addition, the book needs a more extensive explication of technique and strategies for dealing with resistances and impasses.

Dr. Watkins has, however, written an important book. Her intellectual critique of the dominant schools of psychology complements the role-theory approach that is part of the foundation of psychodrama. *Invisible Guests* is a valuable contribution and deserves to be recommended to those who want to understand some important aspects of the theoretical basis of psychodrama and many of the new trends in psychotherapy.

ADAM BLATNER

ADAM BLATNER is the director of consultation at the University of Louisville School of Medicine. He can be reached at the Bingham Child Guidance Clinic, 200 E. Chestnut Street, Louisville, KY 40202.

TITLE: *Every Person's Life Is Worth a Novel*

AUTHOR: Erving Polster

PUBLICATION DATE: 1987

PUBLISHER: W. W. Norton, New York

PRICE: \$19.95

In reviewing this book, I shall try to present its main idea and then to ask questions from three main points of view: (1) that of the practitioner

in the mental health field looking for a helpful book, (2) that of the psychologist looking for evidence that an approach is effective, or at least worth further study, and (3) that of a literary critic interested in parallels between psychotherapy and literature.

Polster's main idea lies in "the recognition of the healing effect which comes to people as they learn how remarkably interesting they are." This is explained in the preface and opening chapter, and buttressed with vignettes whose topic is "transforming the ordinary into the remarkable." Polster believes that in having this idea of psychotherapy he resembles the novelist, who makes ordinary lives interesting to readers. For example: "By recognizing the common bond with the novelist, the therapist may more readily sense the drama in peoples' lives—the plots they live through, the suspense they create. . . ." So, by his analogy, the novelist's interest in ordinary lives is also the therapist's, and the latter's is healing. It might be considered that, despite superficial resemblances, these interests are different; the therapist's interest in real clients can hardly be the same as the novelist's in fictional characters or in real people whose lives will be transformed into fiction. Polster does not discuss the questions raised by the analogy in this book, however.

(1) Would a practitioner in the field find this book useful? My guess is that from a technical point of view it is too elementary and that it would better suit the general reader with minimal professional knowledge. To support this guess, here is an example relevant for those trained in psychodrama. In a chapter called "Internal Dialogue," Polster explains that people sometimes seem to live in certain ways by partialing or splitting themselves, or experience constant conflict and indecision within themselves (pp. 114–121). He recommends internal dialogue to give each side a hearing. He follows this up with a vignette of a client talking to a parent in the empty chair, gives some reasons why it is better for the parent not to be present, presents some ensuing dialogue that involves the client in the empty chair speaking as if from the parent's side, and ends by giving the impression that the difficulties of the (female) client's problems with men are henceforth reduced. Readers already familiar with such techniques would probably find the rationale and the description of *modus operandi* superficial. Do they need *another* basic explanation of the empty chair and role reversal (he does not use this term) from a lay point of view? They might also be skeptical about the rapid improvement clients seem to make through such one-shot interventions. If Polster's vignettes are to be believed, he is a performer of near-miracles.

(2) Would a psychologist be satisfied by the process by which Polster makes cause-and-effect judgments about the effects of clients of techniques described? Here the answer would be a more definite no. Polster

offers no conceptual framework to support his understanding of the phenomena he presents and in which to ground his observations. The reader gathers that he is a follower of Perls, and there is, like rain on dry leaves, the steady patter of such phrases as “stuck points,” “skipped-over experience,” “staying up-to-date with oneself,” “unfinished business,” “sidetracking,” “the click,” “non-linear experience,” “peak experience,” “breakthrough,” and people being “flipped out of their perspective.” (I list these examples, not because there is something inherently wrong with using them, but to give a sample of the level of conceptualization and powers of expression.) Except perhaps in a negative sense, these do not amount to an approach. In many cases, explanations other than the author’s seem equally likely. Let me give what I think is a fair example. This is a vignette of a client of Italian background who had, unknown to the therapist, not paid for his therapy for a year:

He didn’t have the money but had never said so. . . . I told him he was behaving like his Mafia cousins, whom he had presumably cut out of his mind. He was stunned by my observation because he had been very disdainful of them. But he was excited. From his depressed and futile attitude about life—which was his common state—he was jarred into seeing the adventure of robbing me right under my nose. A continuing revitalization in his life dates back to that moment of insight when he was able to understand his unwillingness to do what other people are supposed to do. (p. 112)

The client has not been paying; he is Italian; the therapist compares him to the Mafia; the client becomes “excited”; this begins a “revitalization in his life” (we take that on faith). The therapist concludes that this turning point was insight into “his unwillingness to do what other people are supposed to do.” This is the therapist’s assumption, and he was there, but are other explanations feasible? One could suggest that the therapist’s anger about fees was satisfying to his client and represented a minor victory or that unconscious identification with powerful, illegal forces (“Mafia”) was revealed, with liberating effect, or that the patient’s refusal to pay was his way of communicating a devaluing attitude, otherwise covert, toward his therapist personally, or as figure in a transference relationship. None of these is necessarily better than Polster’s point about unwillingness to “do what other people are supposed to do.” But the book has no rules of observation and inference to help one understand how it arrived at a particular explanation of why a client behaved in a certain way and of why a particular intervention was (supposedly) effective. There are thus no offered grounds for agreement or disagreement. All one can say is that Polster’s clients are presented as having an impressive degree of adaptability to his insights.

(3) Would a literary critic find food for thought in this book’s

literature-psychotherapy analogy? Perhaps the answer depends on that critic's prior knowledge of a subject that has been so discussed already. Much has been written on the source of creativity and insight into others, on the use of literary interpretation and literary metaphor by Freud and his followers, on the sense in which clients in therapy learn to "narrate" themselves and interact with narratives of others, and on the structural elements lying within such narratives. There is such a profusion of riches here, it is amazing Polster can ignore it or not know of it. It is, however, his prerogative.

Another way to ask the literary critic's question is to see how an example of Polster's use of literature adds to an appreciation of psychotherapy. To exemplify his basic theme, here the use of awareness, he juxtaposes a literary quotation with one from a client. The first is from *Lady Oracle* by Margaret Atwood:

[Atwood] When I woke up the next morning my euphoria was gone. I didn't exactly have a hangover, but I didn't feel like getting up too suddenly. The Cinzano bottle was standing on the table, empty; what I found ominous about this was that I couldn't remember finishing it. Arthur used to tell me not to drink so much. He wasn't a great drinker himself, but he had a habit of bringing a bottle home from time to time and leaving it out where I could see it. I suppose it [sic] was like a kid's chemistry set for him; secretly he liked mixing me up, he knew something exciting would happen. Though he was never sure what, or what he wanted; if I'd known that it would have been easier. (p. 86)

[Client] I'm feeling funny today. Feeling real careful and real cautious. I don't like being where I am at all. Every time I think of working [therapeutically], my heart starts to beat . . . a lot of things come to mind—the onstage feeling I get a lot of times. The person inside me wants to be at home, silly or whatever. The more I talk the scareder I get. It's connected with some unfinished business I have with Tom. (p. 87)

Of the Atwood passage, Polster says that by "paying attention to her awarenesses, Joan [character] not only manifests the otherwise hidden workings of her mind but also is led, as is the reader, beyond her immediate self to a recognition of a number of ingredients of her life." Of the other, he says there are "hints . . . that there are dramatic things going in Nancy's [client] life." At least on the face value, which is all we are really given, he overstates the import of the passages, although Atwood's kid's chemistry set was a good touch. (Polster misquotes; the original is "I suppose *I* was like a kid's chemistry set for him," which is better.) He follows up with a vignette in which the client, duly aided by Polster, works through her "unfinished business" with Tom (pp. 87–88). Apart from whether such passages warrant his responses—they do not seem to me good examples of using awareness—what is their connection? How

does it clarify what is not already quite clear? The most disappointing aspect of this book is the irrelevance of so much of its literary material to the therapy material. Were it cut out, we would have a slim, but more straightforward, account of what Polster believes were successful points in his work with certain clients.

Having answered the three questions presented at the beginning, let me return to what seems to have been Polster's original idea. Does the therapist *qua* therapist respond to people in a way that is comparable to that of the artist? Defining and distinguishing something called the artist's view and the therapist's view would be daunting, but it has been attempted. This book does not try or see a need to try. Polster's (good) title is attributed to Flaubert, and Flaubert was notoriously ambivalent in his attitude toward ordinary life and ordinary people. Madame Bovary's "crime" is that she resents being ordinary and longs for higher, transforming things. She is in one sense, like the artist: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi." Polster's comment on the lady is that she was "consorting unwisely with a doomed future" (p. 53), which I enjoyed. When he said that every person's life is worth a novel, Flaubert spoke out of both sides of his mouth, as the novel in question is partly motivated by loathing. A therapist cannot follow Flaubert too far, but there is undoubtedly a sense in which the transforming processes of art and therapy are connected. Unfortunately, after being visited by the idea, Polster did not write a book affording a perspective on this connection. The main character in *Every Person's Life Is Worth a Novel* is Polster himself. If you think about it, that's a self-contradiction worth a short story.

DOMINICK GRUNDY

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Let performers actually improvise.

Echoes of Moreno

Among Moreno's other accomplishments, his venture into drama, with his founding of the Theatre of Spontaneity in Vienna, provided an important stimulus to his belief in spontaneity-creativity as central to mental health. His Vienna theatre opened in 1921.

The Wall Street Journal of January 7, 1987, published a discussion in the section Leisure & Arts on "Art vs. Life: Grappling with Pirandello," by Edwin Wilson. The critic describes an experimental production of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, of Luigi Pirandello's "Tonight We Improvise."

To quote Mr. Wilson: "The conceit in 'Tonight We Improvise' is that there is no script for the play, only a short story by Pirandello that the actors use as the basis for improvised scenes. The director explains the experiment to the audience and raises the questions about life and art: Where does one end and the other begin? . . .

"The basic flaw in 'Tonight We Improvise,' which existed in Pirandello's original script but is even more pronounced here, is that we do not for one moment believe that any of this is improvised. . . .

"How truly daring it would be to let these performers actually improvise. Most actors today are trained to do just that, and it would be exciting to see what they could come up with."

Mr. Wilson seems to be speaking *our* language.

ZERKA T. MORENO

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