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Using Spontaneous Role-Playing Methods to Study Literature and Legend in a College Course

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ABSTRACT. In this article, the author reports his use of spontaneous role-playing methods, which formed the vast majority of the learning process, in a one-semester college undergraduate course studying the Arthurian legends and Holy Grail mythology. He describes specific techniques that included empty chair dialogues and role reversals with characters, extended scene settings leading to explorations of character experience, and an extended psychodrama vignette for a character not mentioned by the author. The students' responses and learning outcomes reinforce claims that sociodrama offers a valuable tool for the study of literature.

DURING THE 1998 FALL SEMESTER, I taught a college course in which we explored literature through spontaneous role playing. The course was an enrichment elective at a small state college with an open admissions policy for in-state students. Although the methods and process followed were drawn directly from psychodrama (Blatner, 1996) and sociodrama (Sternberg & Garcia, 1989), the nature of the course material dealt with made it differ from the usual applications in some notable ways. My approach to the course also bore some general relationship to drama therapy, particularly in the spontaneous exploration of roles drawn from dramatic literature and mythology, as described by Landy (1993) and Pearlman (1995). The lack of explicit therapeutic goals and certain specific methods does differentiate my applications from practices in drama therapy.

The role-playing process of the course was similar to that of bibliodrama (Pitzele, 1997), in that the material for enactments was drawn neither from the personal lives of the participants nor from an issue, theme, or situation of immediate concern to the group as a whole. The difference in the type,

nature, and cultural significance of the literary material, together with the context and population of the course, made for some notable departures from the methods of the bibliodrama described in *Scripture Windows.* The methods include multiple empty chair encounters with separate characters, the use of a locogram as a warm-up to a series of moments in the lives of individual characters, an intrapsychic conflict among the various inner roles of an author, and a single–protagonist exploration of a character not directly mentioned in the literature.

The course, titled Literary and Cultural Sources of Fantasy Role Playing, was offered as a study, through spontaneous action methods, of some of the most prominent literary sources of Arthurian and Holy Grail legends, which have strongly influenced contemporary fantasy role-playing games that have evolved from the early *Dungeons and Dragons* games. The explicit goals as stated in the syllabus were: (a) to offer both an academic and an experiential approach to the outstanding works of literature and mythology that provide the sources and inspiration for modern fantasy role playing; (b) to provide students with an appreciation of the literary romances, myths of King Arthur and the Holy Grail, alchemy, and the ideals of chivalry and courtly love; and (c) through methods of spontaneous role playing to provide an appreciation of the emotional and imaginative dimensions of the materials through active personal engagement. I expected the use of spontaneous role playing to offer the students opportunities to connect with the stories and characters in a deeply personal manner and to expand their imaginations. During my 15 years at the college, there has been widespread agreement among the faculty members that many of our students respond most readily to cooperative and experiential learning strategies.

The four works studied spanned a wide historical range from the earliest Arthurian romances of the late 12th century to a widely popular 20th-century trilogy. They included *Parzival* by the medieval German knight-poet Wolfram von Eschenbach (flourished c.1170–1220), the most widely influential compilation of the materials in English—Sir Thomas Malory's 15th-century *Le Mort d'Arthur,* Tennyson's Victorian masterpiece *Idylls of the King,* which has been most strongly responsible for the 19th- and 20th-century conceptions of the major Arthurian characters, and *The Lord of the Rings,* Tolkien's fantasy adventure of "Middle Earth" that draws heavily on the cultural ideals, values, and character typology of the Arthurian sources and that has provided significant inspiration to contemporary role-playing games. Because Malory's entire work is lengthy and written in late Middle English that is difficult to read for all but the specialized scholar, I chose a selection of some of the most notable tales, focusing on Merlin, Arthur, Lancelot, Guinevere, and Gawain.

The course population consisted of 7 male undergraduate students. Six were between the ages of 19 and 21, the other was an adult degree student in

his late 20s. The course met once a week for 2 1/2 hr, for a total of 14 course meetings between late August and mid-December. The size of the group allowed for significant participation by all members. The wide range of the students' backgrounds required some initial care in introducing spontaneous action methods. Three students had significant experience in fantasy role-playing games, which meant they were familiar with the practice of creating and embodying a role with a range of characteristics, qualities, and attributes. That experience, however, was limited to a very tightly controlled range of choices and outcomes as determined by the highly prescriptive rules of the fantasy game. They had no experience with role reversal, doubling, and mirroring, and little with unscripted live interaction. One student had had modest experience with psychodramatic methods because of taking an earlier course with me in acting fundamentals. The other three students had had no previous role-playing experience. As a result, I chose to use the initial session as an introduction to basic psychodramatic principles, processes, and techniques, including a contract of confidentiality. Because of the lack of experience among the class members and the once-a-week format of the course, warm-ups for sessions were almost always slow and deliberate.

Opening Session

At the opening session, I devoted time to establishing initial group sociometric connections and to introducing the basic methods of spontaneous role playing. Several students already knew one another, being friends and long-time participants in the campus Role-Playing Club. Two began as isolates, knowing no other class members and not ever having participated in role playing. After I made some introductory remarks about the basic principles and norms of sociodramatic process, I paired the students with partners previously unknown to them and gave them an opportunity to exchange information about their motives for enrolling in the course, their previous role-playing experiences, and their anticipations for the course. If a pair were already acquainted, then I directed that two-some to share a piece of new information and their hopes and expectations for the course.

I directed the pairs to close their eyes and to think of a character to whom they felt strongly connected from a role-playing game or from any piece of literature or film. The students were to imagine that character in an empty chair, with more specific warm-up directions to help concretize and focus the image of the character. Finally, each student in sequence took on the role and was briefly interviewed in role. The interview focused on some outstanding characteristics and attributes of the role and on the particular importance that the role had for the student role player. The session ended with sharing about the experience of the role presentation.

Developing Cultural and Historical Contexts and Initial Role Playing

We devoted the next several weeks to introductory lectures and discussions on the historical contexts and the earliest forms of Arthurian romances in the late 12th century. The topics included the Crusades and the creation of the Knights Templar, the Albigensian Crusade, the Cathar version of Christianity, the rise of troubadour culture, and the Celtic precursors of the romances. The course moved to the first and earliest piece of Arthurian literature, *Parzival,* the medieval German epic poem by knight-poet Wolfram von Eschenbach. Recognizing that this piece presented some difficulties for the students because of its unfamiliar literary style, its composition as an oral epic, and its distant cultural context, I proceeded deliberately into the role-playing explorations.

The first effort began with the warm-up of reading aloud Wolfram's "Apology," a vehement exhortation by the poet to his audience after Chapter 2, concerning his resentments toward a lady who he feels has treated him shabbily. Each student read aloud a separate segment of the introduction; the process was repeated twice to facilitate a warm-up to the material, particularly the outstanding emotional attitudes, which were quite distinct for each segment. The writing is also replete with powerful images and the blatantly ironic self-promotion characteristic of this oral genre. I then asked each student to embody the aspect of Wolfram most prominent in his segment. During that process, the students displayed their sense of humor, and someone spontaneously seized on the image of the final lines—"but this story goes its way without the guidance of books. Rather than that it be taken for a book, I should prefer to sit naked in my tub without a towel—provided I had my scrubber!" The students extended the image into a projected erotic fantasy of Wolfram about the lady in question, whom they assumed to be in the audience during Wolfram's oral rendition of the epic.

That inspiration provided the focus for the action, which consisted of Wolfram taking a bath and ruminating on his romantic failures and unsatisfied desires. Each student embodied a particular aspect of Wolfram created as an extension of the attitudes in each segment read. One student, for example, became the erotic libido of the author, another became the moral judgmental conscience, another the romantic woman-worshipper, another the poet intoxicated by metaphors, and another the indolent sensation-lover whose sole aim was to soak in steaming bath water.

The action evolved into a lively intrapsychic dialogue, with some subroles in strong conflict, others trying to mediate, and others distancing themselves from the conflict. Predictably, libido and conscience locked horns, while the romantic wanted only to be left alone to fantasize about an ideal lover. The poet mocked both the pedantry of the conscience and the mindless lust of the

libido, and the bath-taker tried to close his ears to everyone else in a vain attempt to enjoy the bath. As one might expect in the first actual spontaneous exploration, the students tended to seize on one quality for each role and rigidly cling to it. Given that this was an introductory action that emerged in the latter part of the session, I made no attempt to use role reversals to bridge the conflicts but did some brief interviewing with each role to acknowledge the perspective of the others. When the creativity of the students began to wane, I closed the action and followed it with sharing. Students were highly exhilarated by the power of the role playing as well as by the ironic and quasi-erotic tone of the passage. They left with an increased sense of familiarity with and connection to von Eschenbach.

Deepening the Action Explorations

In the next phase of the course, we focused on the legend of Parzival in a series of progressively more complex explorations. The first of those consisted of students reading aloud a particularly striking passage. I solicited volunteers to do a solo exploration by choosing one character from his passage to whom the student felt an intuitive connection and then stepping into the role of that character. The exploration was an expansion of the experience of the character in one particular set of moments, which consists first of a scene-setting and then soliloquy (an adaptation from an exercise I regularly use with student actors in my acting fundamentals course). I asked the student in role to describe some vivid, concrete details of the environment surrounding the character in the moment and then to express some of the character's significant thoughts, feelings, desires, and hopes. The action ended with the character making a short statement to the student, represented by an auxiliary. The student and auxiliary then reversed roles so that the student could receive the statement and respond briefly to it.

From here, the work moved to empty chair encounters with a chosen character from the epic. Again, in order to assure a high level of trust and safety for the more tentative and resistant students, I kept the level of encounter relatively contained throughout. The typical form of the encounter, which was used for several sessions, began with the students being invited to imagine in the empty chair any character from the epic, either a major or a minor one. The characters most often chosen were King Arthur, Parzival, and Guinevere. After an extended warm-up visualization, I invited students to ask one question of the character. The students who chose to ask a question then reversed into the role of that character, chose an auxiliary to represent themselves, and produced a response to their question. As director, I echoed, prompted, or doubled the student as the character to deepen the nature of the response. Finally, I requested the character to make a statement to the student from his or her

perspective in the form of "what do you see about (student *x)* that he doesn't see about himself?" The student then reversed back into his own role to hear the statement from the character. In most instances, the statement was an affirmation of an important strength that the student had some difficulty with or some reluctance to acknowledge fully.

Several classes later, we broadened the focus of explorations and extended the action process to allow the students to engage a character as a protagonist in a multiscene drama of some 40 min. The warm-up for that session consisted of asking students to select a character who was mentioned only briefly or not at all in the epic but who could be imagined to be present at some event. That allowed the students a greater scope of imagination, as their versions of the most prominent characters, such as Arthur, Guinevere, and Merlin, were strongly colored by contemporary films and often required additional effort to move beyond the cultural conserve to a more personally authentic and unique vision. The warm-up experience gave everyone a greater empathic connection to the literature, along with a richer sense of life for the fictional world.

After each student briefly presented his character in role, a self-selected volunteer, John, came forward to do a more extensive exploration. John identified the character he had imagined as an old servant who had faithfully attended Parzival's mother, Herzeloyde (trans.. Heart's-Love), in her cottage in the woods where she had retired after her husband Gahmuret's death in battle to raise her son far from the world of the knightly ethos of martial prowess. The enactment began as an empty chair dialogue between the student and the role of Old Servant, which produced a more complete presentation of that role.

John then moved into the role to become the protagonist of "The Drama of Old Servant," while an auxiliary was chosen to remain in the role of John, serving as a witness to the events produced by Old Servant. The director's interview with Old Servant to expand and deepen the role focused first on aspects of the latter's daily life and work. That led to a brief scene between Old Servant and his ox, with whom he ploughed Herzeloyde's fields and who was a significant companion. The humor and exhilaration that resulted from portraying the role of Ox helped to deepen the warm-up of John and the rest of the group. In addition, the naive trust and admiration of Ox for Old Servant also warmed up the protagonist for the more serious encounter to come.

The major scene arose from a further interview with Old Servant about his relationship to and feelings for Parzival, namely, that he viewed himself as the silent stolid supporter for whom Parzival, as the emerging, young, spiritually pure hero, served as an ideal. He recognized that he remained always a background figure, barely noticed and unremembered by Parzival. (Because the character is not mentioned in the literature, John had assumed that, as Old Servant, he could make no significant impression on the hero.) That led to the directorial suggestion of a surplus reality scene in which Old Servant could

have an opportunity to speak with Parzival as Parzival was setting out on his journey (after he accidentally encountered a small party of knights and was inspired by their appearance to leave his mother and become a knight himself). As the protagonist Old Servant then produced his version of Parzival in role reversal, an auxiliary was chosen for Parzival, and the Old Servant's farewell scene was enacted. Old Servant at last had an opportunity to express some of his feelings and admiration for Parzival and to have those generously received and acknowledged. Using typical psychodramatic methods, Old Servant first produced Parzival's reactions in role reversal and then was able to hear and accept those in his own role. The scene ended with Old Servant offering good wishes to Parzival in his quest for knighthood and ultimately for the Holy Grail and stating that Parzival on his quest was to serve as a surrogate for Old Servant's yearning for spiritual grace.

The closure scene was another dialogue between Old Servant and John, first represented by the auxiliary as witness. In the role of Old Servant, the protagonist was able to express to John the most prominent feelings of Old Servant's farewell to Parzival, some of which he had not been able to express to Parzival because of the gulf between their social roles. With directorial prompting, Old Servant also added something about the depth of meaning that the farewell had for his spiritual yearnings. John then returned to his own role and received those statements from Old Servant, who was represented by the auxiliary.

As we might have predicted from the scope of the drama, the sharing afterward was one of the more extensive and profound so far in the course. The expressions of spiritual yearning by Old Servant near the end of the drama allowed other students to voice some of their own spiritual needs and to hear those of their classmates.

Progressive Encounters With Characters From the Arthurian Legends

As the course next moved to Malory's (1975) *Le Mort d'Arthur*, I devoted several sessions to empty chair encounters with characters from that work. The students' initial conceptions of the characters were strongly influenced by some of recent films based on the legend, such as *Excalibur, First Knight,* and, not surprisingly, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail.* The opening sessions required some directorial effort on my part to help students transcend the melodramatic and conserved character versions in the films, which were based on highly simplistic concepts of character and character relationships. Characters are neatly divided into sympathetic, ideal heroes and unrelenting villains. To add additional sentimentality and pathos, the hero is given a single weakness or flaw against which he must struggle, such as Lancelot's erotic passion for Guinevere, Arthur's loyalty to Lancelot, or Merlin's need for a

disciple. One of my goals for this segment was to help the students envision the characters as multidimensional and complex, who could serve as projective containers for disparate aspects of the students' own personalities.

Again, the effort was marked by slow-paced warm-ups that focused on each student's selection of a character from Malory to whom each felt drawn. As one might expect for a group of undergraduate male students, the selected characters included Arthur, Lancelot, and Merlin. Two students, however, did choose Guinevere, which was a tribute to their lack of strong patriarchal or sexist bias. The enactments followed a typical pattern.

Director: Take plenty of time to let yourself see the character sitting in the chair across from you. Notice details about how he looks today; notice the color of the hair, the shape of the face, the mouth; notice what he's wearing, which may be the way you've pictured him in your mind or seen in a picture. He may be very different from the way you imagined him. Notice how he's sitting, his posture, the expression on his face. Now think about some things you'd like to tell him. Go ahead, tell him something.

Student: (typical statement) "I'm . . . well, I've thought a lot about you."

Director: Go ahead, tell him what it feels like to be talking with him.

Student: It feels . . . well, strange . . . but exciting, too. I really admire you.

Director: OK, good. Now reverse roles. Sit in _____'s chair. Look at yourself through his eyes. Tell him something.

Student (as character): Thanks for asking me here today. I don't usually have a chance to talk to people like you.

Director: Tell (student) how it feels for you to be able to talk to somebody outside your world.

Student (as character): It's . . . kind of a relief. You know, I get tired of the same old world all the time.

Director: Now take a look at (student). Because you come from a very different world, the world of creative imagination, you may see things about him that he can't see himself. Take a look, and tell him one thing you see about him that maybe he can't see himself.

After giving the student an opportunity to produce some insight or message to himself from the Arthurian character role, I had him return to his role and receive that message as a closure to the encounter.

As students became more familiar with both the action process and the literature, the encounters became more extended. They were able to create more imaginative interactions and to explore significant personal connections. In one particular case, a student chose King Arthur over several sessions; for him Arthur was clearly in the role of Ideal Hero. After an initial warm-up dialogue, I asked the student in the role of Arthur to tell himself, represented by an auxiliary, something about the student's capacity for strength that was obscured

from his conscious awareness but that Arthur from his transcendental perspective could see. That produced a significant, positive insight for the student about his emotional and spiritual strength. It also opened the way to similar experiences for others who had chosen the roles of Merlin and Guinevere. Thus, the Arthurian characters began increasingly to function as beneficent positive archetypes for the students.

More Complex Encounters Among Characters Across History

As we began explorations of *The Lord of the Rings,* the students also addressed characters in empty chair dialogues similar to those described earlier. Again, they were first invited to select a character, to imagine that character seated in the empty chair, to concretize the appearance of the character with some definite physical detail, and then to make a statement or ask a question and produce a response in role reversal. By far, the most popular characters were Hobbits. Two other figures who also captured the imagination of separate students were the wandering hero/king, Strider/Aragorn, and Tolkien's variant of Merlin, the Wizard Gandalf the Grey.

In a later session, I directed a more complex enactment, which was spontaneously conceived as a way to bridge the disparate historical periods. I began the session with the now-familiar warm-up, setting out several empty chairs and asking students to take time to visualize a character from *The Fellowship of the Ring,* the first book of *The Lord of the Rings,* concentrating on the details of physical appearance, posture, and facial expression. Next, I directed the students to identify their chosen character verbally. Those turned out to be the Hobbits Frodo, Merry, and Bilbo Baggins, with Frodo and Merry receiving multiple choices. The students were directed to stand behind the chair that contained their chosen character and to connect to the character by touching him on the shoulder. The students as themselves then addressed their chosen role, emphasizing points of personal connection, role reversed into the character, and responded to their present selves.

In their Hobbit roles, the students were asked to imagine the characters of Lancelot, Parzival, and Gawain sitting opposite them in empty chairs. Because of the lack of romantic interest in the Hobbit characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, I concluded it was more productive to focus solely on male characters. In the Hobbit roles, each student chose one of the three Arthurian characters and made statements about what ideals those characters embodied for them in their Hobbit roles. Because of the complexity of the enactment—students moving from themselves into a Tolkein role and from that role encountering an Arthurian role—some students fell out of role and addressed the opposite character as their actual selves. I intervened several times to help the students remain in their Hobbit roles.

In the next role reversal, the students became the chosen Arthurian character and responded with comments on their feelings at being chosen as an idealized role model by the Hobbit roles. My directorial doubling here focused on helping the students deepen their awareness of and their expression of the emotions in the Arthurian character roles. That experience produced some particularly poignant conflicts from the projective Lancelot role around his guilt arising from adulterous betrayal of his sovereign Arthur.

The encounter closed in two stages of role reversals. The first was from the Arthurian characters back to the Hobbits, and then from the Hobbits back to self. In the first stage, the final statements were from the Hobbit roles to the Arthurian roles. The second stage consisted of further dialog between the Hobbit roles and the students in the role of self, allowing the Hobbit roles to comment on their expectations for the Arthurian roles and what they had received in the spontaneous encounter. The significant benefits of the process, going from Arthurian role to Hobbit role and back to self, were to clarify and solidify the students' evolving image of each set of characters, to create for them a deeper sense of connection to each imaginative world, to expand their conception of the attitudes and emotions of the characters, and to experience the relationships between the two works of literature through action insight in a way different from traditional intellectual and analytical discussion.

Using a Locogram to Create Character Experience Outside of Text

In one of the late sessions, a different exploration got under way spontaneously when a student brought in an unusual Tolkien artifact—a large map of "Middle Earth," measuring approximately 3 by 3 1/2 feet. The map inspired me to create an exploration using the map as a locogram. By now the empty chair warm-up to encounter a character had begun to become a familiar conserve for the class and for me, so I was eager to approach the Tolkien world and characters through a different avenue, namely, a concrete physical and topographical locale, and to use that approach to let the students connect with a character implied but not explicitly drawn by Tolkien.

I asked each student to choose a particular location on the map, based on his knowledge of the geography of "Middle Earth" from reading the trilogy, and to connect to it physically, either by standing on it or reaching with a foot or a hand to it. Then I used an extended induction warm-up, similar to a guided imagery exercise or detailed psychodramatic scene-setting.

Director: Imagine yourself standing at a very specific place in this locale that you've chosen. Stand in one spot for a while, and notice what your eyes are seeing. Take a nice long look; notice the colors of things, the shapes, the textures, the highlights and shadows. Notice the sky, what time of day or night; clouds, stars, the moon, if it's out. Let your eyes continue to roam over

the landscape; take a long, slow look around you, all 360 degrees. While you're doing that, also notice whatever sounds are coming into your ears, even the most subtle ones. Also, breathe in the air. Be aware of the different odors here in this place, all of them, even ones so faint you wouldn't normally pay attention to; and continue to let your eyes drink in whatever they fall on; and keep letting all the various sounds in this place sink into your ears.

After that exercise warmed up each participant to become fully present in the Middle Earth locale and to experience it as a living environment, I invited each to imagine being a particular person from *The Lord of the Rings* in that environment. According to the intuitive choice of each, the person could be either an actual character created by Tolkien or, similar to the Old Servant role in the earlier Parzival drama, one who could plausibly be present but not explicitly mentioned by the author.

Director: Now let yourself imagine that you're that particular character in *The Lord of the Rings,* here in this place where you are, at this very time, a very particular set of moments. Who else is with you in this moment, or are you alone? What are you doing here? What did you come here to do? What's going on? Let yourself see the people, see details about them. If there's a crowd of people, notice someone near you, or notice a couple of people; see as vividly as you can details of their appearance—clothes, facial expressions, gestures, movements; hear what they're saying, the tone of their voices, the volume, the rhythms. Hear other sounds around you, whatever they are. And breathe the air; let all the odors around you float into your nose, and notice them. Stay with everything that's happening in this moment. Notice how your body is feeling, all the physical sensations; where are you most tense? where are you most relaxed or loosest? where are you hottest? where coolest? what emotions are you feeling? what particular images are running through your mind in this moment? What inner thoughts?

As the final segment of this experience, I directed the participants as the particular characters in this location to move to another part of the space, and to be in a different moment in their fictional time, which could either be very close to their initial moment or at some other time. As with the initial moment, I directed them to experience as fully as possible all that was happening around them and inside them. As closure for that exploration, I directed them to return to themselves, standing at their initial spot in the Middle Earth locale, and then to return to the classroom.

Finally, I invited anyone who wished to describe aloud his experiences, and three students accepted my invitation. The stories from a series of moments in the life of that character in that particular locale, with occasional directorial prompts or questions to clarify, to express feelings, or to focus perceptions, became the climax of that session. One student imagined himself as an ordinary soldier in the army of Aragorn, the legitimate ruler of the realm of Mid-

dle Earth, fighting against the army of orcs and goblins assembled by Sargon, the renegade wizard in service of the Dark Lord of Mordor. His description of two moments, one during an assault at the turning point of the battle during a moonless night and the other during bleak daylight the next morning when he discovered the body of a dead comrade, was especially poignant and moving. As in previous explorations, the sharing proved valuable for all students, enriching their imaginative connections to the novel and deepening their empathic identification with the characters they and their classmates selected.

Closure and Conclusions

Because of time limitations, the closure session of the course was brief. Each student was invited to bring into the group one character from whom he had received a important meaning, insight, and connection. Each then conducted a brief empty chair dialogue with that character, using role reversals, to express his appreciation to the character and to receive the final responses, tribute, and appreciation from that character. Characters present included King Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, Merry the Hobbit, Frodo Baggins, and Old Servant from the *Parzival* exploration. Although I did not do so for that course, one could gather more extensive data on outcomes and growth experiences during such a course by devising simple pre- and postcourse instruments focused on such factors as the students' degree of comfort with spontaneous role playing, their discovery or increased awareness of their personal attributes, their imaginative powers, and their ability to imagine a fictional character as a complex, three-dimensional personality.

The experiences of the participants in the course, expressed throughout in sharing, at the end of the closure session and in formal course evaluations, reflected the advantages of spontaneous action methods in the study of literature and mythology. Representative comments from the participants' evaluations included the following: "[role playing] united our group, educated us, and got us to open up to one another," "an effective learning environment," "spontaneous role playing really excited me . . . I learned much about myself," "definitely opened me up to exploration in my daily life."

The course provided ample justification for Sternberg and Garcia's (1989) observation that "Sociodrama is an additional way to explore the richness of literature." Students responded positively to explorations of the material that stimulated their creative imaginations, allowed for expression of feelings, and produced strong empathic identification with characters and situations. They revealed more of their own emotional process and became more attuned to and accepting of the processes of others. The approach provided another avenue of active and cooperative learning, an instructional method that has become increasingly more widely accepted in recent years. I have concluded that the

positive results of my experiment support the idea that teachers in secondary and higher education need training in the spontaneous role-playing methods of psychodrama and sociodrama. I believe that my use of role-playing procedures demonstrates how the principles and techniques of psychodrama can be successfully applied in wider educational contexts and hope that other practitioners and educators expand the applications of spontaneous methods.

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The Use of Psychodramatic Techniques Within Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: A Theoretical and Technical Integration

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ABSTRACT. Regardless of what might be considered ideal, most therapy today is brief. Consequently, psychodrama practitioners could serve many of their clients by following a brief model of therapy. Solution-focused brief therapy is an approach that is receiving increased support from those who provide brief therapy. The integration of solution-focused theory with psychodrama theory and its techniques is offered as a model for the provision of short-term, solution-focused interventions. The authors provide suggestions for the practice, highlighting the use of psychodrama's social atom, action sociogram, future projection, and regressive drama techniques.

NO MATTER THE THERAPEUTIC APPROACH, most clients see their therapists for relatively few sessions. Typically, clients entering treatment expect that it will require only a few sessions (Koss & Shiang, 1994), and practitioners coping with ever-changing health care delivery systems are often encouraged to reduce the treatment duration. The median number of therapy sessions that occur across all schools of psychotherapy is from six to eight sessions (Koss & Shiang, 1994). With so few encounters, the goals of therapy and the depth of psychotherapeutic interventions are often limited. Therefore, clients who see therapists for only six to eight sessions are better served by interventions designed to operate within a brief context. Moreover, the limited number of sessions provided to clients, client expectations, and

current trends in health care provision have led to the need for psychotherapists to provide effective, time-limited services.

We propose the integration of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and the theory of psychodrama. Specifically, in this article, we highlight the strategic use of psychodrama's social atom, action sociogram, future projection, and regressive drama in an SFBT framework. We give examples that illustrate the applications of techniques in the proposed theoretical and technical integration.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)

This is an approach that is a growing force in the brief psychotherapy movement. It evolved from a family-therapy tradition (Kiser, Piercy, & Lipchik, 1993) and is a variation of the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto, California, brief strategic therapy model (Quick, 1996). It has been used in many different contexts with diverse populations and has been integrated with other therapeutic traditions, such as experiential family therapy (Bischof, 1993). Solution-Focused Brief Therapy emphasizes positives, solutions, and goals. It asserts that changes in the desired direction will be facilitated when clients focus on the positive, the solution, and the future (Walter & Peller, 1992). Instead of spotlighting the problem, SFBT looks for exceptions to the problem, or problem-free times, and develops solutions based on those exceptions (de Shazer, 1990). Exceptions to the problem are times when the goals of therapy are being accomplished immediately or have happened in the past. In SFBT, care is taken to encourage clients to focus on what they would *like* to be doing rather than on what they would *not like* to be doing (Walter & Peller, 1992). For example, if a client states that she wants to stop fighting with her spouse, the therapist encourages her to focus on the types of interactions she wants, rather than focusing on what she no longer wants.

If a client is having difficulty thinking in terms of exceptions to the problem or is framing goals in a positive fashion, the therapists may invite him or her to view the situation through the hypothetical solution frame (Walter & Peller, 1992). The hypothetical solution frame allows clients to engage in a new way of thinking about problems and constructing solutions. It helps them generate alternative ways of viewing their situation and frees them from being strictly problem-focused. The hypothetical solution frame provides an avenue by which clients can envision their lives once they have met their goals. Clients are invited to access the hypothetical solution frame through the use of the miracle question (de Shazer, 1990) or one of its variations: "If a miracle happened tonight and you woke up with the problem solved, or if you were reasonably confident you were on track to solving it, what would you be doing differently?" (Walter & Peller, 1992, p. 78). The therapist can follow the miracle question with a series of thought-provoking questions, such as those

about how clients can think differently, how different they feel, the ways in which those changes could make a difference in their lives, how other people can recognize that changes had occurred, and how others might act differently because of the changes (Walter, 1996).

Once clients are able to identify and describe what their lives would be like when the problem is solved, they are encouraged to identify exceptions to the problem state, or times when they are presently behaving in ways that are moving them closer to their desired goals (Walter, 1996). That enables clients to build a bridge from the hypothetical frame to their present situation. Clients are encouraged to focus on their current successful behaviors and to replicate and enhance them. They are encouraged to continue to behave in successful ways to create their desired reality through action. The continuation of exceptions to the problem then becomes the goal of therapy (Walter & Peller, 1992).

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy provides a solid framework in which clients can reach achievable goals within a limited time period. At the same time, SFBT has some limitations that can be addressed through the use of psychodrama theory and techniques. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy has been criticized for focusing on behavior and cognition exclusively, often at the expense of emotions (Kiser et al., 1993). As such, there may be a purposeful and strategic shift away from affect toward the accompanying behaviors (Kiser et al., 1993). According to Walter and Peller (1992), SFBT takes problems "at face value" (p. 62). In so doing, they do not address deeper issues that may have laid the foundation for a client's difficulties. That restricted focus leaves SFBT ill-equipped to help a client discover and work through unresolved issues related to significant relationships and events or other blocks to growth. When psychodramatic techniques are used to help achieve the goals of SFBT, they allow for and encourage the expression of emotions as a pathway to growth and healing. The techniques also help clients gain insight into the various blocks to growth and the methods that allow for rapid movement through those blocks. It is possible for clients to meet their therapeutic goals within the context of time-limited psychotherapy. The therapeutic methods of psychodrama are powerful catalysts that can be used to help meet, and expand on, the goals of SFBT.

The Use of Psychodramatic Techniques Within SFBT

Psychodrama, the action-oriented psychotherapy originally developed by J. L. Moreno in 1921 (Moreno, 1994), uses role-playing methods to externalize clients' internal conflicts. Through psychodramatic enactment, clients are invited to externalize conflicts in the here-and-now of therapy so that they can work with concrete rather than abstract objects. They are encouraged to resolve internal conflicts by expressing that which has gone unexpressed, gain alternative

perspectives on their situation through role reversal, and practice new behaviors through role training. Psychodramatic techniques offer powerful vehicles by which to meet solution-focused goals in group and individual settings.

Several specific psychodrama techniques can be used effectively within a solution-focused framework. We discuss the social atom, action sociogram, future projection, and regressive drama as they can be applied to the practice of SFBT. Brief examples are used to elaborate the technical and theoretical integration of psychodramatic techniques within a SFBT framework.

The Social Atom and Action Sociogram: Assessment

The social atom is a unique and powerful psychodramatic tool that can be used throughout this integrative approach. The social atom is a picture or diagram that represents a person's emotionally significant relationships and their various interrelations (Hale, 1986; Treadwell, Leach, & Stein, 1993; Dayton, 1994; Moreno, 1994). It can be adapted to represent an individual's relationship to any problem area that is of issue or concern. That may include an individual's relationship to his or her past or present family-of-origin or issues concerning life-stage development, eating patterns, use of chemical or behavioral medicators, wishes and fantasies, and so forth (Dayton, 1994). For example, a social atom might be used to highlight a client's conflictual relationship with her parents. In such a case, the therapist might help the client represent her relationships with her parents by drawing a diagram using appropriate symbols and shapes. Her relationship with her parents might be represented spatially, to represent closeness or distance, with connecting jagged lines to delineate strained relationships. The social atom could also include symbols representing past or present issues of conflict, such as a bottle to represent substance abuse or anything else that might be at the core of the etiology and the maintenance of the conflict.

Whatever the focus, the social atom can be used at the start of therapy to provide a concrete diagram of the conflict situations so that treatment goals can be adequately defined. It can then be used throughout treatment as an assessment tool to help bring the issues into focus and monitor progress toward the desired goals. Each social atom can be translated into a psychodramatic role play, an action sociogram. Thus, the social atom can be used as a springboard to role play. The protagonist can choose the role players, and empty chairs or other objects can symbolize each of the important characters or concepts represented in the atom. The action sociogram could be a discrete piece of work or could be part of a series. Between sessions, clients may be encouraged to use journaling or letter-writing techniques that are designed to reinforce what was worked on in a session. Homework can also be a warm-up to the next session's work.

Exceptions to the Problem: Expecting Change

An important goal of SFBT is the identification of exceptions to a problem. In addition to use as an assessment tool and a springboard for role plays, the social atom can be used to enhance a client's ability to identify, and work with, exceptions to the problem. With those goals in mind, the client can be asked to create a social atom representing his or her life before the conflict took over. In the enactment stage, he or she can be encouraged to reconstruct a scene representative of a time before the conflict occurred or became prominent. Through the identification of those exceptions to the problem, the client experiences what it would be like if the problem no longer existed, which leads him or her to *expect* change (Berg & Gallagher, 1991). Psychodrama offers clients the opportunity to experience exceptions to the problem in a multidimensional manner in the here-and-now of therapy. Consequently, many of the internal and external contextual cues associated with these exceptions are reinforced, making it easier for an individual to re-create these moments in his or her daily life.

Future Projection: The Hypothetical Social Atom

After the treatment goals are defined and change is expected, a social atom can be created to help the hypothetical solution frame become concrete. For example, the miracle question could be adapted to encourage the creation of a hypothetical social atom. The question "How would you like your social atom to look?" can be addressed through the creation of this alternative social atom, which demonstrates how the client would like his or her situation to look if his or her problems were resolved. With client goals identified, the hypothetical social atom can be explored through role-playing, dialogue, and the playing out of different possibilities. Movement into an action sociogram enables the client to not only think about what life would be like when his or her goals are met but also to experience what it *is* like. By actually experiencing what life would be like through a future projection, the client is given the opportunity to concretize goals through experience. The future projection psychodrama allows the individual to play out anticipated desired or undesired experiences. This "practice" is believed to decrease anxiety about the future and help clarify the reasons for, and possible consequences of, desired changes (Dayton, 1994). By so doing, the client is given a mastery experience that includes solution-oriented thoughts as well as solution-oriented feelings and behaviors. He or she is given the opportunity to experience success in the role play. That in-session mastery experience can then be replicated outside of the session by encouraging the client to access the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that brought him or her success in the role play.

The Regressive Drama: Working Through Unfinished Business and Blocks to Change

Psychodrama offers powerful techniques that can help clients move through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impasses. The social atom can be used as a tool to assess for, and initiate the working through of, unfinished business and blocks to change. It can help diagram the extent of the barriers and how the client perceives himself or herself in relationship to those with whom he or she experiences conflict. For example, having already created a social atom reflecting his or her current life and one reflecting life as he or she wants it to be, a client might be encouraged to create a third social atom. Through this third social atom, the client can begin to identify that which prevents the realization of changes required to meet desired goals.

When blocks occur in the client that prevent him or her from entering into the spirit of enactment, a regressive drama could be initiated. A regressive drama, the most common of all psychodramas, is often used when a client is tormented by a traumatic experience from the past (Dayton, 1994). It is a drama designed to explore what is in the way of realizing a change, or shift in perception. For example, if a client with a sexual trauma history is having difficulty with his intimate relationship and is unable to make consistent and lasting change, a regressive drama might be beneficial. In such a scenario, the client might be invited to explore unresolved thoughts and feelings related to the trauma through psychodramatic enactment.

Although delving into the past is a deviation from the general model of SFBT, pointed exploration of the past may enhance therapeutic outcome by predicting and resolving conflicts that have kept a client from a true shift in perspective and behavior. Regressive dramas offer an opportunity to gain insight and allow the client to experience a cognitive and/or emotional catharsis. With new insight, treatment can then return to the goal of a change in perspective and behavior. Positive changes, which can be extrapolated from the regressive drama, may include a new way of seeing the situation, a new compassion for the self and/or others, and a new awareness of previously unseen strength or ingenuity.

Summary

The integration outlined in the preceding text offers intervention strategies that can be used to meet SFBT objectives through the use of psychodramatic techniques in the contemporary psychotherapy environment. Although longer-term intervention might be the ideal for many clients and clinicians, most psychotherapy is brief. The technical and theoretical integration described here is a strategy by which solution-focused goals can be addressed through the use

of psychodramatic interventions tailored to meet the needs of clients scheduled to be seen for only a few sessions. The integration highlights the many applications of psychodrama's social atom, action sociogram, future projection, and regressive drama techniques. The integration includes psychodrama's use in assessment and diagnosis as an evocative warm-up/focusing tool in the identification of specific problems and exceptions to those problems and in facilitating focused strategic interventions that include emotional, cognitive, and behavioral restructuring. Ultimately the combination of SFBT and psychodrama techniques offers a powerful formula for a purposeful, strength-based, feelings-focused, action-oriented intervention.

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Using Sociometric Data to Increase Social Integration and Reduce Depression Among Residents of an Assisted Living Community: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT. Little research on interventions for people over 75 and residing in assisted living communities has been conducted. In this pilot study, the first author administered a sociometric test measuring friendliness, sociability, and concern for others, along with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), to evaluate the effects of a 4-month sociometric intervention period. The first author designed the sociometric interventions used during the 4-month period to increase self-disclosure and enhance mutual interpersonal sharing among participants. BDI scores were significantly lowered, and participants mutually selected one another significantly more at posttest. Also, at posttest, significantly more participants selected themselves as being sociable and concerned. The authors found a significant relationship between decreased depression scores and increased mutual scores, which supported existing research.

IN THIS PILOT STUDY, we employed sociometry to increase social integration and reduce symptoms of depression among 15 elderly research volunteers residing in an assisted living community. In his use of sociometry to advance clinical efforts, Moreno (1953) stated that one test of the success or failure of a sociometric intervention is the amount of positive change that occurs in a group. If sociometric tests are given at different times, then positive change can be observed by the increased scores for mutual sharing, social status, and more choices of self (Northway & Weld, 1957).

Sociometry quantifies aspects of social networks such as complexity, size, reciprocity, and durability of interactions over time. Blazer (1982) found that

the social networks of the elderly were predictive of their morbidity and mortality. The social dimension of well-being warrants further research to ensure that psychosocial interventions are available to assist the at-risk institutionalized elderly people to reducing their social isolation. The therapeutic goals of interventions based on sociometric methods are to increase group members' abilities to give and receive mutual support and reduce their social isolation (Moreno, 1959).

Method

Participants

The pilot research project, reported in this article, took place at a northeastern Ohio assisted living community, a subdivision of a larger retirement community, that encompassed a full nursing program and an independent living program. The assisted living community consisted of 112 elderly people, over 90 percent of whom were women. Assisted living at the retirement community was designed for people who required help with routine physical care.

Volunteers had to be interested in joining a group activity and had to agree to be interviewed, photographed, and audio-recorded. Fifteen women, 75 to 95 years of age or older, agreed to participate during the 4-month study.

Instrumentation

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). The Beck Depression Inventory was used to measure the participants' self-reported severity of depressive symptoms at pretest and posttest. The BDI consists of 21 four-choice statements that describe symptoms and attitudes associated with depression. The BDI has evidenced adequate internal reliability (.80; Gatewood-Colwel, Kaczmarek, Ames, 1989) and temporal stability (.79 to .90; Gallagher, Nies, & Thompson, 1982) in samples of elderly people. A number of studies support the validity of the BDI as a measure of depression. For example, Byerly and Carlson (1982) reported a correlation coefficient of .80 for the BDI and the Depression Adjective Checklist. Further reliability and validity data are found in the manual (Beck, 1987).

Computerized Sociometric (CompSoc). Participants answered three sociometric questions at the pretest and again 4 months later at the posttest. The three sociometric questions that served as the sociometric assessment were:

1. Select up to three people from these photographs whom you would invite to your party. You may decide not to choose anyone.

2. Select up to five people, including yourself, who enjoy the company of others. You may decide not to choose anyone.

3. Select up to five people, including yourself, whom you perceive as helpful. You may decide not to choose anyone.

The participants completed a sociometric data form, which included their names, identification numbers, and the names of the people chosen. They answered the sociometric questions from photographs of the 15 participants, themselves included.

For the study, we used the Computerized Sociometric (CompSoc) program (Treadwell & Leach, 1987) to view group structures, social choice patterns (i.e., unreciprocated choices), mutual choices, self choices, and social status (i.e., popular versus unpopular choices of group members). The CompSoc program (compatible with an IBM PC) is in the public domain, and a copy can be obtained by contacting the authors.

The 4-Month Sociometric Intervention

The sociometric interventions used during the 4-month intervention period included both formal and informal activities directed toward building and enhancing social networks among participants. Formal strategies involved structured group activities, manipulation of seating arrangements at those group activities (and also at mealtimes) based on the pretest sociometric data, and individual interviews with the 15 participants. Informal activities included unstructured discussions with participants, socializing with participants and subgroups during their daily routines, and phototherapy. Increased social interaction and bonding were facilitated by photographing various subgroups of friends, asking participants to "sit closer" during the photography sessions, and encouraging participants to share their photographs with others. All the interventions were designed to increase self-disclosure and enhance mutual interpersonal sharing among the participants.

Major Questions and Research Hypotheses

The three major questions guiding the research were:

1. What is the impact of a 4-month intervention on depression of elderly participants residing at an assisted living facility?

2. What is the impact of a 4-month intervention on increasing friendship and sociability networks?

3. What is the relationship between depression and patterns of social choice?

The seven research hypotheses were:

1. BDI mean posttest scores are lower than the mean pretest scores.
2. The mean number of choices on all three sociometric questions measuring friendship, sociability, and support combined is significantly higher on the posttest than on the pretest.
3. The mean number of mutual choices for the three sociometric questions combined is significantly higher on the posttest than on the pretest.
4. The mean number of choices on all three sociometric questions combined is significantly higher on the posttest than on the pretest.
5. The mean for the number of participants selecting themselves on sociometric questions 2 and 3 combined is significantly higher on the posttest than on the pretest.
6. BDI (pretest–posttest) change scores are significantly correlated with the total number of mutual choices that were made for all three sociometric questions combined.
7. BDI (pretest–posttest) change scores are significantly correlated with the total number of choices participants receive on all three sociometric questions combined.

We used one-tailed *t* tests for hypotheses 1–5 because the hypotheses were generated before the collection of the data (Spence, 1968). We obtained Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients for research hypotheses 6 and 7. Because the sample size was small, we used a $p < .05$ significance level to test each hypothesis.

Results

Table 1 contains the findings for hypotheses 1 through 5, giving the mean, standard deviation, and paired *t* values. A summary follows:

1. As predicted, the BDI mean posttest scores ($M = 4.47$) were significantly lower than the mean pretest scores ($M = 9.13$) ($p < .001$).
2. The mean for the total number of choices participants received from other group members for the three sociometric questions measuring friendship, sociability, and support was slightly, but not significantly, higher at the posttest than at the pretest. Thus hypothesis 2 was not supported.
3. As predicted, the mean number of mutual choices for the three combined questions was significantly higher at the posttest ($M = 2.40$) than at the pretest ($M = 1.35$) ($p < .01$).
4. The mean number of choices that participants made for all three questions at the posttest was higher, but not significantly so, than the total number of choices participants made at the pretest. Thus hypothesis 4 was not supported.
5. As predicted, the mean number of times participants selected themselves

TABLE 1
Pretest and Posttest Paired *t* Test for Hypotheses 1 Through 5

Variable	Pretest		Posttest			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
1. BDI	9.13	5.28	4.47	3.64	4.06	.001*
2. Choices Received	7.20	4.56	7.53	5.83	–0.30	.38
3. Mutual Choices	1.33	1.35	2.40	2.26	–2.87	.01*
4. Chosen	8.40	3.50	9.33	2.10	–1.28	.11
5. Self	1.13	0.26	1.80	0.15	–2.32	.02*

Note. BDI = Beck Depression Inventory.
*$p < .05$.

TABLE 2
Correlations Between BDI and Sociometric Change Mean Scores in Hypotheses 6 and 7

Variable	*r*	*p*
6. BDI/Total Mutual Choices	.48	.04*
7. BDI/Total Choices Received	.09	.38

Note. BDI = Beck Depression Inventory.
*$p < .05$.

for all three questions combined was significantly higher at the posttest (M = 1.80) than at the pretest (M = 1.13) ($p < .02$).

In Table 2, we present the findings for hypotheses 6 and 7. The correlations for BDI and sociometric change scores and r values with confidence levels follow:

6. As predicted, BDI (pretest–posttest) change scores were significantly correlated with the participants' total number of selections at a mutual level for the three sociometric questions combined ($p < .04$).

7. BDI (pretest–posttest) change scores were positively correlated, but not significantly so, with the participants' total number of choices received by other participants for the three sociometric questions combined and did not support the hypothesis.

Discussion of Significant Findings

Because the investigation was a pilot study (i.e., small sample size with no control group), all conclusions must be considered tentative. The lack of a control group is of particular concern, because without a control group, it is difficult to factor out the wide variety of possible alternative explanations for the significant findings.

Results for hypothesis 1 suggest that the 4-month sociometric intervention played a significant role in decreasing the participants' BDI scores at the posttest. The participants decreased their BDI scores by an average of 4.60 points. No participant increased in her level of reported depression as measured by the BDI.

For hypothesis 3, the number of participants who shared a mutual-level choice with at least one other person doubled from the pretest (n = 6) to the posttest (n = 12). The number of mutual-level choices shared by the participants increased 86% from the pretest (n = 20) to the posttest (n = 36). The sociometric intervention appeared to increase the overall mutuality and social integration of the group of participants.

Moreno (1953) explained that mutual level selections are reflective of a group with more sophisticated social connections and more integrated interpersonal relationships. It appears that at posttest, group members were more involved with each other, perhaps indicative of less isolation.

For hypothesis 5, the number of participants selecting "self" increased 69% from the pretest (n = 16) to the posttest (n = 27). Only one person did not select herself for either question at the posttest. Thirteen of the 15 participants selected themselves as sociable and helpful at the posttest, compared with only five at the pretest. The sociometric intervention appeared to improve their perceptions of themselves as sociable and cooperative members of their assisted living community. According to Beck (1979), positive self-perceptions are related to decreased depression.

In hypothesis 6, a relationship between a participant's quantity of mutually shared social interactions was found to be related to decreased depression scores. The relationship between mutual social interactions and decreased depression scores found in this study has also been noted in other studies that involved the institutionalized elderly (Bitzan & Kruzich, 1990; Grant, Patterson, & Yager, 1988; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968).

Limitations of the Study

In this pilot study using sociometric data with the elderly, we found many limitations. That only one assisted living community was studied is a significant limitation. Because all participants were volunteers from one community, the findings are not generalizable, even though some reasonable inferences

can be made. All 15 volunteers were women, but given that the vast population of elderly institutions consists overwhelmingly of women, that in itself is not a limitation. Demographics suggest, however, that that situation may be rapidly changing. In the future, both men and women may live longer and be more likely to live in an assisted living situation. Therefore, the lack of male participants is an important limitation and underlines a great need for research on the social networks of institutionalized males.

Most of the women who participated in the study were middle class, White, and Christian. Those circumstances limit the inferences that can be made about the elderly from different racial and religious backgrounds living in institutions. It is possible that for various cultural groups, family as opposed to friends would be more related to well-being. For this study, the first author was also the therapist, which made it difficult to determine how helpful the sociometric data were in improving social connectedness, compared to the effect of the researcher/therapist's personality (i.e., the Hawthorne effect).

A valuable design for a future study would contain the following experimental conditions:

1. The researcher conducts the pretest and posttest sociometric testing. Then, based on the sociometric pretest scores, the researcher presents and recommends interventions to an assisting therapist. The researcher and the therapist, with the aid of the sociometric data, then jointly design interventions.
2. The assisting therapist implements the agreed upon interventions, using the pretest data.
3. The researcher collects posttest data, and the interventions are analyzed in terms of their impact on the social structures measured.
4. The researcher collects pretest and posttest sociometric data for a control group that receives no sociometric informed therapy.

In that way, the usefulness of sociometry can be evaluated separately from other variables such as the personality of the therapist or the social integration that naturally occurs over time at assisted living communities.

Conclusions

Even though significant findings were obtained in this pilot investigation, such findings must be interpreted with caution. Beck Depression Inventory mean posttest scores were significantly lower than pretest scores. The number of participants who selected one another on a mutual level for the three combined sociometric questions, as well as the question measuring sociability, increased significantly on the posttest. The number of participants who selected themselves for the sociometric questions measuring sociability and concern for others was significantly greater at the posttest, when compared with the pretest. Perhaps most important, a relationship was found between

decreased depression scores over time and increased mutual scores over time, a finding that supports existing research recognizing the importance of shared relationships in the reduction and prevention of depressive symptoms among elderly adults.

Computers will likely play an increased role in social network research in the years ahead (Treadwell, Kumar, Stein, & Prosnick, 1998). The type of assessment and treatment in this pilot study would not have been undertaken a decade ago, given the costs and technical limitations then available. The results of this pilot study suggest that computerized sociometry may prove to be an invaluable tool for creating psychosocial treatment plans and generating positive functional outcome data. As interest in this area grows and funding becomes available, new assessment technologies can help clarify the needs of the ever-growing older population and expand our knowledge about the interpersonal changes involved with aging.

This pilot study is a starting point that suggests that sociometric interventions may reduce social isolation and depression in institutionalized elderly people . Aging and dying are inevitable realities confronting us all. What older adults require to attain fulfillment and integration before dying is a question increasingly deserving society's attention.

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BRIEF REPORT

The Split Screen Technique: A Concrete Means for Handling Physical Immobility and Cross-Cultural Tensions in Psychodrama

ERICA MICHAELS HOLLANDER

In this article, I describe the Split Screen technique that I developed during a classical psychodrama in which there were two particular difficulties: (a) an auxiliary ego cast by the protagonist in a major role was almost totally immobilized by a physical disability, yet when called upon, was willing and able to participate with affect in a number of scenes; and (b) the resistance of the protagonist to revisiting or seeing the applicability of childhood scenes from a very different culture containing the roots of the current problem being dealt with in her adult life. The Split Screen is a technique that could be useful for other directors working with one or more immobile or disabled members in a group. Moreover, the Split Screen technique may be useful and effective in other kinds of circumstances, particularly resistance and cross-cultural conflicts. My spontaneous development and successful use of the Split Screen technique may encourage therapists to be creative in their adaptations of direction in other situations.

The Psychodrama

The drama began with an international telephone call from an Asian father to his daughter Ilana, the protagonist. The father rarely calls Ilana, and she feels he speaks more often to his other children. In the protagonist's case, the father only calls a couple of times a year and does not often see his daughter. In the episode, which is a repeat of a recent actual event, the father phones his daughter's home late in the night, wishing only to speak to his son, who is vis-

iting his daughter. Ilana wants to have more contact and an affirming emotional tie with her father. Instead, after months of silence, he phones her only to be sure that his son had had a safe trip. To add to Ilana's disappointment, when her father does phone, he calls her Irena, her sister's name.

In the opening scene of the psychodrama, Ilana carefully asks her father to call her by her own name, but she does not fully express her sadness, hurt, or anger at his having called her by her sister's name. The action is stopped, and a double is introduced. The phone call is replayed with the double helping to express the unspoken feelings of the protagonist. Even the second time through, with an active and capable double, the phone conversation is very carefully controlled by the protagonist, with only the most restrained sentiments being expressed in moderated and acceptable tones. "Daddy, I am fine. I just wish you would call me by my own name. You always call me Irena."

As an auxiliary ego to play her father, the protagonist chose a man who, because of his medical condition, could not easily walk or stand. The action moved to a scene following the phone conversation in *status nascendi* (Moreno, 1964), going to the source of the current dilemma in the childhood experience of the protagonist. We then see Ilana at her parents' home at age 12. She is in her father's bedroom, with the father watching television and the protagonist and her double massaging the father's fatigued and aching legs.

In this scene, the protagonist feels she is her father's favorite child, and she is filled with the desire for this closeness to continue. It is here that the catharsis of abreaction takes place. Her traditional Asian father tells her he expects her to marry and have children. When she asks him what would happen to their relationship if she were to fail to fulfill his expectations, he cannot accept that possibility. Instead, he insists that this is her lot in life—marriage and children—and that it is pointless to discuss anything else. He repeats that he knows his prescription is what life holds for her. Now the moral dilemma at the heart of the drama is clear: If the protagonist leaves or strays from the path the father maps out for her, will she then lose him altogether? As an adult, she is living far away and has not adhered well to the vision of life that her father set out for her. Her father's idea of what her life should hold is conservative and traditional; the protagonist's choices are far less so. In the psychodrama, the exchange between protagonist and father is active and spontaneous, but the typical role reversals cannot follow because of the immobility of the auxiliary playing the father. Instead, the role reversals are accomplished in the bedroom scene, with the auxiliary playing the father staying in one place and the protagonist and the double moving around him to a pair of chairs nearer the audience. There they are reversed in role (see Figure 1). In no way did the audience appear confused or stymied by this simple adaptation.

After the scene in *status nascendi* has been fully enacted, the action shifts back to the contemporary setting. The director suggests that the protagonist

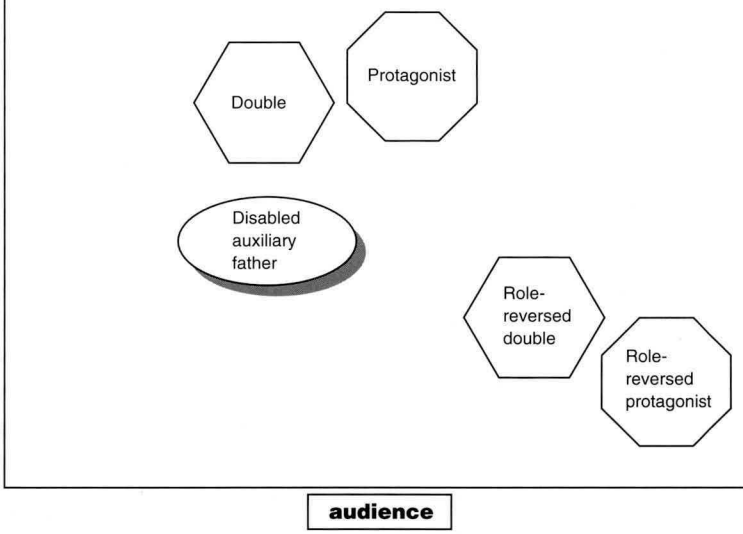

FIGURE 1. Diagram of the Placement of Participants in the Bedroom scene.

bring the affective elements reclaimed from the earlier scene to her current problem, and the protagonist agrees. She wants to address her indecision and her spirit of freedom from traditional constraint in the present. Those are concretized by establishing the time, place, person, context of both scenes, and auxiliary egos chosen to play the roles.

At that point, I devised the Split Screen to allow the auxiliary as the father to remain on the bed as in *status nascendi* while the action moved to a contemporary foreground scene. As director, I simply announced that I wanted to use the Split Screen technique that allowed the father to remain where he was while the action moved to aspects of the protagonist's adult life. Not surprisingly, the aspects of her adult life that were especially important to her were those that she feared would bring disapproval or rejection from her father. To allow the father's presence to be felt with mobility in the scene, the protagonist herself was asked to embody his judgmental spirit in the present-day foreground scene. In that role then, in front of her father, who remained in the scene of origin in surplus reality, the protagonist walked around and interacted with other auxiliaries as the embodiment of his judgmental voice. As her father's judgmental self, she interacted with her own independent spirit and her indecision. The dialogue that ensued between her independent, wild spirit and her ambivalence about living out his traditional vision for her was live-

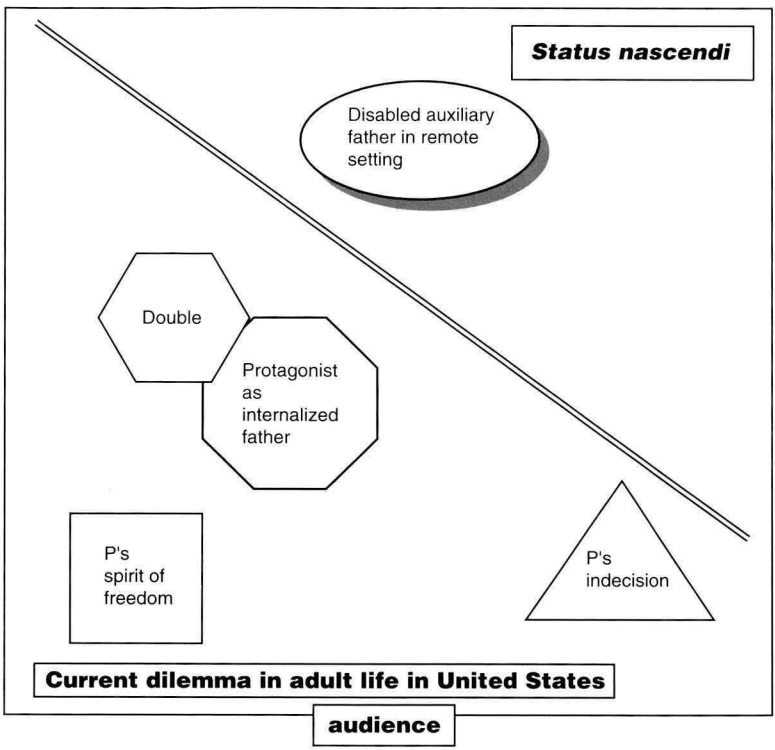

FIGURE 2. Diagram of the Placement of Participants in the Split-Screen Segment of the Psychodrama.

ly and energetic. All this took place by way of the Split Screen, in front of the father who was in the bedroom at home years earlier, still reclining on his bed. The father could of course speak, and he did. Thus the stage (Figure 2) held two scenes at once: father at home as he had been years ago and the protagonist in her current battle with her indecision and need for freedom and internalized father.

The drama ended with the protagonist and the double easily returning upstage to talk with the father on his bed, telling him what was hoped for from him. The catharsis of integration occurred in the surplus reality space that was then readily defined as revisiting the childhood setting for the affective scene with the learning and wisdom of the adult protagonist. Although the original idea for using the protagonist to embody the father's spirit of negativity was one of simple practicality in response to the limited mobility of

the auxiliary playing the father, it quickly became evident that it was also useful to concretize the internalized father, who was demonstrably not the same as the real father.

Evaluation of the Split Screen Technique

In this drama, the Split Screen worked well, and it is a technique that others can adopt. After my success, I urge other directors to be creative in devising techniques to fit special needs and circumstances. The functions of the Split Screen are many: The technique helped the group deal with the immobility and disability of the auxiliary chosen to be the father; it concretized the notion of the father's impact on the daughter's current moral dilemma; and it also made tangible the separate internalized father. The Split Screen impressed the emblem of the past onto the present dilemma and yet made it easy to see that the impact of growth and competencies gained could release the protagonist from the historical trap that the 12-year-old child was unable to escape. In addition, the Split Screen technique helped the drama develop beyond the protagonist's resistance to seeing the roots of her dilemma in her childhood, and it made the cross-cultural conflict obvious. The father's imprint was evident in the contemporary conflict, even though the father lived half a world away. His impression on his daughter's life and her choices remained unmistakable, but she was able to return to deal with him as an adult because of her own strength and maturity.

I believe that simultaneously using a scene in *status nascendi* in a Split Screen presentation to show the source of the lessons of the past and a scene with the symbolic re-creation of archaic dynamics in the present is a useful strategy for directors and protagonists. The Split Screen technique offers a way of working easily and fluidly with a physically immobile auxiliary ego and has potential for use with other cross-cultural tensions because the strategy presents the protagonist living in two worlds at once.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Action Modality Couples Therapy: Using Psychodramatic Techniques in Helping Troubled Relationships, by Joyce Hayden-Seman. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. 1998. ISBN 0-7657-0064-6.

"Anyone who hates children can't be all bad," a line credited to the great W. C. Fields, has a logic in its humor. Whoever has not felt like screaming back at the little monsters has either never experienced their insistent misbehavior or is a saint or a liar. Joyce Hayden-Seman is none of these and consequently has written a marvelous book for psychodramatists, one that is really down in the trenches with us. Although she limits her scope to psychodrama's application in couples therapy, much of what she offers is applicable to all our psychodramatic work.

Perhaps her high point is the extended verbatim protocol that she sandwiches between theoretical material at the start and sociometric material at the end. That verbatim account, including her own interventions, comes straight from the videotape she made to be used for playback to the couple itself. Alongside the spoken record, she includes two other columns, one for her own (unspoken) soliloquy, apparently what she felt like saying at the moment, and the other for her more-considered reflections. The ensemble has such a ring of truth that it is immediately engaging. Her unspoken soliloquies contain such gems as "They both have to defend their positions. It drives me nuts." "I'm amazed he doesn't agree with me." "Boy, do I sound outspoken!" "They're off and running again and I don't even feel like stopping them." "Wait, I can't remember what happened two weeks ago." "Gosh, is he arrogant!" "That doesn't sound very understanding. I'm glad you're not married to me." On page 210, she thinks, "Let me distract them so we can end this session with some closure rather than a bang," but it is not until page 225 that she finds a way to say, "We're out of time for now," allowing the reader to relax. At no point did she speak out impulsively on the basis of these flashes but what a breath of fresh air to record immediate reactions so candidly. She presents herself in no way less human than the client couple. And what psy-

chodramatist does not have such an ongoing series of thoughts? There certainly are some, but they are the ones totally devoid of Moreno's famous *spontaneity.* I have listed only the most outrageous examples, but there are many, many others that reflect deep concern, "Poor child, she gets so overwhelmed" and "I'm reluctant to put pressure on Alan. He has been so stressed lately."

In the "reflections," she examines herself in a way that every therapist must, but she puts it all down without embarrassment. A typical example: "Again I've detached my self. My unconscious rage at my own father paralyzes me. I remained outside the scene. I can't conceive of doubling if I keep myself removed. It's painful for me to observe how detached from the situation I am." The primary emphasis in the reflections is, of course, her considerations of what therapeutic tactic was timely and likely to be effective at the moment: a role reversal to facilitate empathy between the couple, doubling by one partner of the other, therapist doubling to lend confirmation to a fragile or isolated experience, a psychodramatic reenactment of events in one of the partner's early development, in short, all of the critical considerations that are the real work of our profession. She rightly criticized herself for the underuse of doubling but was clearly trying to get a handle on the countertransferential factors inhibiting her. She often saw when doubling would have provided support but seemed less aware of its potential for extending insight. For example, a doubled comment for the husband–such as "I'm aware of how cruel and self-centered that must have sounded, but I really didn't mean it that way"—might help the husband become aware of the impact of his words, as well as help the wife feel validated in having been hurt.

The final section is devoted mostly to her own applications of applied sociometry and role theory. Most interesting is the sociometry. Rather than risk the dangers involved in the sociometric popularity contests sometimes used in groups, Hayden-Seman has the partners draw their own social atoms, diagrams indicating themselves and the important people in their lives, using size and distance to indicate emotional significance and social distance. Each partner also draws the other's social atom as he or she imagines the other experiences it. All the diagrams are repeated at the beginning, middle, and end of therapy. She begins with a starkly objective description of the diagrams, such as the fact that the symbol for the self was larger than the others, that partner was drawn above or below and touching or not touching the symbol for the self, that the in-laws were omitted or prominent, the children were drawn much closer to one parent or situated between them, and so forth. It is apparent at once that the simple, undeniable descriptions spoke volumes in themselves. What a superb and eminently useful projective test. Beyond the descriptions, the author has also included some short analyses of the test results, further confirming their utility. In the analyses, she forms hypotheses for diagnostic and therapeutic interviewing. In one analysis, she writes ". . .

she represented herself at least three times larger than any other symbol. Was she feeling the need to consider herself more? Was she feeling more expansive?" In the interview, she asks: "You drew the symbol for yourself somewhat larger. Does that have any significance for you?" To avoid a "no" answer, she might have phrased it: "What significance might that have?" or she might simply point out the size and remain silent, waiting for a response. Whatever, the technique is loaded with potential. I do not mean to quibble, but she has already drawn me in.

At the outset, Hayden-Seman gives us a brief and rather dense overview of the need for couples therapy and a review of the literature. In her attempt to be inclusiveness and concise, her descriptions of the alternate approaches must necessarily suffer from incompleteness and an indistinct threat connecting them so that the effect is to leave the reader with a sense of contradiction rather than of contrast. Least successful was Hayden-Seman's valiant attempt to hobble together a number of Moreno's broad philosophical generalizations into a theoretical whole. Lotsa luck. That is beyond even her. She seems to endorse the Morenean divergence from psychoanalysis, saying that Moreno placed his attention on conscious rather than unconscious life. Yet she also subscribes to the idea that "most of us underestimate the scope of our unconscious mind." In her actual work, mercifully, she directs her own attention to that delicate region of the mind where conscious and unconscious are tangent, using that which is already conscious to expand into areas previously banished from awareness.

The book has two other weaknesses, both aesthetic, and one that is in no way Ms. Hayden-Seman's fault. The cover of the book is an awful, garish red. The second weakness is her use of poetry. I suspect her work would only gain if she could relinquish the routine reading of the, by now, cliché verse from Khalil Gibran in which he counsels married couples to be neither too distant nor to lose their boundaries in merger. The two pages of her own poetry near the end indicate that prose is the better mode of expression. I mention these limitations, particularly those in the initial section, primarily to bid the reader a modicum of patience until the middle phase, where this remarkable woman may be seen in action.

JAMES M. SACKS
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Carnes, Patrick J. (1997). *The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships.* Deerfield Beach, FL.: Health Communications.

I finished reading *The Betrayal Bond* with mixed feelings, the overriding one being true enjoyment. My enjoyment came from reading something interesting, from learning things that I did not know, and from my relief at not having had to exert myself in the process. I did feel a twinge of discomfort at some statements that were discordant and that detracted from an otherwise humane, logical, and compassionate book. I also experienced a sense of disappointment because I believe that the author should have aimed the book at a totally different audience.

The title of the book itself is a finding. What better words to describe the subject matter,—that is, the pain, shame, anguish, and rage caused by relationships in which one person exploits the other. The book is exceedingly well written in simple language, mercifully free of professional jargon. The sentences are short, the points made clearly and succinctly, yet the reader does not feel talked down to. *The Betrayal Bond* is well organized, and its topics flow smoothly. The author comes across as genuinely honest, insightful, compassionate, and very experienced in his field. The reader is often left with the thought, "Gee! I knew that but did not know how to put it into words."

The book begins with the description and discussion of exploitive and traumatic bonds, followed by a chapter about the impact and effect of various kinds of trauma on people. The effects of trauma and the various unhealthy ways in which people cope with it are beautifully described. The chapter ends with a traumatic stress index worksheet. I do not know how effective the worksheet would be to patients, but I believe that it could be quite useful to a therapist. The next two chapters deal with the effects of betrayed trust on relationships and the prevailing conditions under which those destructive bonds reach such strength that breaking them becomes next to impossible.

Each chapter is followed by summaries and inventories, and the use of *Peanuts* cartoons to illustrate an occasional point adds a poignant sense of humor to the issues discussed. Those issues are further illustrated by well-chosen, short, and much to the point vignettes. The next three chapters deal with the road to recovery, again in a logical, well-thought-out fashion. Initially, the author warns against the tendency to deny and repress. He then offers vignettes and inventories designed to bring into focus the many destructive ways in which exploitive relationships are destructive. In the next two chapters, he describes specific steps that hasten recovery. That section I consider to be the weakest link in an otherwise marvelous little book. My statement is perhaps unfair because it originates from my bias against mechanical exercises, which abound in those two chapters.

The last chapter is particularly moving. It spells out the heartaches that one

suffers and the hard decisions that one must make to become whole, that is, the recognition of the reactions of those who do not understand or even welcome the healthy changes, the need to accept change and separation, aloneness, honesty, and vulnerability. The final chapter is a fitting ending for a book speaking of human bondage, pain, and hope.

Yet, I was distressed by a few details. One has to do with a vignette (p. 83) implying that a psychiatrist, who had engaged in sexual misconduct with several women patients, continued to practice without a license. It is possible that, in his eagerness to protect the anonymity of his examples, the author may have distorted some of the details.

Some other statements are infinitely more disturbing. On pages 82–83, the author talks about victims (and victimizers) having a sense of uniqueness that makes them believe that they are more entitled than others and not subject to constraints and limitations—such as "sociopaths," "narcissists," "addicts," etc. On page 85, he goes on to say that "Organizations and movements also have that sense of entitlement. Jonestown, the Holocaust, the Japanese followers of those who put poisonous gas in the subways—all shared a sense of uniqueness." It is not at all clear whether the author means Holocaust perpetrators or Holocaust victims. If he means Holocaust victims, then the statement is false. For one thing, those who committed suicide at Jonestown or put poisonous gas in Japanese subways inflicted harm on themselves or on others. Holocaust victims had harm inflicted on themselves by others. Many readers will be deeply offended by that statement, which should either be clarified or eliminated in a subsequent edition.

In another instance, on pages 103–104, the author beautifully describes the dynamics of the Karpman triangle—the switching of roles among the victim, the victimizer, and the rescuer. He states, "the victimizer so fears that his needs will not be met that he feels he has to deceive and exploit the victim. And the rescuer is trying to secure a place by being heroic, hoping that if he goes to this extreme then others will recognize his needs and meet them" (p. 104). Earlier, in the same section, the author cites, as an example of the triangle, police officers intervening in domestic disputes. Although that example illustrates how roles are switched, it is highly unlikely that police officers are motivated by the same needs as rescuers in betrayed relationships. I doubt that that is what Carnes meant; his meaning, however, should be clarified.

Another minor criticism that could be leveled at this book is that it deals almost exclusively with relationships betrayed within the context of physical and/or sexual abuse and drug and alcohol addiction. The author with his obviously vast store of experiences could have dealt with more subtle kinds of betrayal.

I noted earlier that I believe that the book targets the wrong audience, those people who engage in self-destructive relationships. The author makes a point

of emphasizing how difficult it is for such people to change. It is naive to believe that reading this book will affect such change. True, the author occasionally alludes to the necessity of being in therapy but does not emphasize the point. It is highly unlikely that those people will have the patience and perseverance to complete all the inventories and lists mentioned in the book. It is also possible that readers in perfectly normal relationships may read and distort the meaning of the book in their minds and then see abuse and betrayal where there is none. The medical student syndrome is familiar to all of us.

Still, this book can be a marvelous adjunct to all clinicians and therapists. The concepts developed, the inventories, stress indices, and the exercises can be powerful additions to our repertoire.

RAY NAAR
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Newmark, Gerald (1999).*How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children.* Tarzana, CA: NMI Publishers.

Gerald Newmark is eminently qualified to write a book that provides some basic directions and insights required for effectively socializing children. He is a parent, an educator, and a behavioral scientist who has worked with schools and youth for more than 20 years. In brief, he has been in the combat zone of parent-child relationships.

Out of the morass of psychological concepts, screaming directions for proper child care, and religious prescriptions for bringing up Janie and Jake, Newmark has effectively culled out five critical emotional requirements that children need to have fulfilled if they are to grow up and become emotionally healthy adults. Those emotional needs are to feel respected, to feel important, to feel accepted, to feel included, and to feel secure.

In my direct work, using psychodrama and group psychotherapy with psychiatric patients, criminals, and neurotics, I find that Newmark's assumptions about those five critical needs illuminate the problems we deal with in psychotherapy. It is almost axiomatic that people who become emotionally ill and/or deviant have not received the critical emotional vitamins Newmark delineates as necessary in the effective socialization process of their childhood.

That emotional deficiency is crystal clear in the vast 1.7 million criminal population now doing time in America's jails and prisons. If one takes each of Newmark's critical emotional needs in order, one can recognize that people who grow up to be criminals had, in their early years, never been respected, made to feel important, accepted (in many cases, their parents rejected them

at birth), or included in law-abiding society. For all of those reasons, they have had insecure feelings all their lives. Those deficiencies in their lives have propelled them into lives of crime, drug addiction, and mental illness.

The issues that Newmark elaborates on in his erudite and fascinating book are very useful for diagnosing and treating a problem I have researched and worked on for almost 50 years—the violent gang problem. Youths who gravitate toward and join violent gangs are desperately searching to satisfy the critical emotional needs described by Newmark. In the gang, gangsters attempt to develop a pseudo-organization that they believe will give them some of the components of respect, acceptance, importance, and security. From my research, I have concluded that they are sucking on a dry emotional teat if they expect those needs to be met in a gang. If, as Newmark asserts, their critical needs had been fulfilled by their parents in their childhood, then they would not have been motivated to join self-and-other destructive violent gangs.

Although I recommend Dr. Newmark's book as useful in explaining deviant behavior and as a valuable book to be read by psychotherapists, it is essentially an outstanding parental cookbook for teaching average parents how to effectively raise their children to be happy, self-confident, and law-abiding citizens. In this regard, I believe the book provides an important guide for all parents. I predict that this book will be the highly accepted Dr. Spock manual for properly raising emotionally healthy children in the 21st Century.

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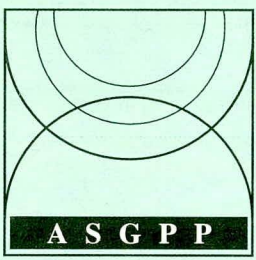

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