

## SOCIODRAMA AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

We conducted an action research with students of the Psychodrama Course, with the objective of identifying the characteristics valued by a researcher. With regard to Sociodrama as a method, we show especially the greater ease of collecting, analyzing and validating the data with the group itself, while also performing a critical analysis of the information obtained. Lastly, to acknowledge that this methodology allowed facilitated reflection, decision making and construction of coping strategies for the situations that the students themselves experienced as researchers.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychodrama; Research; Qualitative research; Action research.

## O SOCIODRAMA COMO METODOLOGIA DA PESQUISA

### RESUMO

Realizamos uma pesquisa-ação junto aos estudantes de um Curso de Psicodrama, com o objetivo de conhecer as características valorizadas para um pesquisador. Com relação ao Sociodrama como método, evidenciamos a facilidade de recolher, analisar e validar os dados com o próprio grupo, paralelamente a uma análise crítica das informações obtidas. Consideramos que essa metodologia facilitou a reflexão, a tomada de decisões e construção de estratégias de enfrentamento para as situações que os próprios estudantes vivenciavam enquanto pesquisadores.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Sociodrama; Pesquisa; Pesquisa qualitativa; Pesquisa-ação.

## SOCIODRAMA COMO METODOLOGÍA DE INVESTIGACIÓN

### RESUMEN

Realizamos una investigación acción, con estudiantes del Curso de Psicodrama, con el objetivo de conocer las características valoradas por un investigador. Destacamos el Sociodrama como método, especialmente, la mayor facilidad para recolectar, analizar y validar los datos con el propio grupo, en paralelo a un análisis crítico de la información obtenida. Finalmente, considerar que esta metodología facilitó la reflexión, la toma de decisiones y la construcción de estrategias de resolución de las situaciones que vivieron los propios estudiantes como investigador.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Sociodrama; Investigación; Investigación cualitativa; Indagación activa.

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## INTRODUCTION

“The invitation to research is, then, a scientific version of the *invitation to the encounter...*”  
(Brito, 2006, p. 31, our translation)

In conducting the present research, we directed our interest to sociodrama as a research methodology. Currently, the qualitative methodology is a reality practiced by recognized researchers in the academic environment. Moreno (2008) argued that the ontology of science and the objects of research are not the same in all sciences and are not always mere objects on which generalizations can be made. The author was already seeking recognition for his work in the category of scientific research.

We could not make the importance of sociodrama as a research methodology more explicit than Brito (2006, p. 39, our translation):

Moreno bequeathed a methodology that allows us to move between numbers, words, silences, and movements without ignoring static positions and graphic expressions. We can do research employing all the possibilities of human interaction, including the imaginary ones.

We have chosen to use the term “sociodrama” in the context of research methodologies because we find it so in several works by sociopsychodramatists. We can highlight the work of Nery (2010) that brings two very enlightening chapters in this regard: *O sociodrama: um método de intervenção e de pesquisa social* and *Análise de sociodrama para produção de conhecimento científico*.

Looking to the literature to support our claims that sociodrama is an important research strategy, we present the assertions of Figusch (2010), for whom sociodrama is an action research tool, in a qualitative research approach. Dramatic action, inherent in sociodrama, is the privileged means of understanding the development and transformation of groups.

The sociodramatic methodology makes it possible to clarify situations that are difficult to confront; it produces knowledge about the reality of a group or community and makes it possible to collect data as perceived by the people involved.

The advantages of using this methodology are: the effective participation of the subject; the search for autonomy; the analysis of one’s own actions in group work; the achievement of social roles; the evidence of the potentialities of the human being; the maintenance of sufficient and necessary depth for the understandings desired in the research (Ramos, 2008); in addition to the offer of support and empowerment in the face of the current problems of society (Iunes & Conceição, 2017).

The sociodramatic methodology facilitates the emergence of emotions, life stories, perceptions, among other subjective knowledge of the group, and in this process, paradoxically, greater objectification of the studied phenomenon may occur (Fleury & Marra, 2010). The issues of subjectivity, objectification, and neutrality of the researcher are often concerns of a research process, and the dynamics of the sociodramatic method will make it possible to highlight conflicts and overcoming strategies by the group.

Sociodrama, in working with interpersonal and group conflicts, seeks to give voice to the social actors and has the group as its subject. For their development, sociodramatists have at their disposal the entire legacy of the Morenian theory (Nery, 2010).

In addition to providing participation, this process of social transformation also brings with it the principle of the “here and now” or of the moment, as Rozados (2018) emphasizes.

Another aspect of sociodrama that favors research is that it allows data to be collected and evaluated continuously, integrated and together with the social actors themselves. This point is significant and valued by scholars in qualitative research (Gomes, 2015).

The research we conducted meets the points highlighted here by proposing its main objective to know the characteristics of the researcher from the point of view of the students in psychodramatic training.

Thus, our ultimate goal was to strengthen sociodramatic research, integrating theoretical and practical knowledge permeated by critical reflection.

## METHODOLOGY

We developed action research with a group of students of the Psychodrama Course – Levels I and II, to achieve the proposed objective during the Research Methodology Module. With seven students present, the group was interested in building a research project, one of the requirements for their degree; therefore, this was a subject of common interest. Other feelings expressed initially were also common: insecurity as researchers and the need to deepen knowledge in sociodramatic methodology.

The main data collection session was developed through the classic steps of sociodrama. During the specific warm-up, each participant was given cards on which they should write their reflections and pin them on posters, whose titles were already intended as the previous categories of analysis: “Competencies of a researcher”; “Personal characteristics/values of the researcher”; “Needs for transformations within the research”; and “Fears, insecurities, and difficulties faced by a researcher”.

At the end of the warm-up, we confirmed that the central theme of the sociodramatic session was the role of the researcher and that we also had the previous data regarding what it is to be a sociodramatic researcher from the point of view of the students themselves.

In the dramatization, considering the orientations of Merengué (2006), which differentiates dramatizations with investigative purposes, precisely by the objective cut made beforehand, we sought to validate the data collected in the previous step regarding what it is to be a researcher. Thus, the group members were invited to occupy the chair in the center of the stage with the following title: “The desired place—a researcher who uses sociodrama as a methodology to research with spontaneity, creativity and freedom”. Three students took turns occupying the chair, and the director asked them, in the form of an interview, if they agreed with the statements posted on each of the posters and if they wanted to change, add, or remove any items. The audience also participated by suggesting and questioning. So, we had the data validated, pondered, and analyzed together with the group. The data resulting in this phase were distributed across the four posters, which constituted the categories of analysis.

In the sharing, feelings about participating in the activity, which was primarily positive, were presented. Completing the session, in the theoretical processing, we present and discuss sociodrama as a research methodology, with its main characteristics already described in the introduction of this work.

The specific warm-up, role-playing, and sharing steps were audio and video recorded, with the consent of the participants, who also signed the Informed Consent Form.

During all the stages, the director (researcher) carried out the participant observation and, during the dramatization, used the interview as a dialogical technique, promoting the most outstanding participation of the group elements.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The data presented here can be viewed from two different but integrated angles:

1. From the point of view of the chosen problematic in the reported sociodrama—the sociodramatic researcher, whose main results are visualized through the previously proposed categories;
2. From the point of view of sociodrama as a research methodology, whose data analysis and discussion will permeate the presentation of the sociodrama session developed with the students.

Initially, we found that the proposed theme for sociodrama was of interest to the group, that is, they were the actors in the process of building and recognizing their capabilities as sociopsychodramatist researchers.

Among the various principles Gomes (2015) indicated for qualitative data analysis, two especially marked the beginning of our analysis: contextualizing actors and valuing accounts validated by the actors themselves.

Below, we present the four previously proposed categories, accompanied by some transcripts that the group confirmed:

1. Researcher's skills: study, knowledge, communication:  
*"I am studious, I like to read, I possess good communication skills (emission, reception and perception), I understand technology tools, I am interested, determined, I have technology skills".* During the role-play, it received the following addition: *"I have good resourcefulness in directing/acting"*.
2. Researcher's characteristics/values: ethics, empathic understanding, respect, determination, and dedication:  
*"I am ethical, I am joyful, I propose new things, I judge less, I encourage the different. I try to make suggestions in a free manner. I am an understanding person. Respect. Empathy"; "Love to write and research, determination, commitment to developing good work"*.
3. Need for transformations within research: production, dissemination, more flexible sharing spaces with spontaneity:  
*"Publish/record/report experienced encounters, proposals, discoveries, reformulations. Create a habit of writing/publishing, sharing"; "Contribute to reflection on the training of psychodramatists. Collaborate to have more spaces for discussion and construction of the method"; "In the academic-research environment: less rigidity and more spontaneity"*.
4. Fears, insecurities and difficulties that researchers face: not being able to transmit what they want; external criticism; blocking:  
*"Criticism by fellow psychodramatists. Not having structured or stalling at some point"*.

Through sociodrama, it was possible to justify the statements. For example, one student explained why she thought it was important for the researcher to have joy: *"...for people to come forward, to put their true ideas, joy helps. When I participate with my joy, there is an invitation for people to share their ideas"*.

Sociodrama, as a method of action, provided information beyond the words spoken; body movements also manifested important information. In analyzing the data, the audience freely communicated if they agreed, if they wanted to add, subtract, or modify anything in the posted statements.

We could also notice a rich exchange of information and, at the same time, desire for openness: *"...I can share with you... the dance... all artistic expression... the look of anthroposophy... the painting... you are stimulating various places, various senses that can help you as a researcher being..."*.

The debate held also allowed for reflection, recognition, and respect for differences, for example, in the statement, *"It's quite particular, I put that one in, because for me it's important: online psychodrama"*.

Several expressions of satisfaction with the information produced are worth noting: *"I'm feeling more and more like a researcher"; "How wonderful!"; "Oh, I loved it"; "We're the psychodrama lovers, right?"*.

In sharing desires for transformation, they also disagreed and clarified terms. For example, they proposed changing the term "psychotherapeutic" to "therapeutic" to broaden and include those who were not psychologists. Sociodrama is seen as a method that facilitates inclusion and the consideration of the other as a subject and actor.

Through the observed dialogues, it was found that the group had integrated its own objective: to research, report, and disseminate the experiences.

However, they wanted to transform the research method: *"write down what you think, what was left for you, what you think about it... you accept being able to dialogue with the authors"*.

The group went over their fears and insecurities regarding being a researcher, and they came to terms with them. Nevertheless, in the course of the debate, they considered the fears more as challenges to be faced: *“This is not a risk, it is a reality... because we are researching reality in dynamic... movement... the project has to be designed with the journey... this versatility is given in our own training in psychodrama”* and *“that will enrich our practice.... that’s very interesting—the flexibility”*.

Moving towards the end of the session, it was possible to perceive the evolution of the understanding of sociodrama as a research methodology, as well as the recognition of the skills needed for the role of researcher and the incorporation of the concepts and theory: *“I was able to position myself further ahead... until now we were in role-playing, now comes the role-creating... create...”*.

These results aligned with what Moreno presented: a science of action begins with two verbs—to be and to create—and with three nouns—actors, spontaneity, and creativity (Moreno, 2008).

The sharing was in the sense of stimulating the development of work, recognizing the importance of sociodrama for the resolution of the group’s own issues, as we verify in the following transcriptions:

*“This is important for my development process... even in this we must have autonomy...”*; *“It gave me excitement, it made me want to read, start writing, search for information to read... it’s coming in a very nice construction, both from these classes, as well as from others... the ideas are clearing up”*; *“The exchange was very good, it helps a lot”*.

In the case reported here, the group members were more encouraged and motivated to develop their role as sociodramatic researchers, highlighting two of the method’s main advantages: its transformative potentiality and the recognition of the participants as subjects of this transformation. Other potentialities of the method (spontaneity, creativity, group interaction, learning) align with the results found in action research within psychodramatic pedagogy developed by Sombrio and Bond (2018).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sociodrama as an action methodology pushed for transformative action. It strengthened the group and showed ways, solutions to the issues and conflicts presented by the group itself. No less important is to highlight that it allowed the group to self-recognize their skills and values, such as: interest, dedication, empathy, ethics, communication skills, among others.

The use of sociodrama allowed the data to be collected, discussed, and validated with the group in a construct that interested the participants. The sociodramatic method also promoted achievements, creations, and transformations, culminating in recognizing motivation and skills to investigate, which resulted in a manifestly recognized satisfaction.

*“The main attribute of science must be its permanent willingness to self-study and to disagree with itself”*  
(Moreno, 2008, p. 81, our translation).

## AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Feijó N, Ferracini L; Investigation: Feijó N, Writing – Original Draft: Feijó N, Ferracini L.

## AVAILABILITY OF RESEARCH DATA

Data will be provided upon request.

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