

# *Sociodrama of projecting the future with young settlers: meetings and farewells<sup>1</sup>*

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents the analysis of a sociodramatic projection of the future carried out with young people from a settlement located on the coast of Ceará. A sociodramatic group was formed in a high school in the countryside. They longed to continue their studies and practice a profession that enable them to obtain a higher income, but for this purpose they would have to study in other cities. These young people are rooted in the place where they live and the people with whom they live, because everyone expressed a desire to return to their cities, once they have finished their studies. Public policies can expand or limit future projects for young people by enabling them to stay in rural areas. In particular, this study brings reflections on the contribution of sociodrama to the communities.

**Keywords:** social groups, role-playing, youth, human migration, rural environments

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Maceió Settlement is the first land reform project in the Coastal area of the State of Ceará (Lima, Cajado & Esmeraldo, 2010), conquered by the union of its residents, mobilized by the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs), a Catholic Church movement.

In 1985, the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra) expropriated an area of 5,844 hectares in order to form this settlement, located about 140 kilometers from Fortaleza and 50 kilometers from the center of Itapipoca. Its population is estimated in one thousand families (Soares, n.d.). The main economic activities of the community are: small businesses, agriculture, livestock, fishing and handicraft, all of them made by the families.

There are currently threats posed by the deployment of wind energy and fish production on an industrial scale, which differ from the community's way of life, and as a form of resistance there are partnerships with NGOs, such as Terramar, and religious organizations, such as the Congregação de Notre Dame, which carry out actions to develop awareness of these kind of problems in the communities.

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## SOCIODRAMATIC PROJECTION OF THE FUTURE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

From this point on, I chose to write in the first person singular, considering that this article is an “incarnate research”, as Merengué (2006) uses such term, which is opposed to a bureaucratic writing: “the experience taught me not to quarrel with human passions and desires, but to try to integrate them into the project as a driving force that motivates a research” (p. 69, our translation). I have visited the high school of the settlement once a week for about a year, in a process of participant observation, as a research activity of doctorate on young people of that settlement.

At the end of this period, as part of a specialization monograph on Psychodrama, I have elaborated the following research question to be presented in this article: How do young settlers project their future in a context of struggle and resistance to maintain their fundamental rights, as the right to housing, to the permanence on the land and to their way of life? In addition to emphasizing their fundamental rights, in the face of few work opportunities in their place of origin, this research aimed at analyzing if these young people have imagined to work in their own settlement, in the economic activities that are developed there, or to migrate searching for other opportunities that enabled them to improve their financial condition.

According to Weil (2001), taking roots is one of the most important human needs: “a human being is rooted in his real, active and natural participation in the existence of a community that preserves certain treasures of the past and certain hunches of the future alive” (p. 43, our translation). In the assemblies in the community settlement, I observed, as a researcher and psychologist, the adults’ concern about the young people’s departure from the conquered land.

To answer some questions about how young people projected their future, I chose to carry out a sociodramatic group in the high school of the settlement. Group activity with young people has been reported as promoting spontaneity and creativity (Gonçalves & Gomes, 2013, Hadler, 2010, Leão, 1999, Mazzotta, 2010, Pitzele, 1992; Vale, 2009).

The origin of sociodrama had social motivations, according to Moreno’s (1997) actions, when he worked with a group of sex workers, in which he problematized the difficulty of exercising citizenship, the absence of civil rights, a discourse in line with current debates in human rights area, as mentioned by Zakabi (2014).

Buchbinder (1996) considers adolescence as a transition zone and that the attitude of each society can enlarge or limit the creativity of the adolescent. This author uses as an example the years of dictatorship in his country: “The years of dictatorship limited, in Argentina, that place of transition and creativity that, in order to survive, had to reach some particular exits” (p. 215, our translation).

Moreno (1959) describes the method of projecting the future, which he considers fruitful in youth, when fantasies concerning the future exist more intensely. Contemporary authors of Psychodrama developed a method for projecting the future and adapted it to their clinical experience (Bannister, 1992; Crelier, 1993; Cukier, 1992).

In his clinical experience, Buchbinder (2005) observes more often three styles of dramatization, which he called “happy ending”, “tragic” and “Beckettian”. The happy ending style refers to American musical comedies and the pursuit of illusion in relation to problems. In the tragic style, which contrasts with the constant search for joy, characteristic of consumer society, everything seems to be destroyed. The Beckettian style refers to Beckett’s plays, which are unstructured and ambiguous.

The invitation to participate in the sociodramatic group on projection of the future, described and analyzed in this article, was extended to all students of the mentioned school, lasting about one hour, since the group made this time available at lunchtime on a full-day period. This group approached what Moreno (1959) named as a *therapeutic act*, that is, with a

beginning, middle and end in only one session. The recording of this session was done in a field diary soon after its completion. Students data are described in Table 1. Students' names are fictitious in order to maintain their confidentiality.

The invitation was accepted by seven persons: six students and one alumnus, who at the time of the research worked at school. Participants were 15-19 years old and most of them – five – were girls.

**Table 1.** Description of the sociodramatic group participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Grade in High School</b>
Fernanda	15	Second
Taís	16	Second
Cíntia	16	Second
Charlene	16	Second
Beatriz	19	High School graduate
João	17	Second
Pedro	18	Third

To make this projection of the future, the technique of *re-plotting*, created by Arnaldo Liberman, according to Sergio Perazzo (1999), was chosen. Re-plotting is a sociodramatic technique that aims at working with the group co-consciousness, so that its contents can emerge and be worked by all. For this purpose, the group of participants is divided into subgroups, and there are three moments of creation for these subgroups. The first moment consists of a “brainstorming”, in which each subgroup freely writes the associations of words and ideas related to a certain theme. In the second moment, the subgroups exchange their notes and create a scene based on them. Finally, as a third moment, the subgroups play the scene created by another subgroup. Thus, it is intended that the subgroups can work with the content created by other subgroups.

Originally, because of these three moments, this technique is worked out in three subgroups and is mediated by what is commonly used in Psychodrama: warm-up, dramatization, and sharing. As there were few people in the group, the division was made only into two subgroups and the technique was adapted, resulting in a creative and spontaneous moment of the young people, meeting the research objectives.

For a non-specific warm-up, the coordinator asked the participants to present themselves, writing down only their characterization data. I asked them about what their

expectations were, and basically the answer was: *“Listen to others and receive guidance to decide better and have a good future”*. Then, each one was asked to hold an imaginary ball, a warm-up based on the games presented by Yozo (1996), following the first phase of the matrix, me-me. As they were shy and withdrawn, they were asked to imagine a ball of energy and to carry it from one side to the other, an adaptation according to the experience of the coordinator, a Tai Chi Chuan practitioner. Spontaneously, the participants began to throw the energy ball at each other, like the attacks in a movie or a cartoon, which indicated that they were already moving into the second phase of the matrix, when it is possible to interact with the other, me-you.

We went on to the specific warm-up, with an exercise using again the first phase of the matrix, me-me: *“Walk like you are in 2019”*, five years ahead: *“How are you? What has it changed? Where do my feet step in 2019? Who is around me? Am I in the same clothes?”*. After that moment, I asked them to walk as if they were in 2024, ten years ahead. One of the girls, Beatriz, walked like she was pregnant, showing that she was really imagining herself in the future.

Next, I divided the young people into two groups – one with four members and the other with three. They were invited to sit down on the floor and I gave each one a sheet of paper and a marker. Then I asked them to write on the paper: *“When I think about my future, what comes to my head?”*. The participants became thoughtful, so I asked them to write the first idea that came to their mind. Then, I asked them to exchange the notes with the other group and to write a scene to be played based on the words they had received. After about five minutes, I asked them to exchange their notes again: *“Now I would like you to dramatize the scene that you have received”*.

The two groups dramatized two daughters saying goodbye to their parents to study in other cities: one to attend university and the other to join the Navy.

Here is the dramatization of the first scene:

*Characters:* father, mother and daughter.

*Setting:* home.

*First act:* Daughter tells her parents that she wants to attend university. Then she moves to another city.

*Second act:* Mother asks father what he has prepared for lunch, and father answers: *“Chicken”*. They have lunch, mother chokes and feels sick.

*End of scene.*

I asked the group that have created and watched the scene: *“You people that have created this scene, would you like to change anything?”*. One of the spectator, Charlene, told us that their daughter would come back when she knew that her mother was sick. So, I asked her to play the role of the daughter.

Daughter calls her parents to ask if everything was ok. Father says that it is fine, and mother shouts: *“Do not worry our daughter!”*. Daughter tells father that she will always be there and, whenever they need her, she will go back.

*New end of scene.*

I asked the audience: *“Do you want to make any comments? And ask the characters*

*about anything?”*. Since no one wanted to talk, I said: *“Let’s watch the second scene!”*.

*Characters:* father, mother and daughter.

*Setting:* home.

*Act 1:* Daughter tells her parents that she wants to join the Navy.

*Act 2:* Daughter moves to another city, a teacher receives her and asked her if she really wants to join the Navy. And she says yes.

*Act 3:* After a few years, daughter receives her certificate, goes back to her parents’ house and shows them her certificate.

*End of scene.*

As well as to the first group, I asked the group that have created and watched the scene if they would like to change something. And they said no.

Both characters in these scenes thought of coming back after graduating. Also, in the scenes, a concern was expressed that parents would be sick and children would be far away to help them – a role-reversal position of those who usually care for and those who are cared. This is an indication that the children in this community care for the health of their parents or guardians, which I could also hear in conversations with the young people during my visits to the school.

After that, we moved to the last moment of the group, sharing. I asked: *“Have you enjoyed to join this group?”*. The participants were very pleased to know that they have projects and concerns in common. Some of them have reported that they have been able to reflect more on what they would like to accomplish in the future and the challenges they would face. They were careful with each other, praising those who have exposed their projects.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The images brought in this group demonstrate the potential of sociodrama to set scenes that, in their plasticity and aesthetic strength, synthesize experiences lived individually and collectively, and especially the technique of re-plotting. This experience portrayed the matrix, according to Amato (2002) and Bustos (2005), the subjects’ existential response related to their feelings, to community situations lived, which reflect the way society is structured.

The greater female presence in the mentioned group may have been due to the identification with me, the coordinator, but also because this is an intimate activity, and women are culturally socialized to share intimacy, while men occupy a public space, as it was also observed in the activities carried out in a low-income community by Figueiredo and Ayres (2002).

Although dramatization in this sociodramatic group has been associated with the tragic, according to the modalities exposed by Buchbinder (2005), I consider that the end of the scenes came closer to the Brecht theater, as Gonçalves Filho (2004) analyzes. According to this author, the Brechtian theater does not offer an end, when the situation is not resolved in real life; in this way, it does not offer an easy and illusory answer and it provides a transforming and creative potential of reality itself. Glimpsing a project for the future can be difficult because of the imagined suffering occasioned by young people’ s departure from their place of origin and

being separated from their family to study abroad and achieve a better living condition.

Bessa (2010) reports that low-income young people from Fortaleza are concerned to help parents financially, which runs counter to the common-sense view of carefree and irresponsible young people.

The longing and concern felt by parents or guardians of the young people that study in other cities, on the other hand, appeared in studies in rural communities (Albuquerque, Coelho & Vasconcelos, 2004; Schapuiz & Hadler, 2013).

As previously mentioned, according to Buchbinder (1996), society can expand or limit the creativity of adolescents in this phase of transition between childhood and adult life. In the case of the young people studied, there is a fear of losing their land ownership and degradation of the environment around them, which would force their permanent migration.

What attracted the most attention in this sociodramatic group was the degree of rooting of the young people in their community of origin and in their families. Even when they think about graduating in other cities and working in areas other than their parents', they also think about the possible contribution they can bring to their community, which they consider to be the extension of their own home; in this way, Gonçalves Filho (1998) declares: "Being at home is to be in others, it is to be in yourself even being in others" (p. 3, our translation).

It should be highlighted that the expanded understanding of a single therapeutic act was only possible by insertion into the community, in a research during a certain period of time, about a year, in which I was prepared to transform and be transformed by continuous coexistence, in a relationship of interlocution, according to Schmidt's (2006) ethical considerations. This analysis can contribute to the formation of psychologists, strengthen and guide the actions carried out by governmental, non-governmental organizations and religious institutions, by providing a psychological and reflective look at the future projects of young settlers and nearby communities.

To conclude this study, I quote the excerpt of a cordel literature created by an activist of the Maceió Settlement, Maria da Paz dos Santos (n.d.), which illustrates the process of struggle and resistance so that this history can be recalled and reconstructed. Moreover, I emphasize the importance of people who work in different areas, such as in the academic area, to strengthen the community: "Look, dear listeners, how I finish the story, there is no conquest without struggle, there is no struggle without victory, there is no war without battle, sometimes the mind fails, but keep that in mind". (p. 17, our translation).

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