

The psychodramatic auxiliary ego: Effects of prior personal acquaintance with a role, role play ability and training on the quality of role reversal

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Psychodrama is a group therapy method that incorporates elements from the world of theatre in order to raise "here and now" meaningful scenes from the life of the group members. Role reversal is a central technique in psychodrama where the "protagonist" plays a role that is not his; while an "auxiliary ego"- a participant chosen from within the group - performs this role for the protagonist.

Three research questions were derived in the study regarding the auxiliary ego: (1) Is the quality of role reversal influenced by a personal acquaintance with the required role? (2) Do role play ability and role reversal quality correlate? (3) Does training in role reversal improve this skill? These questions were evaluated using a role reversal questionnaire designed to assess the quality of the role reversal that was especially developed in this work. Thirty-three social work students participated in a weekly role reversal training program for 12 meetings.

The findings of this study are: (1) No correlation was found between the personal acquaintance with a role and the auxiliary's quality of role reversal, (2) No correlation was found between role play ability and role reversal quality, and (3) An improvement in role reversal occurred throughout the training process among the directors and the auxiliaries, but not the protagonists.

The conclusions drawn are: (1) Personal acquaintance with a role does not directly influence an auxiliary's action in role reversal, (2) Role play ability does not directly influence an auxiliary's action in role reversal, and (3) Role reversal can and should be taught and trained in order to improve its quality.

This work elaborates on the empirical basis of the psychodramatic approach and technique, and raises further hypotheses for future studies.

Keywords: Psychodrama, role reversal, role play, auxiliary ego, role.

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