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**The Embodied Mandala Method as an Assessment Tool in Drama Therapy**

**Nisha Sajnani**

**A Research Paper**

**In**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Embodied Mandala Method as an Assessment Tool in Drama Therapy**

**Nisha Sajnani**

The Embodied Mandala method evolved out of the Mandala method proposed by Dr. Sue Jennings as a viable structure to explore the self. This research is an exploration of the connection between embodiment, projection and role to the mandala structure and is intended as an integrated mind/body approach to understanding the self. The proposed methodology has been explored with adolescents seen individually and in a group format. Applications of this method for assessment within drama therapy as well as cross-cultural adaptability are discussed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **Introduction**

Drama therapy as a clinical profession is in its adolescence. It is a hybrid child of two established fields: psychology and theatre (Johnson, & Lewis, 2000). It has been developed and applied across various populations and settings and has been defined through a myriad of eclectic approaches (Johnson & Lewis, 2000). These stem from theoretical paradigms as unique as the individual practitioner. The adolescent in search of identity underscores this research and is, in my opinion, reflective of the youth of this profession.

In postulating the definition of drama therapy, I have been developing as an individual practitioner in order to separate myself from the parental body of theory and practice and isolate those ideologies with which I resonate in the hopes of further maturing the profession. In order to discuss the evolution of a methodology such as I am proposing ,and to begin the process of conscious development, guiding influences, concepts, postulates, and constructs for validity must be identified (Johnson, &Lewis, 2000).



This research paper will explore the developing connection between the processes of embodiment, projection and role to the mandala, or 'dramatic structure of the mind', as proposed by Sue Jennings (1998) as a viable structure for the exploration of the self. I will argue the necessity for the inclusion of embodiment in this exploration to extend the capacity for this symbol to engage the participant in an exploration of a holistic representation of the self. The emerging methodology will be referred to as the Embodied Mandala method.

An argument for the development of methods which account for both the mind and body will provide the rationale for the emerging methodology which seeks to combine the proposed 'dramatic structure of the mind' with processes of embodiment, projection and role. This will be presented in the context of the Creative-Expressive model of Drama therapy (Cattanach, 1994) as well as Jennings' (1990) Embodiment -Projection - Role developmental paradigm. For the purposes of this research, the emerging methodology will be explored with the adolescent population. A discussion of the applicability of this method within this population as indicated by current developmental theorists will also be included.

In Chapter 1, a discussion of the body's capacity for symbolic communication will be presented. The body, in this research, is considered an important component of identity formation. The acquisition of increased perspective, or an objective understanding of the self, will be accessed through the participant's subjective experience of physically engaging with the mandala structure. This will be enhanced through an integrated mind/body approach as the participant's whole being will be engaged in the process. An overview of the uses of the mandala structure in therapy as well as current applications of the mandala structure in drama therapy will be discussed.

Chapters 2 through 4 will provide an outline for the Embodied Mandala method grounded in case material. The process of measuring the viability of the method will be based on Mala Betensky's (1995) approach to phenomenological research in the art therapies. The research process will contain elements of hermeneutic phenomenology in that the experience of the Embodied Mandala method may be regarded as interpretative. Participants are invited to engage in active clarification of the terms present in the mandala structure (Heidigger, cited Betensky, 1995). From the point of view of descriptive phenomenology, objective meanings of these terms will arise from reflecting on the subjective experience of the Embodied Mandala. The viability of the proposed method as a vehicle to explore the self will be determined through the participants' subjective account of the experience of the Embodied Mandala.

In chapter 5, applications of this method as an assessment tool will be discussed in relation to current approaches within drama therapy with groups and individuals. I will conclude with a discussion of the potential applications of this methodology cross-culturally insofar as it was applied to the cultural backgrounds of the participants.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review**

Sue Jennings' articulation of the Creative-Expressive model of drama therapy has as its focus the healthy aspects of a person. The treatment goal, in this model, is to enable the participant to discover their own creative potential (Cattanach, 1994). The model emphasizes the use of developmental play through the dramatic exploration of embodiment, projection and role, which are core processes in drama therapy (Jones, 1996). I shall present the guiding influences of this model found in specific philosophies of theatre and psychology. A discussion on the value of the body in defining the self will also be included as it relates to the proposed methodology. An examination of these influences provides the backdrop for the emergence of the Embodied Mandala method.

### **Influences in Theatre**

The Creative Expressive model finds its roots in a theatre model of drama therapy. Jennings (cited in Meldrum, 1994, p.22) describes theatre as a "direct experience, where people encounter each other in a set space at a given time ...where someone may behave as if they were something other than themselves". Jennings equates the drama therapist to the "facilitative director"(p.23) which is echoed by Mitchell(1990) and Meldrum (1994), other drama therapists influenced by the theatre model.

The role of the drama therapist is to facilitate the client's inspection of real challenges within a "theatrical reality"(Meldrum,1994, p.23), to enlarge the client's perspective and ability to reflect, and to encourage the development of social responsibility, or empathy, through the use of theatre as metaphor.

The main process involved in the theatre model is that of dramatic and aesthetic distance which is manipulated by the drama therapist by means of a dramatic metaphor (Meldrum,1994, Jones,1996). A metaphor, in drama therapy, is the fictional vehicle through which internal and external experiences may be explored and assimilated. The metaphor, or story chosen in the drama therapy session, does not lend itself to interpretation but, by its nature, allows the client to travel between objective and subjective reality, from the microcosm of the self to the macrocosm of one's external environment ( Emunah,1994).

The metaphor may be a story, script, or symbol and, by its nature, provides a degree of distance between the participant and the subject matter being explored in drama therapy. Jones (1996) explains dramatic distance with reference to the ideas of two influential theatre practitioners and theorists. The first, Stanislavski, emphasized an individual's experience to inform role. He challenged his actors to access their personal reservoirs of experience in developing as actors (Stanislavski, cited in Jones,1996).

His influence sparked reaction from Bertholt Brecht, among others, “who explored the concepts of distance, cognition, and insight (Johnson, & Lewis, 2000). Bertholt Brecht’s ‘Verfremdunseffekt’ suggested that the actor not allow himself to be completely transformed on the stage into the character he is playing (Brecht, cited in Jones, 1996). The Stanislavskian approach emphasizes emotional expression and release, an under-distanced approach, whereas the Brechtian approach emphasizes emotional containment and the development of the observing self, an over-distanced approach. The manipulation of distance is primary to the process of drama therapy (Emunah, 1994).

Jones (1996) suggests that the manipulation of dramatic distancing in drama therapy encourages an involvement which is more oriented toward reflection and the acquisition of perspective. The actor, or participant, does not become disengaged but is able to engage in several perspectives of the same ‘scene’, which can catalyze the experience of a perceptual shift within the container of the metaphor employed. These concepts are fundamental to the method being explored in that the distance created within the metaphor of the mandala facilitates a conscious reflection of personal experience.

## **Influences in Psychology**

I believe that Jennings' articulation of the Creative-Expressive model resonates most readily with a humanistic, person-centered approach to well-being. Humanistic psychology has had a significant impact on the field of drama therapy as it articulates the value of the self-actualizing processes employed in this field (Emunah, 1994). This approach to psychology addresses the fullness of human potential for creativity, art, spirituality, self-realization, and transformation, all of which are echoed in Jennings' model.

The Creative-Expressive model places emphasis on the unique skills and capacities of members within the group as a means of increasing self-esteem and a heightened sense of self (Cattanach,1994). The Creative-Expressive model employs the "skills that are available in the group emphasizing what each individual can achieve and how that skill can be integrated with the skills of the rest of the group (Cattanach, 1994,p.141)". This is echoed by Maslow (1968), Rogers(1951), Buhler(1962), May(1975), Moustakas (1967), who, as humanistic psychologists, frame their work on models of health rather than pathology and view human nature as "intrinsically good and healthy" (Emunah,1996,p.27).

The Creative-Expressive model of drama therapy draws upon one's "spontaneity, playfulness, expressiveness, resourcefulness, imagination, humor, empathy, and childlikeness" (Emunah,,1994,p.28). These qualities evoke creativity and promote self-actualization, defined by Maslow as the state of being fully-functioning.

This movement towards growth and health underlies Jennings' concept of well-being which is postulated as the "balance of internal states" (Jennings, 1998,p.125) She views the task of the drama therapist as enabling "vulnerable people...to restore their internal balance" (1998,p.125). The creative self is integral to the restoration of an internal balance. This is supported by Adler (cited in Hooper, and Holford, 1998)who regarded people as having an internal faculty for change but saw it as a continual process of achieving balance through the cultivation of creativity rather than a final end.

According to Maslow ( cited in Emunah,1994), the creative self is characterized by the ability to be spontaneous. This is a trait employed when one confronts one of two innate forces: fear of the unknown, and the desire to grow and change. Jennings articulates this as the need for both risk and ritual in daily living and in the drama therapy session which is "ritualistic in form and structure and acts as a container for exploration and risk taking" (Jennings,1998, p.126).



The Creative- Expressive model seems to reflect the statement that “we have within us a nature and potential that we can actualize and through which we can find meaning (Corey, cited in Emunah, 1994,p.26).” In this way, trust is placed in the client’s capabilities, and freedom of choice rather than the sole expertise of the facilitator or therapist (Emunah, 1994).

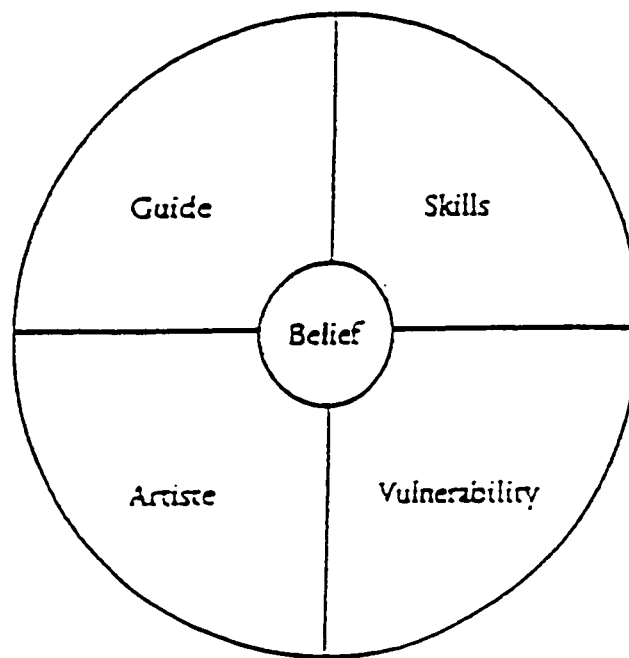
Maslow (1968), one of the founders of humanistic psychology, states that “we both discover and uncover ourselves and also decide on what we shall be”(p.13).

The reliance on the subjective experience of the participant apparent in the Creative- Expressive model of drama therapy serves to engage the client in the co-construction of their individual perspective with the therapist and other group members. This is echoed in narrative approaches to therapy which regard human beings as ‘meaning-making’ agents (Lax,1999). This research places emphasis on internal resources for creativity and spontaneity as they relate to the ability for one to attribute meaning to experience, meaning which cannot be permanently captured but shifts according to circumstance, time, and space.

## The Mandala Method

Sue Jennings (1998) created the Mandala method as an approach through which a person might examine a holistic image of their life. The image of the mandala serves to externalize a balance of internalized states of being. The goal of therapy, according to Jennings, is to enable the restoration of an awareness of this balance. Jennings' mandala of the 'dramatic structure of the mind' counters the medical model of symptom reduction and aims to address all aspects of a person rather than just the deficiencies.

**Diagram 1**



*Dramatic Structure of the Mind*

She identifies the internal states of a person as the guide, the skilled person, the artist and the vulnerable person. These four states are all linked to a belief system that is at the core of the diagram which, according to Jennings, could be representative of one's ethical, religious or philosophical stance. This core belief influences the four states which surround it. These states are represented in the diagram of a circle, or mandala, divided into four quadrants with a smaller circle in the middle. This diagram is used as a basis for exploration within the drama therapy process as participants fill in the drawn mandala with symbols and words which express their relation to each section. Jennings suggests that the drawn mandala can serve as a springboard into further dramatic explorations and as an excellent assessment tool to assist in the design of a series of drama therapy sessions(1998).

## **Embodiment, Projection and Role : A Developmental paradigm**

My intention is to supplement Jennings' holistic approach to therapeutic intervention and move towards a more integrative approach within the inclusion of embodiment in the mandala structure. Current perspectives on the development of the mind and body in the treatment of an individual will be presented to support my rationale for this inclusion.

Jennings (1990) proposed the Embodiment-Projection-Role Developmental paradigm (EPR) as a way of understanding dramatic development. This paradigm addresses the need for an integrative approach to therapy in that it recognizes the presence of the body as an intricate and invaluable component of the self. Jennings suggests that human beings progress through a developmental sequence of embodiment, projection, and role in drama therapy.

The first stage is embodiment and refers to the beginning of body-self awareness. Embodiment, in Jennings' paradigm refers to the sensory process by which a child understands the world around them (1995). The inclusion of embodiment is stressed by several prominent theorists in drama and drama therapy. Courtney(1986) emphasized the importance of the relationship between the body, change, action and drama. Jones (1996) has also established the benefits of engaging both the mind and body in a process of change and discovery.

He suggests that physicalization in therapy allows clients to experience their issues in the 'here and now' and serves the more pragmatic function of preparing the client for conscious reflection.

Several developmental theorists also validate the integration of body and psyche. In speaking of the ego, initially forged as a body ego, Freud formulated a basic developmental theme of maturational evolution. He argued that bodily processes are an indispensable foundation for the nascent self and the developing ego (Mcnaughten, 1998). The integration of the body and psyche as a developmental process is also a basic tenet in Piaget's theory of representation, where all learning processes develop from early sensory motor phases of exploration (Stern, 1985). These theorists place high importance on the development of self-awareness through an awareness and use of the body.

As the child progresses to exploration of their external environment "there is a noticeable shift from earlier embodiment play to projective play" (Jennings, 1995, p. 97). Jennings describes this phase as marked by a child's shift of focus to objects around them which become imbued with meaning. This concept is echoed by Winnicott's theory of the transitional object which becomes 'representative' of something else, be it security or an imaginary friend (cited in Jones, 1996). Winnicott described the first special possession adopted by a child as having special significance as the first 'not me' possession.

During the projective play stage, the child develops the capacity to imagine things as they are and as they might be, to form concepts and attribute symbolic meaning to objects(Jennings, 1995). Jones (1996) equates the ability to project to the ability to access one's material in therapy. He states that projection "enables a dramatic dialogue to take place between the child's internally held situation ...and the external expression of that situation"(p.101).

Yalom(1985) describes projection as an unconscious process which consists of "projecting one's own (but disowned) attributes onto another...as a form of defense"(p.131). While Yalom refers to the use of projection in psychotherapy as a form of unconscious defense, Landy, (cited in Jones1996) emphasizes the conscious, expressive utility of projection in drama therapy. He states that projection is used to create a "balanced form of therapeutic dramatisation"(p.131). This perspective is supported by Jones (1996) who suggests that drama therapy emphasizes projection as a tool which enables a client to "create, discover, and engage with external representations of inner conflicts"(p.132). In a similar vein, Cattanaach (1994) maintains that the play of children extends into 'make-believe' play in which roles develop initially as a representation of self and then gradually into the self as other.

The use of role in drama therapy is emphasized by several drama therapists.

Jones(1996), states that the taking on of various identities in drama therapy provides a dramatic distance from which one can experiment with alternative ways of using the body as a source of resilience and creativity. This idea is elaborated upon by Landy (1994) who suggests that an interrelated, integrated role system, where one has access to healthy roles to balance those which are vulnerable, constitutes good mental health. Engagement in the dramatic processes of embodiment, projection and role primes participants for an in-depth reflection upon the self(Jennings, 1995), and provide a plethora of possibilities for direction in drama therapy.

### **Relevance to the adolescent population**

The EPR paradigm emphasizes the evolution of dramatic development within the therapeutic process in drama therapy. It also provides a framework from which to view developmental transitions. Adolescence is marked by profound physical, psychological, and cognitive changes which can create uncertainty and instability. Erikson(1968) uses the phrase 'storm puberty' to explain the adolescent period as one of coming to terms with new challenges in a time of crisis, in which unresolved conflicts of earlier stages emerge.

Erikson discussed the adolescent stage in child development as being one marked by 'identity vs. role confusion'. The unresolved conflicts at this stage of development can manifest as "isolation marked by self-doubt, role inhibition and a sense of futility" as opposed to "mutual recognition, a will to be oneself, an anticipation of roles, and the ability to identify tasks"(Erikson,1968,p.128). Although their need to express and communicate their world is great, the adolescent may not have yet acquired the capacity to verbally articulate what they think and feel. Added to this is the need to reflect with perspective and distance on one's thoughts and feelings in order to elicit viable change in thought and action. Jennings (1995) describes the adolescent struggle with "identity and selfhood where young people are expected to make choices about their future in terms of relationships and occupations but are often not allowed to act upon those choices" (p.99).

A response to the need to explore choices is also found among the plethora of techniques available in drama therapy which seem to echo the Adlerian 'as-if' theory, an action- oriented approach derived from Vaihinger's theory of 'fictions'. These approaches are used to provide an alternate identity; a different type of self-image, for the purpose of increasing self-confidence and expanding one's ability to conceptualize alternate possibilities (Adler cited in Hooper and Holford (1998). Drama therapy lends itself to this process with its emphasis on 'rehearsal for living' (Emunah, 1994).



Indeed, drama therapy is postulated as being a viable intervention with the adolescent population by many current researchers and theorists in drama therapy and related creative art therapies (Emunah, 1985,1990, 1994,Dequine and Pearson- Davis, 1983, Jennings and Gersie, 1987, Pitzele, 1991). Johnson (1982) states that a stable clear nurturing environment provides one with the safety needed to order the adolescent world "adaptively rather than in response to anxiety"(p.37). Drama therapy, and its reliance on the use of metaphors, provides a safe, contained structure to experiment with roles in relationship to self and other without restricting communication to verbal gestures (Cattanach, 1994, Jennings, 1994, Emunah,1995 , Polos, 1995).

### **An integrated Mind/Body Approach**

An integrated therapeutic approach must seek to bring together all aspects of a person so that person may experience him or herself as a unitary organism, rather than a combination of parts (Kepner,1993). Any psychological issue, such as an unfinished interaction or block in development (Johnson,1992) is part of a larger gestalt that includes the physical expression of that dilemma, just as any physical symptom is an expression of a larger organism (Kepner,1993). From this perspective, Kepner suggests that "therapeutic techniques should not split the person by attending to one aspect of the person as if it is intrinsically different or separate from the other"(1993,p.39).

Dichotomized approaches result in people having difficulty owning or relating to their bodies and, consequently, their self as a whole (Jones,1996). Integrated approaches to therapy must strive to restore the sense of the self as a whole, reassert the mutual identity of the parts and work toward balance (Jennings, 1998).

As discussed earlier, this holistic, integrated approach to health is apparent within the Creative-Expressive model of drama therapy and is echoed by other theorists in related fields. Rossberg-Gempton and Poole (cited in Jones,1996) have summarized the psychoanalytic approach to the body and mind as being a single unit. “Unconscious material can be physicalized through bodily expressions that are orchestrated by the ego...this allows for access to the verbal articulation of bodily sensations” (p.151). Siegal (cited in Jones,1996) , a dance- movement therapist, states that because a person lives with and through the body, the self is often seen to be realized through the body.

The importance of the body in therapy is echoed by Jones (1996),who has suggested a relationship between the body, emotion and identity in drama therapy. Jones advocates an integrative approach that works towards a re-claiming of one's own physical self. He refers to the primary attention given to the body in drama where it is used to communicate one's presence as a complete being (Lecoq , cited in Jones,1996).

This is done through gesture and expression as well as voice. Jones suggests that "an individual's physical body, when engaged in a dramatic act, changes the way the individual experiences their body and a relationship between body and identity can occur" (1996,p.165). This change involves a shift in behavior and relationship to the body, self and the external environment.

Kreuger (1989) states that the emerging view of developmental theorists is that of a body-self which is integrated in to a larger self and occurs within a developmental sequence. A developmental process is needed to encompass the integration of the mind and body. As one usually seeks therapy to address an experience of feeling fragmented (Kepner,1993), fragmented approaches to therapy can only move away from the "experience of wholeness"(p.41).

The body has been considered an object which rests outside of the realm of the social world and rather than recognizing it as an integral element of society, traditional sociologists have dichotomized the two (Scott, and Morgan,1993). Turner (1982) reflects upon this duality and concludes that in "western philosophy and theory the body/self relationship is one in which the body appears simultaneously as a constraint, where the body is regulated and restrained by the self and by society, and as potential, which refers to the body as a means to express, discover and develop the self"(p.4).

The mind and body can no longer continue to be interpreted in dichotomized terms of physiology and psychology (Shilling,1993). The sociological perspective previously discussed is reminiscent of the use of metaphor within drama therapy in that it supports vehicles of inquiry which lead from the micro to macro systems of reflection.

The proposed Embodied Mandala methodology is postulated as a viable intervention with adolescents as it contains the structure needed to proceed with a contained exploration of identity as part of an integrated whole system of self in relation to the internal and external environment. A discussion of the use and significance of the mandala structure in therapy will be provided in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: The Embodied Mandala**

The proposed Embodied Mandala method provides a structure which can be used to facilitate personal growth while supporting the representation of self as a developmental unit involving both the mind and body. As discussed in the previous chapter, the EPR developmental paradigm provides a framework from which one can structure a sensory and symbolic reflection of one's current perception of self. Jennings' mandala, or 'dramatic structure of the mind', is a metaphor for the self but has remained in the realm of a projective technique in which the structure is drawn and used as a point of reference in therapy. Jennings (1990) states that "the metaphor that is embodied, projected and enacted enables profound change to take place" (p.43). The Embodied Mandala method will provide one with the experience of embodying this unique representation of the self, a projected 'dramatic structure of the mind', for the purpose of experiencing this symbol at a visceral, holistic level.

### **Mandalas**

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning 'whole' or 'circle'. It is a universal structure that is found in nature, in physics, and astronomy as well as art and religion. Within nature, the atom which exists within a molecule of matter or the substance of a cell is a mandala. The galaxy and solar system in which we live each form a mandala.

The mandala structure of creation is reflected in micro to macro levels of existence. In art the mandala structure has been used to express beliefs and values, has served to encapsulate cultural stories and as a focal point for meditative and reflective practices (Cooper, 1978, Kellogg, 1978). Hall (1986) describes mandalas as a traditional meditation form in both Buddhist and Hindu yoga. The ritual mandala is arranged in a centered pattern, and usually divided into four quadrants which are peripheral to the core. The basic difference between the ritual mandala, which is a static entity, and the personal one is that the latter is a dynamic entity, ever in transformation (Kellogg, 1978).

### **The Mandala in Therapy**

Carl Jung (cited in Hall, 1986) used the term mandala to describe the images he found in the dreams and unconscious creations of his patients. The mandala, in this context, refers to an image that shows a centered pattern in which both the periphery and center are emphasized (Hall, 1986). Jung's mandala has, at its core, the ego surrounded by four temperaments through which the "ego perceived and reacted to external reality" (Jung, cited in Hall, 1986, p. 16). Jung (cited in Shamdasani, 1996) emphasized the need to make the mandala a conscious exploration. He states that the "mandala is an expression of an unconscious psychological experience and one must be conscious of this" (p. 100).

Jung used the mandala form as an image to represent his perception that the tendency of the psyche is to form a coordinated whole with an archetypal template of the ego at the core.

For Jung, the mandala structure represented the process of individuation in which the center of one's personality moves from the ego toward the self, establishing a new center of the psyche somewhere between the two. This representation provided Jung with a point of dialogue with his patients in order to develop an understanding of meaning behind the symbol. Jung suggests that the creation of a mandala, in the realms of one's dreams, occurs spontaneously when the "ego needs centering"(cited in Hall,1986,p.128). The process of actualizing this structure on paper allowed for a conscious absorption of what Jung termed the 'waking dream'.

Joan Kellogg (1978), an art therapist and psychologist, contextualized her use of mandalas from a historical perspective. Kellogg proposed that human beings have historically placed themselves in the center of the universe, identifying with the sun, around which all movement revolves, in an effort to retain a temporary respite and regain perspective. She suggested that this permitted one to draw on unconscious reserves of strength and permitted a re-orientation to the external world. Kellogg has used the mandala as an assessment tool and as a vehicle for self discovery.. "Unlike a diary, which is a linear account, the mandala acts in the manner of a gestalt for retrospective reflection" (p.3). Kellogg suggested that the creation of the mandala can record a person and their self reflections at different stages of being and can reflect deep insights.

## The Mandala Structure

Jung's structure of the mandala is congruent with Jennings' which is a circular in form and divided into four with a smaller circle in the middle. It is interesting to note that Jung's structure of the psyche, and Jennings' 'dramatic structure of the mind' both form images which imply a balance of states. Jung, however, sought to discover methods of visualizing the unconscious, whereas Jennings offers a format for conscious exploration. The division of the mandala, as Sue Jennings (1998) has used it in drama therapy, appears as a centered form with four quadrants. In the four quadrants are the guide, the artist, the vulnerable person, and the skilled person. In a conversation with Jennings' (2001) she states that she :

“played around with the words for the sections for ages, clear that the central one should be belief and had initially tried out this grid for therapists with the sections divided into internal supervisor, internal therapist, internal client and internal artiste---I then realized that it had its application in ordinary life and not just for training- *guide, skills, vulnerability* and *artist*” (Jennings, 2001, electronic transmission).

She suggests clarifying these constructs for each population.



Certain of these constructs are validated by other therapeutic frames of reference.

For instance, White (1976), a meditation guide, describes divinity at the core of the mandala, similar to Jennings focus on *belief* at the core of her mandala. The *artist* role is significant in that it places value on one's creative resources and is similar to the 'creative self' in Adler's frame of reference (cited in Hooper and Holford, 1998). The inclusion of the *artist* role in a structure of the self is also validated by Rogers who "equates the drive to create with the drive toward self-actualization" (Emunah,1994,p.28) as well as by J.L Moreno who postulated the value of creativity in recognizing individual agency and balance as well.(Blatner, 1988).

The *vulnerabilities* section is Jennings' accounting for situations in which the person feels weak or exposed. The *skills* section provides opportunity to focus on those things which a person is good at. This emphasis is integral to the philosophy behind the Creative-Expressive model discussed earlier (Cattanach, 1994). Lastly, the role of the *guide* accounts for that which provides one with direction, be it a goal, guilt, ambition, or other motivating factor. These terms are, according to Jennings, "simplistic and most likely comparable with other terms in other disciplines" (Jennings,1998,pg.124), These roles are influenced by the core at the center of the mandala, the point from which all four quadrants emanate (Hall, 1986).

A parallel may be drawn between Jung's four temperments and the four roles in Jennings mandala as they reflect "not only one's relationship to the external world but one's internal aspects in relation to one another"(Govinda, 1975). This is echoed by Arguelles (1972) who conceptualizes the mandala as a "module exhibiting principles of organicity, interrelationship of parts, interdependence of systems, resonance and synchronicity"(p.19).

According to Arguelles, an organized and integrated whole does not mean that such self-contained units do not grow, change and become transformed, "on the contrary, the more integrated the whole may be, the more is its capacity for growth and change enlarged"(p.19). The symbol of the mandala provides a vehicle for constant rediscovery and transformation. Arguelles echoes the thesis of this research by suggesting that "to be whole is to be healed and to be self-healing" (p.20). For the purposes of this research, the proposed terms will be subject to clarification by the adolescent participants themselves. In this study, this provided a way for them to identify with the mandala structure. This aspect of the methodology will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Method**

This study addresses the potential of the Embodied Mandala method as a viable structure to explore the self within the adolescent population. As therapist/researcher my goal was to provide a means for the study's participants to engage mentally and physically with the construct of Jennings' mandala.

The Embodied mandala method was introduced to four adolescents seen individually as well as two groups of six adolescents each. Participants were recruited from adolescents already being seen individually or in groups focused on emotional expression through a creative modality. In line with Kepner (1993), who suggests that a sufficient degree of body awareness and an awareness of self in relation to the external environment is needed for such integrated work to take place, the method was presented at approximately the sixth session. This is supported by Jones (1996) who suggests that the client develop the potential of their own body and a basic trust in the relatedness of body processes and psychological issues before using their bodies as a means of developing self-awareness.

All four individual participants as well as four in each of the groups agreed to sign a consent/release form (Appendix 1) which stated that they agreed to participate in the study and gave the researcher permission to keep the data for scholarly publication and presentation. Participants were made aware, prior to consent, that they could terminate the session at any time for any reason. Anonymity was guaranteed.

A phenomenological approach was used in this research to convey the importance of subjective inquiry into individual perspectives gained through lived experience. This approach recognizes the reflexive nature of being as an active rather than a passive state (Giddens, 1991). The research process undertaken is marked by stages of definition and reflection.

I chose Mala Betensky's (1995) phenomenological methodology because it has, as its final goal, the realization or synthesis of new meanings from separate elements. Betensky's process begins with 'intentionality', the process of moving from the appearance of the structure to the essence. The task of creating the drawn mandala was introduced by drawing a sample structure and asking each participant to reproduce it. A dialogue followed in which the terms within the structure were defined. The participant was asked to fill each section of the mandala with whatever forms symbolized their definition of that space.

The second stage of Betensky's phenomenological inquiry involves 'intuition and inference' which refers to the process of linking fragments of awareness toward implicit knowledge. After the drawing was completed the participant was asked to imagine their mandala on the floor in front of them. The participant was asked to envision the mandala and walk around it to further establish its properties of size and shape. The sections were identified on the floor using some kind of marker such as string, or other material.

Once this was completed, the participant was invited to stand in the first area they were drawn to. Upon entering this area, they were asked to take a few seconds to engage with their experience of that space by reflecting on certain questions. These questions were intended to provoke an embodied, sensory engagement with their experience. They included: *what colors exist in this area?, what is the temperature?, What does it smell like?, What part of your body is most affected by this area?, What is your breathing like?, What surrounds you?* . This process was repeated until each area of the mandala had been visited through an imaginary, sensory exploration. The directives to enter other sections were as follows:

- *Enter the space you feel the most comfortable in*                      - *that gives you confidence*
- *Enter the space you feel the safest in*                                      - *that provides strength*
- *Enter the space you feel that is the*                                      - *that needs attention*  
*least explored in your life right now*

Other directives were taken from the participants themselves.

The third stage in Betensky's phenomenological approach is 'self-dialogue' which, in this research, literally means using the medium of drama, specifically monologues, to get to the core of the phenomenon. The participant was invited to take up a position of a statue which best embodied the imagined environment of this area of their mandala. Once in the form of a statue, or sculpt, the participant was asked to provide a short monologue on their experience of the section they were standing in.

Betensky's fourth and final stage is 'symbolic representation'. Each participant was asked to deliver a further spoken monologue from the center of the mandala regarding their relationship to the other sections as well as to the world outside the boundaries of the mandala. The participant was then asked to exit the mandala space. A discussion followed reflecting on the experience of the process as a whole.

The first stage of definition provided an opportunity to deconstruct the terms presented for each section and render them subjective to the participant. The information gleaned from the initial definitions provided participants with ideas for symbolic representation during the drawing task. This was the first level of introspection as provided by the structure of the mandala.

The introspection which occurred during the embodiment of the mandala provided the second level of self- definition within the mandala. Participants were asked to enter the space using a variety of directives outlined above. At the point of embodiment participants were interviewed while in their sculpts in order to invoke a role (Landy, 1993). The third level of definition involved each participant delivering a spoken monologue from within the mandala. The monologues were facilitated by interview questions posed by myself about their reflections on their environment in that section, their relation to the other parts of the mandala, as well as how that aspect of themselves interacts with the outside world.

The last step involved participants leaving the mandala space. A conscious reflection upon the process in its entirety was then encouraged to enable participants to give a subjective account of the experience of creating and embodying the mandala. They were then invited to share their opinions on the efficacy of this method as a vehicle to explore the self. Data was collected through informal discussion based on a questionnaire. These initial definitions are recorded in Table 1. Not all sections were defined by all participants. The monologues and final reflections of each participant were recorded although they will not appear here in their entirety but will be provided as case examples later in this chapter.

**Table 1a: Adolescents seen in a group format****Initial Definitions of areas within the mandala**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Belief</b>	<b>Guide</b>	<b>Vulnerabilities</b>	<b>Artiste</b>	<b>Skills</b>
A-1	What you have faith in	What feels good	weakness	Where you are creative	What you are good at
A-2	Something you live for	Shows the way	obstacles		
A-3	Your religion	Guides you	When you are easily influenced		What you can succeed at
A-4	What you trust		What sticks out as not like everyone else	What you can do to change a negative into a positive	
A-5	Myths and religions	Mythical figure	Weakness	strengths	Places you excel at
A-6	Hope	teacher	Soft spots	creativity	strengths
A-7	Structure	Inner voice	An opponent's advantage	Free being	What you dedicate to and practice
A-8			When I am influenced I bend really easily	Individuality	



**Table 1b: Adolescents seen individually****Initial Definitions of areas within the mandala**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Belief</b>	<b>Guide</b>	<b>Vulnerabilities</b>	<b>Artiste</b>	<b>Skills</b>
B-1	Way you look at life Your purpose How you cope with vulnerabilities	Values Priorities	Weak points What makes you hurt others and self What provokes you	Child in everyone What brings one joy	Not all about success. Artist and Skills should not be separate- it should be what makes you happy
B-2	What gives you peace	Music	When things go wrong in my family, friends, when things do not work out	Photography Art	Do well in school Get into University
B-3	Not sure, too much, - This symbol cannot exist apart from me. I have a space in creating the dialogue which comes from this symbol. It cannot be understood as separate from me.	Intuition Spontaneity Nothing Instinct Boredom	Tiredness Irritability Needing therapy	Thinking Singing Drawing Painting Writing Acting	Math, English, memorizing, drama, public speaking, making things, imaginative, science, bio, arguing, cooking
B-4	We are a pupil/ student/speck/ in the eye of a GREAT EYE, or being. We are small.	Brain and Heart	Feeling scared, unnoticed, invisible, math,	Model Airplanes Create new inventions.	Computer games, Keeping others organized and happy

## **Case examples**

The layers of definition involved in the Embodied Mandala method allow for an active engagement with the deconstruction and reconstruction of self. Each stage of definition involved the participant's assimilation of the terms in the mandala within their unique frame of reference with increasing specificity.

### **An example of the Embodied Mandala with an individual**

B-1 is an adolescent girl of 17 years. She had been referred for individual drama therapy over the course of six months to address her chronic depression and previous suicidal ideation. She had identified herself as being attached to her boyfriend. She chose to see this attachment as a positive factor in her life as she claimed that he had saved her many times from hurting herself.

B-1's initial definition of *vulnerabilities* was synonymous with 'weak points, and what makes one hurt (them)self and others'. This definition was elaborated during the embodiment phase when B-1 took the pose of an infant in fetal position and made carving motions across her arms. At this point in therapy B-1 had disclosed that she often cut herself when upset. In response to questions regarding her emotional and physical state while she was in this position she stated, in a feeble voice, that she was all alone and in pain. She said that she didn't know the other areas well and wanted to reach out to the *guide* section.

In the initial definition of *beliefs* she stated that they were what helped one cope with vulnerabilities, and what defined one's purpose. This definition became clearer as she struggled to embody this section. In role, she stated that she was blank and didn't know what being *beliefs* was about except that she felt guilty for not putting more time into knowing God. She continued by saying that her boyfriend, external to the mandala, was helping her become stronger in her faith but that she felt unworthy of God. She concluded by saying that *beliefs* related to all the other sections because she is confused and anxious in most areas of her life.

We progressed to another section following my prompt for her to move to the next space she was drawn to. She animated the *skills* section, which she had defined as 'what makes you happy and able to be like a child'. She took the sculpt of a person hugging themselves and then held an arm out as if in offering. She then stood with both arms out as if offering to an invisible other. She then animated the *guide*, which she had defined as 'values and priorities', with her hands out to both sides, fidgeting from one side to the next, and simply said "my parents". The final section she was drawn to was the *artist*, which she defined as 'what brings out the child in everyone. She explained that 'child' was synonymous with 'full of joy'. She positioned herself holding a baby and smiling at it then moved to a sculpt where she kneeled and stretched her arms upwards. In her role interview she said she was a performer begging the audience to love her and that her parents were the producers of the show.

B-1's final monologue, in the *artist* section, reflected a need to feel loved. She spoke of wanting to be picked up and held and her desire to be saved by the males in her life. She spoke of her father with whom she did not have a strong relationship, and how this has impacted her relationship with her boyfriend, whom she constantly mistrusts. She spoke of the values and priorities alluded to in the *guide* section and identified some of them as belonging to her parents and some to herself. She stated that her childlike joy can make her hyper with friends at times but was also used to cover her anxious sadness. She concluded by stating her desire to understand her beliefs more, so they could impact her vulnerabilities the way she wished they would.

Consistent with the Creative-Expressive model, B-1's cutting behavior and diagnosed depression was not addressed directly but regarded as part of a larger whole. Together we explored the areas of her 'self', as represented in the mandala, in search of possible coping strategies that might help in achieving an internal balance between states. She commented on the exercise as being an "intense look at herself". She didn't seem quite settled with her discoveries, which she described as being "exhausting", but concluded that we would have a lot to talk about in the sessions to follow.

### **An example of the Embodied mandala with a participant in a group format**

A-1 to A-8 were adolescents who had been referred for group therapy as an intervention to explore and contain emotional expression. In one group of four the process began by defining the initial terms of the mandala. The group members called out their definitions in response to each of the terms and each participant's contributions were recorded. Each individual in the group was given a half- hour to complete their drawn mandala and then proceeded, as a group, with the next step of envisioning the mandala on the floor in front of them.

A-7, an adolescent female, who had experienced episodes of depression and struggled with parental expectations to do well academically, had entered the space in the *vulnerabilities* section which she had defined as "an opponent's advantage". When asked to embody the space using sensory cues, she curled up and used her hands to demonstrate that she was inside a box and could not get out. While the other members of the group witnessed, she delivered a few lines in the role of vulnerabilities: "I am like a box, square, and I am weak and can be moved around by my owners". This statement is a further clarification of her initial definition of this section.

She moved to the *artist* section and spread her arms out at her sides. When interviewed in role, she exclaimed "I am free and like to be me". In the *skills* section, she found that she had difficulty embodying it fully so she put her hands on her head and stood with a pensive look. She said " I'll think and think and think."

She could not embody *guide* nor *beliefs* saying that she was not familiar with those areas though she had initially defined them as “an inner voice” and “structure” respectively. This case is an example of how the task of embodiment was met with difficulty, in particular, this participant shared her resistance to using her whole self to uncover her inner voice as her guide and the structure she experienced at her core.

At one point, A-7 asked her fellow group members to move to the section they felt the most proud in within their own imagined mandalas. This was a new addition to the method and it proved to have an interesting impact on the group as they appeared to become more actively engaged in the process. This welcome deviation will be discussed further in this paper.

Other members of the group were asked to take up the position of A-7's sculptures in each area when it was time for her to give her monologue. In this way, she was able to walk around them and see her living mandala as she spoke. At times, she stopped to tap a statue of herself on the shoulder and declare their inner thoughts. Her monologue expressed her desire not to experience so many expectations placed upon her, even though she appreciated the structure she received from her parents. "You create a path that you want me to follow to a door that is wide open, the opportunities...., can I walk through that door without you following me and what if...when I need to hear you I will listen to myself, and guide myself." .

Her reflections, once she left the mandala space, suggested that the process was lengthy but insightful. "It helped me see that I appreciate my parents, but I really want to know if I am allowed to be different, because I am." The group offered their feedback and support and declared similarities between A-7's experience and their own.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The results of this study will be conveyed through an analysis of the themes which emerged from the process in its entirety in relation to the adolescents participating in this study. The results which emerged from using the Embodied Mandala method with participants seen individually and in a group setting will be compared. The conclusion of this chapter will discuss applications of this method for assessment purposes in drama therapy.

### **Relevance of this method to the adolescent population**

As discussed earlier the Embodied Mandala method is postulated as a viable intervention with adolescents as it permits an exploration of identity as part of an integrated whole system of self. The process of definition involved in this method provided an opportunity for the adolescent to adapt the terms inherent in the structure to their specific frame of reference. This resulted in definitions which were relevant to themselves as individuals. Common themes arose which suggested the potential for the mandala to be reflective of similarities in the experiences of the participants. These common themes are summarized below.



## **BELIEFS**

This section emphasized fitting in with parental values as well as societal and cultural measurements of normalcy, such as being good-looking, being strong intellectually or physically, contrasted with a desire to rely on oneself. The need to belong was given importance as a central philosophy.

## **GUIDE**

In this section:

- Influential external figures such as teachers, parents, friends who could provide direction were regarded as very important.
- A desire to find and rely on one's inner voice or guide was also prevalent but met with some uncertainty.
- Confidence in relying on this voice was contingent on positive encouragement and freedom to make mistakes.

## **SKILLS**

This section was marked by actions that received external affirmation which could translate to an internal sense of worth.

## **ARTIST**

This section was perceived as valuable and necessary although not all participants knew what to include. The images which emerged alluded to internally gratifying activities or pursuits that translated into a sense of pride, pleasure, and confidence.

## **VULNERABILITIES**

This section was perceived as areas of ineffectiveness where the expectations of external, influential members or internalized standards and values are not met. According to participants, this section was marked by circumstances that made it hard to be themselves. Confidence also contributed to being able to filter external influences and understand internal standards towards regaining internal equilibrium.

The themes collected provide an account of adolescence as being a transitional period where encouragement and direction from myself as facilitator/researcher as well as other group members, is acknowledged and regarded as useful and advantageous to developing confidence and an internal sense of self-worth.

Erikson declares that the “self-reliant personality is dependent on an environment which is committed to the freedom of self-realization”(p.133).The Embodied Mandala structure seemed to provide such a structure as it framed each participant’s experience in a manner which was conducive to self-reflection. The structure seemed to be flexible enough to allow the definition and re-definition of identity as explored within the divisions of the mandala.

With regard to the impact of creativity which, in many of the adolescent sculptures, did not have a clear form, Erikson suggests that creativity offers adolescents an opportunity to resolve crises for themselves by “offering new resolutions through works of art”(pg. 134). By creating the mandala these adolescents, according to Erikson’s definition, experienced a structure that permitted an experience of self-discovery in response to crisis. A comment shared by B-2 affirms this idea: “ I didn’t feel like doing the mandala any more but when I got up and acted it out, it felt weird like I was in a dance..I felt peaceful”.

In relation to the processes of embodiment, projection and role described earlier (Jennings, cited in Cattanach, 1994), the Embodied Mandala method provided each participant with the opportunity to project themselves into an external visual container, that being the drawn mandala. They were then given the opportunity to engage with it even further by embodying its properties. By use of questions and facilitated monologues, participants engaged in the creation of roles, or characters representing each section thus further ascribing deeper meaning to each section of the mandala.

### **Groups v.s Individuals**

In the previous chapter the method was applied to participants seen individually as well as in a group format. The applications of this method vary between the two settings although both proved to be rich with opportunities for exploration. Variances of the method which emerged from its application to individuals and groups included levels of disclosure, comfort level with embodiment, and opportunities for witnessing.

### **Disclosure**

The information available to the therapist at the onset of this research varied. Access to the treatment history of the participants seen in individual therapy was more readily available than for those participants seen in the group setting.

Participants seen individually provided more detail when defining each section of the mandala as definitions given frequently referred to a previously discussed issue. In groups each participant disclosed their personal histories at a slower rate. Detailed discussion of the initial definitions of the terms within the mandala was not as lengthy as it was with individuals and it seemed that definitions, once articulated, influenced what others in the group suggested. A lack of group cohesiveness may also have been a factor as group members would often miss sessions prior to this research session which would have influenced the level of disclosure the group, as a whole, felt comfortable with.

### **Embodiment**

Individual participants appeared slightly more nervous about embodying the sections of the mandala. This awkwardness may have been due to a reliance on verbal interaction between therapist and client within the therapy process and a hesitation and discomfort in using the body for dramatic communication. For example, B-4 stated that the sections of the mandala were “good as long as I can make them mean what I need them to mean” but did not feel completely comfortable with the embodiment.

In contrast, the ability to embody appeared to be strengthened within the group setting. For example, A-7 instructed the rest of the group to move to the section of the mandala they felt the most proud in. This directive appeared to prompt participants to move to their chosen section and enthusiastically experience what the embodiment of that section might feel like. This element, not initially part of this study, invited participants to give suggestions as to the quality to consider when moving next. They gave suggestions such as 'where do you feel the most happy, targeted, secure, alone, and achieved'. A primary source of information came from the initial directives given by myself as facilitator to move where the participant was most drawn to. However, the directives offered by the participants seen in groups provided opportunities to explore pertinent issues in greater detail.

This process highlighted the issues which were central to the group as well as illuminating themes which could be explored in further sessions. Participants appeared to be more engaged and invested in the process of discovery through embodiment and as A-3 stated " I was standing in vulnerabilities when (A-2) said to go to the place you don't feel safe. I feel like I don't know who I am in that section and then I moved to belief and felt like I knew what to do, who knew I could do that by just moving".

## Witnessing

The process of having group participant members direct the embodiment of their own mandala with the assistance of their peers had the positive effect of expanding their subjective perspective. In this way, they were able to engage in a form of witnessing. Witnessing, as described by Jones (1996), is a core process in drama therapy which involves "being an audience to others or to oneself within a context of personal insight or development" (p.110). Witnessing provides an opportunity for participants to feel heard and supported. With an individual, I, as therapist, was able to witness their developing self -definitions at each stage of the process without distraction. However, participants did not have as much of an opportunity to witness themselves within the mandala. With groups, opportunities to witness oneself occurred more often.

Jones suggests that witnessing can be enhanced through the use of role-reversal or by the use of objects to represent aspects of ourselves. In the group process this was done when a group member took the position of a participant so the participant might view their own sculpt. This provided them with an opportunity to enhance the process of definition at this stage of the method with the use of doubling, or speaking the inner thoughts of a sculpt. With individuals this process of role-reversal was not utilized although further study might respond to this possibility.

## **Validity**

The validity of this model is restricted to the participant's account of its efficacy in facilitating an exploration of the self. The Embodied Mandala method lends itself to visualizing the self as a state of balance and helps identify resources for resiliency within this representation of the self. A-5 affirmed this statement in saying that the drawing of the mandala was "a good way to look at herself" and the embodiment "helped it sink in better...you get to sink into roles you use in real life". The responses offered by group participants suggest the benefit of using this method with groups. The study also yielded positive results when used with adolescents seen individually.

## **Chapter 5: Applications as Assessment in Drama therapy**

Sue Jennings proposes that the Mandala method, as she used it, externalizes and lends insight into one's state of balance as well as giving direction to the treatment process. The process with which we are concerned is the development of the self, which is in constant flux (Harding, 1973). The methodology used is reflective of this essential need for security. The projected circle can be likened to an alchemical vessel. "The vessel of the alchemists, like the circle of the psyche and the mandala, must be closed... in strong material... if the transformation process is to proceed satisfactorily and the essence not be lost" (Harding, 1973,p.4). The Embodied Mandala method may be framed within the therapeutic process as defined by prominent theorists in the field of Drama therapy but shows even more promise as an assessment tool.

In order to gain insight into the efficacy of drama therapy as a treatment method or process, assessments which use drama therapeutic processes must be employed (Meldrum, 1994). As an assessment technique the Embodied Mandala method provides descriptive and prescriptive information (Bruscia, 1988). As a descriptive assessment, the method provides information about the participant in relation to themselves only. As a prescriptive assessment, it provides insight into the interventions and techniques best suited to the individual within the therapeutic process.



Sue Jennings (1998) gives the example of a trauma survivor who designed his mandala without anything in the *skills* area. She did not interpret this directly but it provided the background for the client's exploration of his feelings of uselessness. During and/or after the therapeutic process, another mandala may have been created to assess any changes in this area. In this way, the two mandalas might provide an opportunity for client and therapist to identify and discuss progress.

A plethora of information may be gleaned by inviting the client to explore the significance of each area in relation to the other sections through a series of directives such as those which arose out of the method when applied with groups. When participants invited other members to explore an area which resonated with a specific quality such as 'security' or 'isolation', descriptive information became available for collaborative interpretation by both therapist and client. For example, when A-7 instructed the group to move to the space they felt the most proud in, all members resonated with their own construction of the word 'pride' and moved to the space within the mandala which best fit. This exercise might serve to assess notions of the construct in question, in this case 'pride', within a representative population which, in this case, were adolescents.

As an interactive method, the Embodied Mandala as an assessment tool may prove applicable within a broad trans-cultural context. By virtue of its reliance on individual perspectives as evolved through discussion with the therapist/ researcher, the mandala structure becomes unique to the participant. This suggests that the results cannot be extrapolated and generalized to the greater population but must remain contextualized within the space and time in which the data was collected. However, it must be noted that the mandala structure requires a certain degree of cognitive agility and ability for reflection.

According to Dana (1993), a culture-compatible approach involves the consumer as an active participant in the evaluation of services. This is given testimony by participant B-4, “the mandala is good but it is missing me...I have to be present or it will not say anything about me”. B-4 did not want her mandala used as a symbol of herself without her present as she did not feel that it could accurately represent her as she was always changing. This comment suggests the need to clarify that the mandala is representative of a moment in time rather than a complete, terminal expression of one’s self. This is important to remember in assessment as the structure can only purport to represent the individual at that moment.

Of even greater importance is the relevance of B-4's statement that the structure could not represent her without her actually being present. It is my conviction that therapeutic services and the evaluation of methods should be participant driven in order to support the participant as an active, self-determining agent in the treatment process rather than a passive consumer. The potential applications for the Embodied Mandala as an assessment tool and measurable indicator of change merit further inquiry.

## **Chapter 6: Summary Formation**

Sue Jennings (1998) created the mandala method as an approach to complement the Creative –Expressive model of drama therapy through which a person could examine a holistic representation of their life rather than being focused on a deficiency or isolated illness. The Embodied Mandala method succeeded in representing this philosophy at a visceral level.

The results of the Embodied Mandala method suggest that mental health may be viewed as a continuous direction toward an internal balance rather than symptom reduction. One's creative ability to regain this balance by the use of individual strengths is respected and becomes the focus of therapy rather than the expedient removal of perceived weaknesses. The process of definition beginning with the drawn mandala and leading to the embodiment of the symbol deepened the process of discovery and catalyzed insightful reflection for each participant. Additionally, the process of defining the constructs within the mandala adapted the structure to the collective or individual who was using it, thereby rendering the mandala structure unique to each participant. The success in relying on a participatory process in which the participants inscribe this universally recognizable structure with meaning suggests the potential for this structure to be adapted to any population group thereby increasing its suitability cross-culturally.

It was apparent that participants needed to develop a certain fluency and level of comfort when using their bodies as a vehicle for expression prior to engaging in the embodiment phase of the mandala. This process was facilitated with the individual participants and groups, though a few participants did not feel altogether comfortable embodying the mandala. The comfort level also differed between individuals and groups in that individuals appeared to be more self-conscious and hesitant while group participants who hesitated seemed to be stymied by the inability to communicate what they desired through physical expression.

This observation suggests that the split between mind and body has been internalized over time and has resulted in communication being limited to verbal expression. Processes which seek to combine the two must account for the novelty of using one's body as an extension of the self. The conclusions drawn from the application of this method with individuals v.s groups suggest that the benefits of this method may be realized more fully in a group setting as opportunities to witness oneself in a sculpt or role increase.

The Embodied Mandala method as an assessment tool merits further inquiry. The integration of the mandala structure, and emergent Embodied Mandala method, within the therapeutic process, might assist the therapist in pacing, identifying needs, assessing progress, and determining appropriate interventions.

The philosophy and structure embodied in this method are adaptable to the therapeutic process outlined by Emunah (1994) as the Integrative Five phase model of drama therapy. Emunah's process progresses from interactive dramatic play dealing with personal situations, and culminates with psychodramatic enactments exploring core themes, dramatic ritual and closure. Similar to the Embodied Mandala method, each stage of development spirals towards deeper explorations in play, trust, and self-revelation. This model might provide a framework within which the benefits of the Embodied Mandala method might be further realized. Further inquiry might also seek to frame the Embodied Mandala method within other existing drama therapy models such as Landy's Role method (cited in Johnson, and Lewis, 2000) and Mitchell's Theatre of Self Expression (Mitchell, 1994).

Inquiry into this method might also be directed towards the addition of psychodramatic and dramatherapeutic techniques such as role reversal and doubling which occurred during the process of this method and which provided further rationale for the addition of embodiment. Participants appeared to empathize with other members of the group once they had experienced being in another's position within the mandala.

The use of directives given by myself and/or by the participants themselves, and the use of thematic directives in particular, merit further inquiry. The motivation and engagement of the participants appeared to increase once they were able to direct the movement within the mandala.

The Embodied Mandala method is a viable structure from which to explore the self. Furthermore, the structure, as a representation of a microcosm within a macrocosm, may lend itself to the exploration of isolated themes such as security, motivation, empathy, self-esteem and responsibility within a larger social context. The process of engaging in a holistic representation of the self marked by concentric levels of introspection provided rich insight to both myself as the therapist /researcher and, by their account, the adolescents in this study.

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## **Appendix**

1. Questionnaire
2. Client Consent Information

## **Questionnaire**

**Name of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please direct any questions to :**

**Nisha Sajnani, Prinicipal Investigator**

**Phone: 934-4400 ext. 2152**

**All information provided in this questionnaire is strictly confidential and will only be used for the purposes outlined in the consent for research form.**

## Questionnaire

Please provide your own definition of the following terms as you would have defined them in the Mandala exercise:

### **Belief**

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### **Skills**

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### **Vulnerabilities**

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---

### **Artist**

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### **Guide**

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---

**In a few words, please describe your experience creating the drawn mandala for each section as well as what you symbolized in that space**

**Belief**

---

---

**Skills**

---

---

**Vulnerabilities**

---

---

**Artist**

---

---

**Guide**

---

---

In a few words, please describe your experience of each of the categories in the mandala when you embodied it.

**Belief**

---

---

**Skills**

---

---

**Vulnerabilities**

---

---

**Artist**

---

---

**Guide**

---

---



**Please circle any of the following that you felt you could not symbolize at this time:**

Belief

Skills

Vulnerabilities

Artist

Guide

**Please circle any of the following that you felt you could not embody at this time:**

Belief

Skills

Vulnerabilities

Artist

Guide

**Please rate this exercise on its effectiveness in provide you with useful information about yourself: 1= very ineffective , 5= very effective**

Please circle:

1

2

3

4

5

**In the space below, please describe any modifications you would make which might improve this exercise.**

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## **Consent Information**

Drama Therapy Student: Nisha Sajnani  
Concordia University  
1455 DeMaisonneuve Blvd. West  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada, H3G-1M8

Practicum Supervisor(s): Unknown at this time

## **Background Information**

One of the ways drama therapy students learn how to be drama therapists is to write a research paper that includes case material and examples of artistic work produced by clients during drama therapy sessions. The purpose of doing this is to help them, as well as other students and drama therapists who read the thesis, to increase their knowledge and skill in giving drama therapy services to a variety of persons with different kinds of problems. The long- term goal is to be able to better help individuals who enter into therapy with drama therapists in the future.

## **Permission**

As a student in the Master's in Creative Arts Therapies Programme at Concordia University, I am asking you for permission to photograph and/or videotape your artistic/performance work and to include them in my thesis. I am also asking you for permission to consult your medical file and/or social services file for a period of one year (until I have completed my research paper).

## **Confidentiality**

Because this information is of a personal nature, it is understood that your confidentiality will be respected in every way possible. Neither your name, the name of your setting where your drama therapy took place, nor any other identifying information will appear in the research paper. Any example of your artistic work will be completely anonymous and your identity will not be revealed.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages**

To my knowledge, this permission will not cause you any personal inconveniences or advantages. Whether or not you give your consent will have no effect on your involvement in drama therapy or any other aspect of your treatment. Also, you may withdraw your consent at any time before the thesis is completed with no consequences and without giving any explanation. To do this, or if you have any questions, you may contact my supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ phone number \_\_\_\_\_

## **Consent Form**

**Drama Therapy Research Paper**  
**Nisha Sajnani, Student**  
**Magistrate in Creative Art Therapies Programme**  
**Concordia University**

I \_\_\_\_\_, undersigned, give permission to Nisha Sajnani to photograph and/or videotape examples of my artistic work and/or performance (s) for inclusion in her Master's Research Paper in the Creative Arts Therapy Programme at Concordia University.

I also give Nisha Sajnani permission to have access to my medical and social service files for the purpose of writing her research paper.

I understand that both my name and the setting where my drama therapy sessions took place will be kept strictly anonymous and that no identifying information will be given in the research paper. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent any time before the research paper is completed, without explanation, simply by contacting Nisha Sajnani or her supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_. This decision will have no effect whatsoever on my drama therapy or any other aspect of my medical treatment.

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions about the implications of this consent and I am satisfied with the answers I received.

I have read and understood the contents of this form and I give consent as described above.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_