

THE USE OF ROLE PLAYING GAMES (RPG) IN GROUP GESTALT-THERAPY: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF WORKING WITH POLARITIES



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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to understand the effects of the use of RPG in group psychotherapy for working with polarities in Gestalt therapy. The research took place in four experimental sessions, lasting approximately three hours each, with three player-patients and three narrator-therapists. The results point to a potentiation of the work with polarities through RPG, by the possibility of experimentation and experience of the polar elements in progress for the patient/players, allowing greater creativity in the chosen paths, facilitating a process of awareness, integration of polarities and production of creative adjustments. Some limitations are also important to mention: the excessively long time of the sessions, possible difficulties in organizing sessions with patients unfamiliar with the RPG, or even with more rational people, unwilling to dive into the world of fantasy.

Keywords: RPG. Gestalt Therapy. Polarities. Awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

A *role-playing game* (RPG) is a role-playing game (as its name suggests) that emerged in the 1980s, from the release of the first version of "*Dungeons & Dragons*" (D&D) (Gygax & Arneson, 1974). The idea is for players to create characters that will interact in an imaginary adventure narrated by the "master" (or narrator).

Since then, many other rule systems have emerged, diversifying the way RPG is played, as well as the uses and purposes of this tool. In addition to being a game, RPG has been used in several contexts. In this sense, recent research has demonstrated some possible uses for RPG: bullying reduction programs (Bagès, Hoarea, & Guerrien, 2021); psychotherapy (Blackmon, 1994), including here the possibility of using the game to experience difficult emotions; prevention and treatment for drug use (Araújo, Oliveira & Cemi, 2011); among other possibilities.

Thus, we start from the assumption that there are an infinity of possibilities for the use of RPG, including the study of the psychological phenomenon (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018), the focus of this study. Despite the various studies cited, few are located in the field of phenomenological-existential approaches, more specifically in the field of Gestalt therapy.

The RPG consists of a game in which the participants assume roles, interpret characters, in a narrative, in a collaborative way (Araújo, Oliveira & Cemi, 2011). In general, there are several types of role-playing games, from games with speech and paper (the famous tabletop RPG); joint incorporation (better known as "*Live Action*"), where players wear the character's clothes and utensils, and perform it just like a theater; and individual or networked computer devices (Zagal & Deterding, 2018). In this work, we are referring to what is known as "tabletop RPG", where players create characters on a sheet of paper, sit around a table and use data to solve challenges within a narrative told by the narrator.

The term *Role Playing* first appears in the psychological literature in 1943, in a study on role playing and the behaviorist method for the treatment of aggression (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018). The aforementioned authors point out that, although we have some literature on the subject, there are few rigorous studies (idem), which highlights the importance of the present research.

According to Fine (1983) (cited by Montola, 2009), we can find a three-tiered structure in role-playing games: a more primary structure, inhabited by people; a secondary

(game), inhabited by players; and, finally, the diegetic structure, inhabited by the characters. It is in the latter that the characters created by the players interact, perform actions and face challenges. According to Bagès, Hoareau, and Guerrien (2021), RPG can be a useful tool, for example, in combating school bullying. In the study conducted by the authors, after three 60-minute sessions, there was a considerable increase in the level of empathy among the participants, in addition to a reduction in the levels of bullying and aggressive behavior.

Other studies deal with the use of GPR in psychotherapeutic processes, with a diversity of practices and objectives. According to Blackmon (1994), feelings present in real life could be projected in the game, in a safe way, such as anger, hatred, etc., thus being worked on in the psychotherapeutic context. In addition, the author emphasizes the possibility of using fantasy to reduce anger and anxiety, to teach children to deal with difficult emotions, integrating them into the personality, or even to bring out elements of the unconscious, among other possibilities: "the use of this game as an aid in therapy can allow patients an opportunity to explore their mental caves and eliminate their psychic dragons" (Blackmon, 1994, p. 631).

Also in this sense, it is necessary to highlight the research developed by Enfield 2006; and Rosselet and Stauffer 2013 (cited by Boowman & Lieberot, 2018), where the authors found an increase in self-efficacy among players (children and adolescents), corroborating the idea that gaming is an important setting for the development of social skills and impulse control. According to the authors cited, despite the stigma associated with pretend play, there are numerous benefits found in this activity: increased empathy (Merilainen, 2012, cited by Bowman & Lieberot, 2018); development of ethical and critical reasoning (Simkins, 2012, cited by Bowman & Lieberot, 2018); and development of social and work skills, practiced during the dramatizations.

In addition, in organizational psychology, many organizations (health, higher education, military, among others.) use role-playing for the dramatization and simulation of issues (Bowman, 2010, cited by Bowman & Lieberot, 2018). In brain research, there is a consensus that "when experiencing stimuli such as movements, social interactions (on the screen, eyes, or in the mind) neural activation patterns correspond to slightly modified versions of what we would expect to see if the subject were actually in this situation" (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018, p. 234). Also according to the authors: "We could assume that

deeply immersive role-playing involves changes in these modulating processes, at least at the level of conscious experience" (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018, p. 235).

Although we have many examples of the benefits of role-playing games for mental health and human development, it is also possible to find some data that contradicts this perspective. The study by Ascherman (1993, cited by Bowman & Lieberot, 2018), stated that the unrestricted practice of games such as D&D, by psychiatric patients, can reinforce symptoms, increase resistance or favor the interruption of treatment, in addition to normalizing violence

Another well-known study used the same RPG (D&D) system to treat a young man with an obsessive schizoid personality, with suicidal tendencies, finding a very positive result: release of fears, development of ego, improvement in interactional skills, in addition to increasing the patient's sense of comfort with himself (Blackmon, 1994). Despite numerous positive examples, the cases, interpretations, and varied theoretical approaches make it difficult to result in a clinical recommendation, or implementation on a larger scale (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018), which, in a way, also emerges as a justification for our study.

Based on the justifications mentioned above, in addition to the few studies on the subject, this research has as its theme the use of RPG in Gestalt therapy. In this scenario, one of the possibilities would be the use of RPG to experience situations and personal characteristics, experienced collectively, promoting situations and conflicts of the self within the role-playing game. For this, the concept of 'polarities' ends up being central in our study.

In Gestalt therapy, polarities constitute an important element to think about the modes of functioning of the subject in the world. According to Perls (1977), the human being is a group of poles, or polar forces, that are related. Joy/sadness, extroversion/introversion, no one is just one or the other. In this sense, agreeing with Zinker (2007), we understand that the healthy individual is the one who recognizes and integrates most of his polarities, articulating differences, creating paths in a creative way.

Thus, the idea of working with polarities came from the recognition that this theme is an important way of growth and development in the field of Gestalt psychotherapy. In the words of Zinker (2007, p. 221): "It seems to me that the *sine qua non* of man's knowledge, happiness and existence can be found in the idea of reconciling differences".

In the context of our study, the work with polarities takes place in the context of a group, mediated by RPG. Gestalt therapy groups are also an important strategy to favor

the therapeutic process, since, according to Cardoso (2009), the idea of the group is for people to become more *aware* of themselves. Among the various possibilities of thinking about the group in Gestalt therapy, it should be made clear that this research is based on a group conception in which an individual therapeutic process takes place in a group, that is, we have an individual process happening, where the group emerges as a support (Ribeiro, 1994, cited by Fadel & Pinheiro, 2015). Still, we can agree that some objectives of group work are achieved:

integrate conflicting intrapsychic polarities; become more aware of their sensory life; enrich and expand awareness; extend awareness to excitement and action; to get in touch with oneself and others; learn a comfortable way of recollection, nourishment and self-renewal; learn to support themselves in their total beings; learn to flow smoothly from the consciousness-excitation-contact cycle without serious blockage (Zinker, 1980, p.59, cited by Boris, 2013, p.11).

In this sense, thinking about the various potentialities of GPR in the clinical context of Gestalt therapy, this study proposes to think about some questions: What are the possibilities of using GPR in Gestalt therapy for working with polarities? What are the differences from a traditional therapy?

Thus, in an attempt to advance in the aforementioned questions, this work has the general objective of understanding the effects of the use of RPG as a tool in group psychotherapy for working with polarities. In addition to this brief introduction, the article is divided into the following sections: Method; results and discussion; and final considerations.

METHOD

Three subjects participated in this research, students of a training course in Gestalt therapy, in the city of Natal-RN. The inclusion criteria were: being over 18 years old, being in psychotherapeutic follow-up and accepting to participate in the experiment. The choice of these subjects was due to the fact that they were already psychologists, in training in Gestalt therapy, which facilitated the participation and reflection on the proposed experiment.

The research took place in four meetings, lasting approximately three hours each. The meetings took place in a psychology clinic, always in the same room (suitable for individual and group psychological care), through sublease of the space. The sessions

aimed to narrate an RPG adventure, where the characters could experience their issues/polarities, through the various situations proposed by the game.

During the sessions, one of the procedures used in the experiment was what we called the "*awareness moment*", which consisted of the use of an object (in this case a red table clock), whose objective was to pause the game so that the subjects could talk, no longer as characters, but as players, about some *awareness* produced in the game, or any important element to consider and reflect on. Thus, players or narrator-therapists could, at any time, request an "*awareness moment*", by performing the gesture of placing the clock on the table, pausing the game and starting a reflection on something experienced/felt in this process.

After the game sessions, we also held conversation circles with the participants, to reflect on the experiment, and on each player's process. Thus, three conversation circles were held with the participants. The conversation circles consist of a type of device that aims to create conditions for dialogue between the subjects, providing a moment of listening and circulation of the word (Afonso & Abade, 2008), promoting reflection and discussion on a given theme.

As instruments, we used a character sheet model (prepared by the narrator-therapists and filled in by the players in the first meeting); digital voice recorder; script of the sessions (prepared by the narrator-therapists); and three six-sided dice (d6).

For a better explanation of the results of this study, the scenes during the game and some theoretical reflections, it is worth a brief explanation about the construction of the characters and the game system developed.

Players received character sheets containing items such as: Name, brief biography, basic attributes (which should be invented by the player (e.g., intelligence, spirituality, charisma, wisdom, dexterity), skills (riding, handling plants, dialogue, bow, sword, intuition, hiding, etc.) and polarities (security vs. insecurity, among others).

The game system is quite simple. Each base stat goes from 3 to 18 (the player's choice), with 3 being "terrible" and 18 being "excellent". The tests take place with three six-sided dice (3d6), the player must obtain a number lower than the attribute chosen for the test. Skills give from -3 to +3 on checks. For example: "The character Azarir is faced with a situation where he must convince someone of a great idea, so that the group moves forward. Thus, it plays against its "Communication" attribute, which is equal to 12, and can add some ability. In this case, she has the "mediation" skill, with a value of +2, totaling 14.

She rolls three dice, rolls 11 (less than 14) and succeeds. She manages to convince the person in question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each player, in the act of building the character, was able to delve a little into the issue of polarities, making it clear which issues they would want to work on. Thus, we had the following configuration regarding the polarities of the characters:

Pinecone: Character linked to nature, had the skills curiosity, wisdom, spirituality, strength, dexterity, ingenuity, perception, communication, survival. Among the skills, the following stand out: drawing attention, finding things, hiding, compulsion, explaining phenomena and creating tools. In addition, it selects the following polarities for therapeutic work: Wanting to discover X Fear of the unknown; "Security, self-esteem (talking about subjects you master) X Fear of being arrogant, long-winded, not being able to speak."

Gunther: Character also linked to nature, with the following basic attributes Vitality, Calmness, Charisma, Dexterity, Strength, Adaptability, Intelligence, Spirituality, Kindness and Curiosity. Skills: dialogue, training, knife and bow skills, exploration and survival. Polarities: Self-esteem X lack of self-confidence.

Azarrir: Character linked to growing plants, formulating potions, etc. It presents itself with the following basic attributes: wisdom, communication, intelligence, health, adaptability, curiosity, strength, intuition and sociability. Skills: communication with animals, wisdom with plants, resistance to substances, negotiation, medication and spontaneity. Polarities: Thinking about Others X Prioritizing. Below, we present the main results of the experiment.

THE WORK WITH POLARITIES IN "RPG-THERAPY"

A first element to be observed here concerns the way polarities are experienced during Gestalt therapy sessions mediated by RPG, or RPG-therapy. In the first session, the work followed the direction of what Zinker (2007) points out as the path to personal growth: becoming aware of the polarities and then getting in touch. In general, players had already gotten in touch with their polarities, lending them to their characters. It was up to us, master-therapists, to create situations in which the characters would have the opportunity to experience their dilemmas and questions.

The first situations experienced by the group draw attention for the viscosity of the emotions. It was not a question of a patient rationally describing his polarities, but of seeing him immersed in conflicting emotions, anxiety, a body that retracts in the chair... One of the scenes that helps to illustrate this was experienced by the character Pinecone. One of his polarities concerned the insecurity of public speaking, of demonstrating knowledge, which he described as "Insecurity/fear X Arrogance of public speaking". Another, also worked on in the sessions, concerned the polarities "fear of the unknown X desire to explore". Next, we contextualize to the reader the first scene worked with the player-patients.

In the first session, each character was called upon to demonstrate their skills by facing a particular issue. Pinecone was summoned to face his fear of the unknown by having to dive into a dark door. The continuity in the adventure depended on it. After reluctant a little, he approaches the door. Try in vain to illuminate the other side... There is an abyss on the other side, which prevents the character from trying to enter little by little. He will have to dive. Pinha approaches, hangs from the access to the dark abyss and, after a moment of visible tension, he lets go.

As we had already planned, the fall is gentle, but it happens in a tavern, with many people shouting his name, a stage where a bard has just stopped playing to listen to what Pinha had to say. Everyone in the tavern was waiting for an explanation for what was happening in the city (the supposed "curse", which affected everyone, in particular the nature of the region). Tension begins. Silence... Pine Cone moves her arms nervously, tries to dodge and, after hesitating a little, leaves the tavern.

After the scene and a request for "*awareness*", the player's observations confirm our experience: "*I was very anxious, I couldn't do that... The bard stopped playing, everyone was expecting, that made it very difficult.*" Still on this scene, after the session, player L. can express some of the conflict: "[about the tavern challenge] *the tavern was a very strange corner for him... a lot of noise, mess. He prefers nature. Everyone stopped and looked at him: 'You!' So I thought: I'm leaving, it's not my place.*"

Azarir, on the other hand, had the mission of facing the polarity: "taking care of the others X prioritizing". Here, we had a slightly different outcome. The character's situation involved receiving a request for help (since she was a well-known healer in the city) in the midst of a situation in which there was very little time. Thus, to continue on the adventure, she had to face the challenge of a request for help, in a situation where there was no more time. A door was open, about to close, through which she should pass and go to the next

scenario of the adventure. On the other side of the house, a villager knocked on another door, waiting for a medicine to be prepared by her. She was between the desire to help others and the need to follow her personal mission (on which the kingdom depended and nature itself, for which the character nurtured a deep connection). The character's response ended up being a "middle ground", in the player's words. She leaves, abandoning the villager who asks for help, but not before saying: *"it's all there, I've already told you what to do, I need to go"*. When he leaves, he leaves the door open.

In the same direction, Gunter had the challenge of facing the mirror and facing himself, in an exercise of looking at his own characteristics, working on his polarity "self-esteem X lack of self-confidence". So he faced the mirror, which clearly reflected his deepest features. In the scene, the character looks with fear at his own image, but without being able to talk about his qualities: *"I don't know if I'm good enough"*. After some time, he remembered that he likes to take care of others, he cares about the suffering of others. The mirror changes the reflected image and starts to show a scene of Gunter's dog being mistreated by another version of Gunter. Thus, the player does not hesitate and decides that Gunter must enter the mirror and murder his other 'self' who threatened to kill his dog. The scene that until then took place without much energy, without much affection, changes completely. Player C.'s body has changed. Her posture, her energy and willingness to come out in defense of her animal was visible, bringing out one of her most visible characteristics: loyalty and availability to help those she loves.

The scenes reported allow us to reflect on the experience of polarities in the context of therapy mediated by RPG. The awareness of polarities and the visualization of them in the scene, lived in the fantasy world of the RPG, allows the players/characters to find ways out, sometimes different from what they are used to doing on a daily basis. This is where what we call creative adjustment in Gestalt therapy, which, according to Furtado and Gaspar (2022, p.4), "is, therefore, the process and the way through which we adapt to reality and its demands, but also reinvent it in order to meet personal needs or give them the best possible closure". Thus, the players had the possibility to face old situations, perhaps giving a new outcome, a middle way, a creative adjustment.

In the aforementioned scenes, all the characters manage to achieve a slightly different outcome, perhaps, from what the players used to do in real life. Azarrir gives up helping the villager and goes on his way. Not before, however, leaving the door open (according to her, so that the villager could enter and make the potion): *"on one side I*

thought, I've already done my part... There is nothing more I can do, sometimes I need to go my way" (Speech of the player M., interpreter of Azarrir).

Pinecone, even after hesitating, dives into the darkness of the door. In the sequence, although he does not go on stage to explain to the audience what was happening in the kingdom, he leaves the tavern without saying anything, without saying "no", allowing the possibility of, perhaps, resuming the dialogue with people in a new format or in a new place.

In addition to the emotion experienced by the polarity situations at stake, something that the players reported after the sessions was the possibility of solving the proposed dilemmas in a more creative way, enabling the experimentation of other paths, other existential territories: *"What I realized was that the RPG allows you to experiment more, allows you more creativity"* (M.'s speech). It was in this direction that the participants walked, perhaps approaching what Perls (1977a) and Zinker (2007) defend, in the sense of integrating polarities, in a creative way. In the words of the player M., who played Azarir:

I think contact can be more creative. Since it is a situation, it allows a place where the same social rules do not exist. There is that environment, with those characters and what can happen there. And then the consequences are different... So you have more openness to try different things, and this comes along with the creativity thing: if you have more openness you can be more creative.

Thus, the conflict of the situations proposed by RPG-therapy represents, perhaps, what was proposed by Zinker (2007, p. 222), when he recalls the "creative promise of conflict", which brings to light a potential to learn, to develop other paths. One of the possible effects of the experience, or "amplification" of polarities, consists of what Zinker determined to be "around the world". In the author's words: "if you fly north long enough, you will end up reaching the south" (Zinker, 2007, p. 223). Thus, as the characters/players move towards a polarity, they end up also illuminating the other side, integrating them in a healthier way.

We understand that one of the proposals of psychotherapy would be: "to experience and promote the patient's creative power to reintegrate the dissociated parts (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1997, p. 50), thus promoting a greater awareness of one's own self, and other psychological processes. In this sense, there are several ways to favor this path, such as working with dreams, exercises and clinical experiments (hot chair, empty chair), and, as we argue in this article, the use of GPR in clinical contexts.

It is also important to highlight in this discussion the fact that the polarities thought by the players were, perhaps, materialized and exposed in the character from what was of material made aware by the players, which can sometimes exclude elements that are more painful to admit in the field of the polarities of the self. Thus, it is possible to agree with Zinker (2007, p. 224), when he states that: "In general, self-image excludes the painful *awareness* of the polarized forces within us", causing players to choose polarities that are easier to handle therapeutically, or elements that are more accessible to consciousness. Or, perhaps, we are in fact dealing with individuals closer to what Zinker (2007) calls healthy, who are "aware of most of their polarities" (p. 222).

Thus, we understand that the RPG, as a psychotherapeutic tool, enables a potentiation of the therapeutic work with polarities and other patient issues. From the point of view of phenomenology, role-playing games are an important tool because, since it is not possible to access the patient's phenomenon itself, "they allow players to express themselves, to give meaning to their experiences, to reflect on the relationships between them and their characters" (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018, p. 246).

In continuity, it can be considered that the characters allow what is called "immersion" in the game and, by adopting a new identity in a fictional space (the game), the players can experience feelings, personality characteristics and behaviors that are the character's, and not entirely theirs. Thus, they experience what some authors call an "alibi" (Montola & Holapeinen, cited by Bowman & Lieberot, 2018, p. 248), allowing players to express themselves, in the most diverse ways, in a safe environment (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018), which does not, however, prevent players from sometimes experiencing what we call "Bleed" (bleeding, in free translation), that is, an extrapolation of the emotions of the game to real life (Bowman & Lieberot, 2018).

In this sense, what we have is an expansion of the possibilities of experiencing and getting in touch with elements of the self (polarities), increasing the capacity, through play, to integrate the polar elements and, in this way, trigger processes of creative adjustment, of subjective power, of production of health and *awareness*. By coming into contact with polarities, more *awareness* is produced about the internal dynamics of the subjects (Zinker, 2007).

Thus, we understand that the use of GPR in Gestalt therapy is an important clinical tool, considering that one of the objectives (and also method) of Gestalt therapy is to promote patient *awareness* (Ozturk, 2019; Yontef, 1998), a "giving" to be aware, or being

aware of the present (Alvim, 2014), being in contact with one's own body, senses, between the present and the person's own being (Ozturk, 2019).

When we talk about *awareness*, we are referring to "a conception of consciousness that is not rationality, but a kind of presence, bodily engagement in the world that provides a type of immediate and implicit knowledge of the field, as defined by Jean-Marie Robine (Alvim, 2010, p. 68). It is an opening to the new elements that emerge in the field. In the words of Alvim (2010, p.68):

Awareness involves sensation, excitement, and gestalten formation, which describe, respectively, an opening movement that allows oneself to be affected by a novelty, a movement toward something in the field related to it, and gestalten formation as the expressive totality of this encounter

Unlike a traditional psychotherapy session, the mediation of RPG allows you to experience situations, dramatized in the game, with infinite possibilities and possible outcomes, favoring the process of *awareness* of polarities.

When it comes to the production of *awareness*, we agree with Zinker (2007, p. 221), when he states that

When they achieve *awareness* clearly, conflicts can allow the person to perceive their internal differentiation; at the level of creativity they offer the possibility of integrated behavior, highly adaptive because it covers the entire wide range of responses between the polarized extremes previously experienced.

This integrated behavior, of which Zinker (2007) speaks, can be perceived in the scenes worked on in our experiment. In the challenges faced by Gunter, for example, contact with polarities, in addition to producing a creative adjustment, suggests the development (or discovery) of something new:

And... I think it reflects a little bit of me as well, of my journey of what I'm going through, and it was really important to have those moments here because, from the last session, I started to recognize that I can also allow myself to be loved, I can also allow myself to be cared for and I deserve that care, I make a lot of effort for many things and many factors for me to make an effort, I believe it is also to be able to enjoy some of this care. [...] I also feel that every time I needed to do something, Gunther he could make a decision, he could accomplish something. This made me happy because I didn't stay motionless in the face of the problem, I moved. And I realized that what moved me the most was the thought that my friends were in danger, I need to do something.

Next, to exemplify a little of the moments of *awareness* experienced with our experiment, we transcribe to the reader part of our last scene, where, after killing the final

'boss', each character had a personal confrontation with a mirror and the polarities experienced:

M. - My heart is still tututututu. I think in that last scene, I realized that when I think there's nothing else to do, I allow myself to dare even if I don't know what's going to happen. Is... Going right or going wrong no longer matters. The thing is to try something, and speaking of which I think I don't always need to get to the point of... is... I don't care about the result. Because I think there are things that need to be important and that I want to work. But that doesn't mean I won't make mistakes in the process. Being indecisive can also be the point of view that I am also making mistakes. So, in the end it doesn't do any good.

Narrator: Maybe it's part of the process sometimes.

M. yes... To search for my meaning, right? If I don't reflect on anything, it also gets complicated. Maybe I take on meanings that are not mine. I was very distressed when I was undecided about what to do, because I don't have so much experience.

Narrator: That's within your character's polarity too, isn't it?

M.: Okay, I interpreted it very well because it's part of me. And in affliction I allowed myself to be a little spontaneous. Express it, hit the pillow. And I think after that, I was finally able to make a decision.

Narrator: Very good by the way.

M.: And... Everything was fine. Super fun. I think I've grown a lot in recent years and this also reflects in my character, that even though I know my difficulties I'm also inside the "experience the other side", experience integration more often than before, and I think this may be what makes this whole process beautiful. It was very difficult to tell other people that it was not my responsibility, not to be able to handle demands that were asked to be shared with me. So much so that it's still very difficult for other people to realize that I've changed, but for me it's better now. I needed the changes, just as before I had to take care of things that were not mine. And today I know that what the other feels about something I choose, does not necessarily have to do with him. It frees but brings a little difficulty, but it's okay.

Thus, when we deal with the production of *awareness*, we are also talking about the objectives of Gestalt therapy, that is, to put us in contact with our polarities, maintaining a flow of *awareness*, expanding it (Alvim, 2010). Here, the work is similar to what Alvim proposes in the clinical context when, by focusing on certain ways of behaving, forms that are repeated in a mechanical way, we also have the possibility of promoting a "creative maladjustment", requiring the patient-player to make a creative effort to regain balance (Alvim, 2010), thus allowing the invention of other possibilities: "If there is security in the situation, there is the possibility of experiencing invention in the face of difference with the other (therapist), allowing us to rescue faith in the body, in feeling, and being able to be in its difference and singularity" (Alvim, 2010, p.69).

As we have been discussing throughout this article, the expansion of *awareness* allows the invention of other possibilities of existence, or creative adjustments, which is the way we adapt to reality, but also reinvent it, trying to meet our personal needs and giving the best possible closure (Furtado & Gaspar, 2022). Such reflections highlight the importance that the use of GPR can have in the therapeutic strategies of Gestalt therapy,

allowing an increase in the capacity for *awareness* and creative adjustments in a therapeutically safe environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study aimed to understand the effects of the use of RPG as a tool in group psychotherapy. Thus, focusing on working with polarities, we used RPG as a tool for a therapeutic group work, during three therapeutic sessions

The results point to a potentiation of the work with polarities through RPG, by allowing the experimentation and experience of the possibilities in progress for patients/players, allowing greater creativity in the chosen paths, facilitating and expanding the process of *awareness* and integration of polarities. The security of the therapeutic setting and the playfulness of the game allowed the participants to experiment with behaviors and paths with greater creativity, favoring creative adjustments.

Some limitations are also important to mention, especially the excessively long time of the sessions, generally three to four hours. One suggestion to minimize this difficulty would be to stipulate a limit for the number of participants between three and five player-patients. In addition, some possible difficulties can be found in sessions with patients unfamiliar with RPG, or even with more rational people, unwilling to dive into the world of fantasy, the main premise of role-playing games.

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