

## Creative Collaborative Dispositifs for the resignification of sexual assault

### Dispositivos Creativos Colaborativos para la resignificación del abuso sexual

Verónica Fonseca Gutiérrez\* 

Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogotá, Colombia ([veronicaf12g@gmail.com](mailto:veronicaf12g@gmail.com))

Andrea Carolina Velandia Paredes 

Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogotá, Colombia ([cvelandiap@gmail.com](mailto:cvelandiap@gmail.com))

Paula Andrea Rodríguez Abril 

Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogotá Colombia ([andrearodab@hotmail.com](mailto:andrearodab@hotmail.com))

Diana Janneth Laverde Gallego 

Universidad Santo Tomás ([dianalaverde@usta.edu.co](mailto:dianalaverde@usta.edu.co))

\*Corresponding author.

**Received:** March 30, 2023

**Accepted:** November 2, 2023

**Published:** November 15, 2023

**Recommended citation:** Fonseca Gutiérrez, V., Velandia Paredes, A. C., Rodríguez Abril, P. A., & Laverde Gallego, D. J. (2023). Dispositivos Creativos Colaborativos para la resignificación del abuso sexual. *Psicoperspectivas*, 22(3). <https://dx.doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-vol22-issue3-fulltext-2943>

### Background

The prevalence of sexual assault is a significant issue, which affects one in three women globally. In Colombia, statistics indicate that seven women are victims of sexual violence for every man assaulted, primarily occurring at home. Research indicates that this sort of violence can have repercussions on physical and sexual health, self-perception and interpersonal relationships. Colombian researchers assert that women who have been sexually assaulted often must prove themselves to be beings of constant and complete innocence. If not, it is expected that in the report made, the assault will be downplayed or ignored, leading to blaming the woman. This reinforces the idea that positions laws within a patriarchal framework and a society that sees women as commodities. Similarly, focusing solely on logics and discourses based on pain, suffering, deficit, and incapacity leads those who have experienced assault to construct blame-inducing identities. Thus, if the importance of narratives in identity construction is emphasized, sexual assault can affect identity narratives, leading to the construction of impoverished stories. For this reason, Narrative Therapy becomes an option for change: it is highlighted as a therapeutic approach involving the joint construction of new meanings through conversations. Techniques such as problem externalization and therapeutic documents, such as collaborative poems, are used to give new meanings to experiences. In addition, the concept of CCD is introduced as an innovative intervention strategy, based on the notion of device as a network of relationships, collaborative practices and art, questioning the dominant discourses and exploring new ways of inhabiting the world through creativity.

### Aims

To understand the processes of narrative re-signification of identity in women who have experienced sexual assault, using Collaborative Creative Dispositifs (CCD) inside a group psychotherapeutic process, in order to favor the emergence of alternative narratives. The specific objectives were: (i) to explore the dominant narratives around the discomfort related to the experience and meanings surrounding sexual assault; (ii) to construct a group psychotherapeutic process among women mediated by CCD, which favors change in the narratives, and (iii) to make visible the new versions of women's identities constructed from the principles of sisterhood among participants and researchers.

### Method & procedures

A qualitative research-intervention process was conducted with a subjective and hermeneutic approach. Knowledge generation occurred through interaction, considering intervention as a condition of research. A reflexive and narrative perspective linked to second-order cybernetics was adopted. Convenience sampling was used, which

allowed the researchers to select participants through an open call on their social networks and social media. Inclusion criteria were women who had experienced prior sexual assault, were of legal age, resided in Bogotá (Colombia), and were willing to collaborate with other women. A clinical research-intervention process was implemented from a systemic perspective, with reflective conversational encounters as a fundamental strategy. Five encounters mediated by CCD were conducted to facilitate dialogue on the experience of sexual assault and identity constructions in women. Narrative analysis was employed to explore subjectivities and the power of narratives in redefining identity. Transcription and coding of sessions led to the construction of analysis matrices in four categories: narrative construction of identity, experience of sexual assault, identity after sexual assault, and CCD.

## Results & discussion

People who have experienced sexual assault may attribute different meanings to their experience, and these meanings are not always traumatic. Emphasis is placed on the importance of resilience and the capacity for emotional mobilization to confront and transform pain, in addition to the need to process the experience in order to achieve resignification. After experiencing sexual assault, participants question and reject the terms "victim" and "survivor". They find these adjectives uncomfortable as they evoke pity or weakness, and feel that defining themselves with a single word limits their ever-changing identity. They choose not to adhere to these common labels, allowing them to narrate their experiences in a broader and more dynamic way. In the therapeutic process with CCD, the presence of cross-cutting elements such as group work and sorority were essential to enhance its effect. Sorority proved to be a crucial component in deconstructing and transforming oppressive narratives. Groupness, collaboration and support among women with similar experiences fostered the polyphony of voices and significant change processes, allowing the visualization and recognition of shared injustices, giving value to the experiences narrated.

## Conclusion

Narrative resignification in experiences of sexual abuse is possible under the therapeutic work with CCD, which more than an accumulation of techniques to apply, is a novel bet in which the developments of narrative therapies and artistic expressions are articulated in a collective context, in order to build spaces that humanize relationships and allow the emergence of versions of change. However, these techniques alone are meaningless if they do not start from a professional position where therapists and researchers privilege reflexivity, sorority, collaboration and the construction of support networks as clinical principles.

**Keywords:** group psychotherapy, identity, narratives, sexual assault

## References

- Anderson, H. (2012). Collaborative relationships and dialogic conversations: Ideas for a relationally responsive practice. *Family Process*, 51(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01385.x>
- Capella, C. (2016). Disequilibrium and loss of narrative coherence in identity construction: A piagetian perspective on trauma in adolescent victims of sexual abuse. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 30(4), 323-338. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/10720537.2016.1227737>
- Krayer, A., Seddon, D., Robinson, C., & Gwilym, H. (2015). The influence of child sexual abuse on the self from adult narrative perspectives. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 24(2), 135-151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2015.1001473>
- Linhares, L. V., Torres, A. R. R., & Diniz, F. C. (2022). "But she was drunk": Sexual violence and blaming the victim. *Psicología, Conocimiento y Sociedad*, 12(1), 84-109. <https://doi.org/10.26864/pcs.v12.n1.4>
- Marxen, E., & González, L. (2022). Alcance de los dispositivos artísticos y poéticos en la investigación en salud y salud mental. *Enfermería: Cuidados Humanizados*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.22235/ech.v11i2.2939>

**Conflict of interests:** The authors declare to have no conflict of interests.

**CrediT:** Conceptualization: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Data Management: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Formal Analysis: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Funding: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Research: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Methodology: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Project Management: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Resources: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Software: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Supervision: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Data Validation: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG ; Data Visualization: VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Writing (original manuscript): VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG; Drafting (proofreading and editing): VFG, ACVP, PARA, DJLG.



Published under [Creative Commons Attribution International 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)