

*Using Classical Psychodrama with women victims of gender based violence. Conclusions of the work conducted in Albania**

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***Summary.** This article describes our experience in using psychological support directed to women that are victims of trafficking or domestic abuse in Albania. In connection with the international research project "Empower", we chose Classical Morenian Psychodrama as the method of intervention.*

***Key words:** classical psychodrama, gender violence, domestic violence*

The therapeutic support interventions presented in this contribution are part of a series of concerted actions carried out in six countries in the context of the "EMPoWER" project, managed by the University of Padua

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and supported by the European Union. The main objectives of this international research project are - first of all - the development of awareness among women victims of trafficking or domestic violence about their responsibility in taking on the role of victims and in transmitting this role to their daughters. Second of all, we wanted to study the above cited phenomena and to test two methods (ecological and psychodrama) to address it. This paper describes the experience in Albania using classical morenian psychodrama method (Moreno, 1953). The realization of this project in Albania was made possible through the collaboration of the “Refleksione” Association and with the support of an Organization called “Different & Equal”.

Introduction

The experience described in the pages below is based on a joint intervention project conducted in six countries as part of ¹⁸ the “EmPOWER” project supported by the European Union and managed by the University of Padua¹⁹. The main aim of this intervention was to conduct an international research project on the situation of women victims of gender based violence as well as on making possible changes to their behavior by using therapeutic methodologies (i.e. Psychodrama). The implementation of this project in Albania was made possible through the support of the “Refleksione” Association and also in close collaboration with “Different & Equal” Organization in Tirana, Albania.

Before describing in detail how this project component was implemented in Albania, we will provide a brief explanation about the organization that hosted this project in Albania, as well as on the general situation. The briefing on our countries situation is very important in order to easily understand the second part of this article, specifically focused on classical morenian psychodrama and marathon sessions.

Albania: general background

¹⁸ The project is implemented in six countries re: Italy, Portugal, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania

¹⁹ <http://empower-daphne.psy.unipd.it/>

Albania is a relatively small country in South-Eastern Europe, in the West of the Balkan Peninsula, with a total area of 28,750 square kilometres and with a population of 2,831,471, of which 50.2 % men and 49.8% women (INSTAT, 2011). Albanian history has many examples of royal women, women historians as well as of women warriors who have fought for freedom and progress of their country. Albanian women have always walked side by side with men in war and in work. At the same time through, the history of the relationship between women and men, is a history of struggle, challenges and also cooperation to create equal rights and opportunities not only inside the family environment, but to further reflect it in a just society free from violence.

In the new socio-economic reality of these last twenty years of democracy, chances and opportunities have been created to affirm the role of women in society, as well as to break a lot of taboos from the past. There is a strong tendency to build a culture of affirming gender equality, from both the institutional and legal point of view. Albanian government and civil society have joined their efforts in many important causes.

Many positive and progressive steps have been fulfilled in terms of revising the legislation with a specific focus on gender equality and domestic violence. There is an approved law on gender equality (Law no. 9970, of 24.07.2008, On Gender Equality in Society,); the law against domestic violence (Law no. 9669, of 18.12.2006, On Measures against Violence in Family Relations), improved with in the year 2010; the national strategy on gender equality and against domestic violence, together with its action plan, (NSGE-DV, 2007-2010)²⁰; There are also a set of indicators in order to monitor the implementation of this strategy²¹; and established mechanisms at a central and local level in order to better address and solve domestic violence cases. For example, many capacity building activities are planned and realized at the central and local level; a lot of awareness raising campaigns are organized by using different media channels; a lot of international conventions are ratified, including the Istanbul Convention

²⁰ The first National Strategy on Gender Equality and Eradication of Domestic Violence (NSGE-DV, 2007-2010), approved together with its Action Plan by a Council of Ministers' Decision on December 19, 2007

²¹ Harmonized Indicators on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights in Albania have been developed and adopted with the support of UN Women Albania in coordination with the Inter-Ministerial Working Group under the leadership of MoLSAEO to ensure consistency in the use of statistical processes at central and local levels, in 2011

(2011)²², In principle, the de-jure situation is improved in a quite impressive way²³.

Unfortunately, the de-facto reality is not reflecting the same improvements. The old traditional mentality of the past is influencing life today. The expression “What happen inside the family, must stay within it!” has been like a “guiding principle” ruling everyday life and this is significant especially in domestic violence incidents.

For many years in Albania, violence against women was not perceived as a crime but simply as “woman’s destiny”. “Who bites you, loves you!” was another typical expression for justifying violence in the family, by believing that punishment was the most effective way of learning to be good: a good child, a good girl/good wife. The woman was considered “man’s property”, her de – facto rights were not mentioned as part of human rights, she had to deal with a lot of duties and responsibilities and she had to carry out all the work inside her family. In turn other family members did not respect her, especially in terms of property rights, family rights and marital rights.

From the property rights point of view, the woman was considered like “a foreigner in her own home”, meaning that she was not considered a member with equal rights in her family of origin, she had no rights on property such as lands, because her destiny and “real home” was in her husband’s family. While after her marriage, in her husband’s family, she was also considered again a foreigner, she was simply the bride with a lot of duties to carry out but with no rights on property and sometimes even with no rights of expression.

Furthermore, in the north of Albania there was a shocking tradition of “the bullet in dowry”: the daughter on her marriage day was taking in her dowry a bullet given by her father and this was a significant sign meaning that the daughter’s father was giving to the bridegroom the permission to kill his daughter if she wasn’t a virgin, or if she did not obey him, so he was giving away not only his daughter, but also her life.

After the change in the communist regime, a lot of women’s organizations were established that started to work on women’s rights, making women’s voices stronger, improving the legal situation and by focusing their activities and efforts on de jure and de facto reality.

²² Albania signed the Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence on 19 December 2011 and ratified it on 8 November 2012.

²³ The above mentioned laws and strategies will be further explained in the article

A first national study on domestic violence in Albania conducted by “Refleksione” Association in 1996 showed that the de facto reality regarding violence against women in the family was horrible: 80% of women interviewed disclosed that they were subject to violence (in a sample of 1500 women). There is a need to highlight that most of the women were addressing only physical violence and didn’t have any idea that there were other forms of violence such as psychological, economical, and sexual. In many cases, even physical violence was not perceived as abuse but simply as “a woman’s destiny”.

Situation analyses

The issue of women’s rights and gender equality has received increased visibility in Albania in the past 20 years, thanks primarily to the work of the non-profit community supported by international donors. Notwithstanding, it continues to remain a matter of concern. The factors that are responsible for gender inequality in Albania are the traditional gender-related stereotypes and the patriarchal mentality which are deeply ingrained and manifested not only in the active refusal of the concept of gender equality, but also in the absence of expectations that there should be gender equality, or lack of appreciation of what this truly means in a person’s everyday life.

The effect of the patriarchal mentality is further compounded by the transitional changes Albania has been going through since 1990. These have led to a disruption of the gender balance in Albanian society, and a situation where women and men have not been benefiting equally from the freedoms and rights gained. The transitional changes have also burdened the condition of women with the aberration of human trafficking, the increased severity of domestic violence, and a deepening divide between those who benefit from it and those who are left behind, a divide often along urban vs. small town/rural lines. At the same time, for women, issues related to poverty, unemployment, discrimination in the workforce, barriers to education and access to health services, as well insufficient representation in the decision-making process, have exacerbated.

With women traditionally being the backbone of a family’s well-being, and in more recent years with the increase in the number of female heads of households, including widows, divorced women, or those whose husbands have immigrated, these phenomena are framing the question of gender inequality both as a violation of women’s rights and as a serious obstacle to

speeding up poverty reduction in Albania, and short-changing its full potential for development. As noted in the first National Strategy on Gender Equality and Eradication of Domestic Violence (NSGE-DV, 2007-2010), approved together with its Action Plan by a Council of Ministers' decision on December 19, 2007: "If the issue of gender inequality, that is apparent in all aspects of social life in Albania, is not made the focus of social policies it will undercut Albania's efforts to achieve sustainable development."

As a fundamental civil right and a value shared by the European Union member countries, gender equality is now a crucial stipulation to ensure Albania's integration into the EU and to meet the employment and social cohesion goals under the Stabilization and Association Agreement Albania signed in June 2006. Yet, the challenges to implementing this legislation and policies remain, ranging from lack of implementational capacity and resources, to the relative absence of pressure to comply. A number of key issues remain in addressing domestic violence/violence against women in Albania:

- violence against women remains widespread in all corners of the country and in all social stratas. A UNDP and UNICEF funded survey which took place in November – December 2009 in cooperation with the Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), a comprehensive effort in documenting the domestic violence situation in Albania, found that no less than 56% of women between the ages of 15 to 49, out of a nationwide sample of 2,590, experienced at least one type of domestic violence, and it concluded that domestic violence prevalence found by the survey was most likely an underestimate;
- as noted in the 2008 annual progress report on the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence (NSGE-DV, 2007-2010) carried out by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, found that while the number of women reporting violence is increasing, the number of those who do not file reports and are victims of violence every day is much higher, a conclusion that is based on the overall elevated level of violence in the country, with women being victims in most of the reported cases;
- domestic violence remains the prevailing form of violence against women in Albania, counting for the largest loss of life statistic among VAW survivors;
- the government's commitment to combating violence against

women is present but hampered by an insufficient capacity and resources. This is especially true in the work with the local government. After prolonged efforts, the first government-supported shelter for domestic violence survivors was opened in Tirana in the spring of 2011. While this is a very welcomed development, it would still only be able to provide shelter for about 30 women, while the goal for meeting the Council of Europe's standards is for the creation of one shelter housing 7500 inhabitants;

- most of the work to combat violence against women is still carried out by NGOs, who continue to provide critical, though localized, assistance to domestic violence survivors, and engage in awareness-raising activities. There is still little progress in involving men and boys in efforts to combat violence against women and there are no programs targeting perpetrators of violence against women, despite the fact that the existing law on domestic violence requires their establishment.

Legislative situation/improvements.

Albania has taken significant steps towards human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and economic empowerment. The most relevant legal developments regarding gender based violence or domestic violence are as follows:

Law No. 9669, date 18.12.2006 -On Measures against Violence in Family Relations-, amended on September 2010. This represented a considerable step forward towards the prevention of family violence, in particular through the introduction of protection orders. Since the adoption of this law, there has been a remarkable increase in reported incidents of domestic violence.

Law No.9970, date 24.07.2008 - On Gender Equality in Society-. Apart from providing definitions on gender, gender discrimination, women's rights in the workplace, equality in education, combating discrimination by the media and equal representation, this law contains measures like the country's first quota for the under-represented gender in elected and appointed positions, and the strengthening and establishment of gender

equality structures at central and local levels of government. The Electoral Code (Approved by Law no. 10 019, dated 29.12.2008) adopted in December 2008 incorporated aspects of the 30% gender quota found in the Gender Equality Law into local and national party lists and some of the bodies that administer the elections;

- the first National Strategy on Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence (NSGE-DV, 2007 – 2010) and its action plan was approved on December 19, 2007. The strategy provided the basis for coordinated implementation of gender equality goals by all public institutions as well as donors in the country;
- the revised National Strategy on Gender Equality and Gender Based Violence 2011-2015 (approved with DCM no.573), dated 16.06.2011 and its action plan. The above mentioned document was evaluated and revised, in coordination with the Working Group on gender equality and domestic violence;
- Law No. 10 221 dated 4.2.2010: approved by Parliament in February 2010 the Law on protection from discrimination, which regulates the implementation and respect of the principle of equality in connection with a non exhaustive list of grounds, including gender;
- the amendment to the Economic Aid Law, recognizing the importance of government support for survivors of domestic violence and their children, meaning that heads of households (men) are no longer the sole claimant of government aid cash transfers, was approved in 2011;
- Council of Ministers Decision (DCM) No. 334, date 17.02.2011- Establishment and Functioning of the Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases-;
- domestic violence is considered now a criminal act and it is part of the Albanian Criminal Code, due to changes in Law no. 23/2012 ‘and after some changes in Law no. 7895, date 27.01.1995, -The Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania’-, has changed. This new Law was approved on March 1st, 2012 and was entered into force on April 11, 2012.

- at the end of 2011, the Albanian Government signed the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011) and this convention was ratified on November 8th, 2012.

The “Refleksione” Association

The “Refleksione” Association is one of the oldest women’s NGOs in Albania and was established in 1992. Since its establishment, Refleksione has had an excellent record of achievements in striving to fulfil its vision of “building a society of equal rights and opportunities”. Refleksione has pioneered and established several of the most successful initiatives on advancing gender equality in Albania. Refleksione has contributed extensively to the development of several key legal and policy documents on gender equality in Albania. This includes, but it is not limited to the drafting of the national strategies on “Employment and Vocational Training”, and on “Gender Equality” under the initiative of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2007). Refleksione has developed and implemented country wide public awareness efforts that have included working with and through the media. Since 2000 Refleksione has played a leading role in organizing the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women. For example, Refleksione put together a major public awareness campaign on the importance of using the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW /C/ALB/CO/3) in Albania.

Practical contribution related to domestic violence

Beginning in November 2007, the Albanian Network against Gender Violence and Trafficking (NAGVaT)²⁴, managed by the Refleksione

²⁴ This is a Network established since 1998, composed by five organizations respectively: “Refleksione” Association, Gender Alliance for Development Center, Counseling Center for Women and Girls, Center for Legal Civic Initiatives and Shelter for Women and Girls, and the projects of this Network that are supported

Association and supported by the UN Trust Fund, piloted a multi-sector approach to address domestic violence at the local level and thus ensuring the effective implementation of the above mentioned legislation on domestic violence.

Implemented in five regions, two in Northern Albania²⁵ and three in the south²⁶ the project established five regional Councils against Domestic Violence (CaDV), supported by five Technical Working Groups (TWG), with the participation of all governmental, NGO's, educational, and judicial institutions responsible for and engaged in the implementation of LDV: i.e. the local government officials at the municipality level, representatives of municipalities, county and the prefecture offices, the local police, health and social services, district courts, prosecution and bailiffs, Ministry of Education (MoE) regional offices, and the local women NGOs that work to prevent and combat DV/VAW. CaDV members came together to enact a coordinated and comprehensive response to prevent and combat DV, informed by the perspectives and voices of women, especially of victims of VAW.

CADVs provided a fruitful platform for cooperation, serving as a basis for establishing a referral system for victims of DV in the five regions, as well as identifying concrete action plans for addressing DV, and informing the DV budgetary planning processes. This model was very soon transformed into the Coordinated Community Response against Domestic Violence model.

Based on this experience, with the request of the Ministry of labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, in 2009 UNDP supported the drafting of a National Platform for the Establishment of the Coordinated Community response against Domestic Violence in Albania²⁷, as well as the implementation of a coordinated community response in three more municipalities²⁸.

On July 2010, the Albanian Network against Gender Violence and Trafficking with support of the UN Trust fund began replicating again the

by UN Trust Fund in terms of establishing the coordinated community response against domestic violence, are leaded and managed by Refleksione Association.

²⁵ Rrëshen and Shkodër

²⁶ Berat, Pogradec and Vlora

²⁷ The National Platform is drafted by Ms. Trisha Gentle (USA) and Ms. Monika Kocaqi (Albania)

²⁸ Korca, Durres and Kamza

same project in five more Municipalities²⁹. While with the support of other important donors such as USAID³⁰, Austrian Development Cooperation³¹ or Welthaus Graz³², “Refleksione” Association replicated the same coordinated community response model in four more municipalities in Albania and actually UNDP is working in three more municipalities. This model, which is known as “referral mechanism”, has also been introduced by the state authorities in four more municipalities, so to date this mechanism is established in twenty four Municipalities in Albania.

Structure of the Project in Albania

From October 2011 to December 2011, there were four psychodrama marathon sessions held in Albania, in the capital city Tirana. The intervention was divided into sixteen therapeutic support meetings held by a Psychotherapist Psychodramatist and a Psychologist Auxiliary Ego professional.

Specifically, the group of patients was made up of two groups of women: one of them was a real group of seven women residents in a refuge managed by the 'Refleksione' Association at the first phase of recovery; the other group was an artificial group made up of six women who lived in independent residences - at the second phase of assisted return - under the protection of the same Association.

The first group included individuals with an average age ranging from 16 to 20 years, the second group was composed of older women. For every marathon session, each group was subjected to two sessions of Psychodrama lasting three hours each, during which an Albanian interpreter facilitated the communication.

Our goal was the observation and individuation of internalized persecutory figures - considered positive authorities - to recognize personal behaviors, imitative, desired or actualized, with the most vulnerable people. We wanted to consider any ambivalence of the role of women within violent relationships: the woman's position of persecutor and / or victim,

²⁹ Lezha, Puka, Elbasan, Manz and mini-municipality no.6 in Kombinat, Tirana

³⁰ This project was developed in Shijak Municipality

³¹ Through the project “Equity in Governance” (EiG) Refleksione replicated the coordinated community response in Gramsh and Lushnje

³² In the Municipality of Lac

due to the internalization of the violence experienced and due to the identification with the aggressor. We also wanted to work on raising women's awareness regarding the violence experienced and witnessed in the intergenerational relationship with parents and in the processes of primary socialization in order to promote the end of the generational mandate of subordination of women in regard to violent relationships.

The first Marathon Session

In the graph below (Figure. 1) women came into contact for the first time with a psychodrama group methodology. One of the two groups of women was a real group composed of women who belong to the same community with interpersonal relationships and dynamics which are already developed and consolidated; this created an 'initial hesitation and anxiety' in approaching tasks. Through the specific warming-up designed to free spontaneity, the anxiety level went down quite quickly during the session, and the girls clearly expressed their needs and the need to find a new direction in their lives. «Spontaneity plays, in the dynamics of the individual psychic, a function antithetical to that anxiety. (...) It encourages the transformation of reality, the breaking of schemes and the avoidance of crystallizations» (Boria, 2005, p.32).

Many of the participants expressed anger: feelings which they use in order to express themselves and present as a response to the situation of the previous life, in a traditional culture where the woman's ability to activate her role of "woman of the house" is advocated. This data is very important in a highly traditional culture and is in stark contrast with their lives and life story.

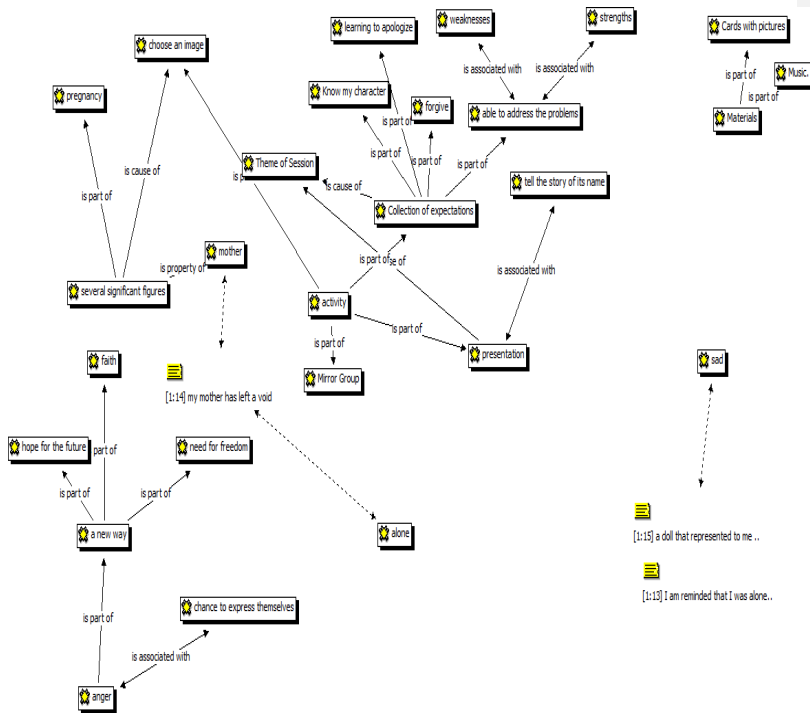


Figure 1. Women who begin psychodrama sessions for the first time

Second Marathon Session

The theme of this session was ‘family roles’ (Figure 2) Albanian society is still anchored to traditional patriarchal roles (respectful grandfather, and the importance of being seen). Through a study of family roles and emotional experiences associated with these participants, thanks to the activation of the ‘observer-I’ («The I-observer perceives and defines with a word the emotional content that has already emerged from the action»-

Boria, 2005, p.157), they gained greater awareness of their role within the family and some of their staged role of "rebellious daughter", and the consequent need to abandon the "bad road" to find new dimensions of life and new opportunities for acting out new and more spontaneous roles in the world. The women in the community who have had a history of "danger" in their lives are often considered outcasts by their own family: this activity focused on what the wrong path was, why they took it and how it happened: absent mother, low level of culture, to attract family attention and the desire for superficial things.

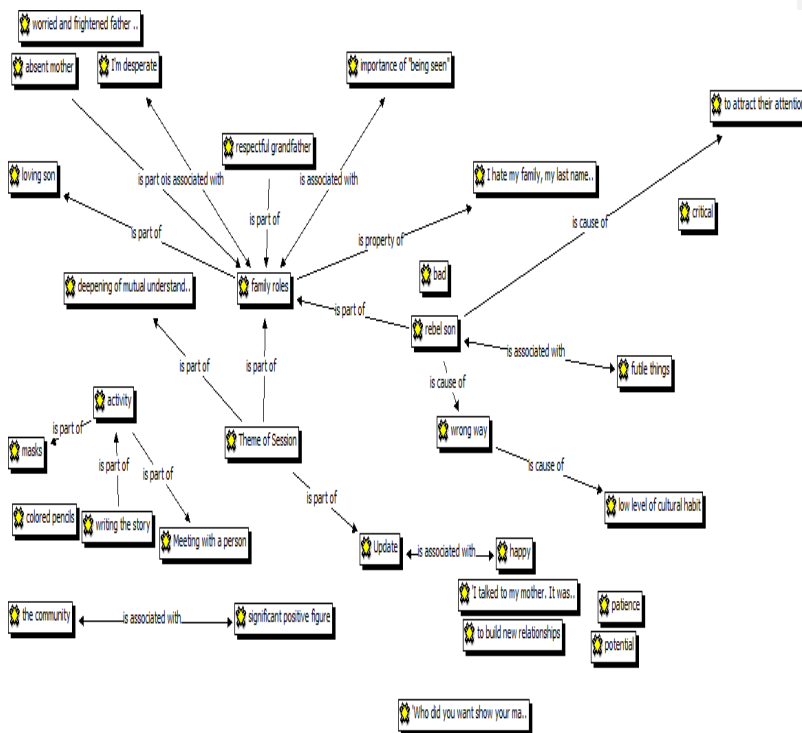


Figure 2. Family roles

Third Marathon Session

Working on gender roles and on their internalization, women get closer to the first and most important internalization of male and female images: in the family. "Within an auxiliary 'good enough' group, the psychology of the woman has the opportunity to become re-born and to re-start thinking about herself and her ways of relating" (Guglielmin, Gola, Basilicò, Gorinova, Nikolova, 2012). The father's figure emerges in connection to the betrayal, to violence and jealousy; the mother's figure is connected to the domestic sphere and to the transmission of traditional roles (to cooking, and to endure violence). Through psychodrama activities, participants increase their awareness of how this has affected their lives and their choices. The relationships between men and women seem to be characterized by poverty, betrayal, violence, and 'physical and soul death'. The final phrase which was shared: "I recognized a lot of things" was really important.

Fourth Marathon Session

The participants, particularly in the last session, identified their fears and resources (Figure 3). The emerged fears are connected to prejudices, to the pain for the mother's pain, to the fear of making wrong decisions again and to the anger and hatred towards themselves.

The resource that emerges and stands out, particularly if considered within the Albanian context, is "the ability to do on your own" and to be able to be a different person from their mothers without being bad.

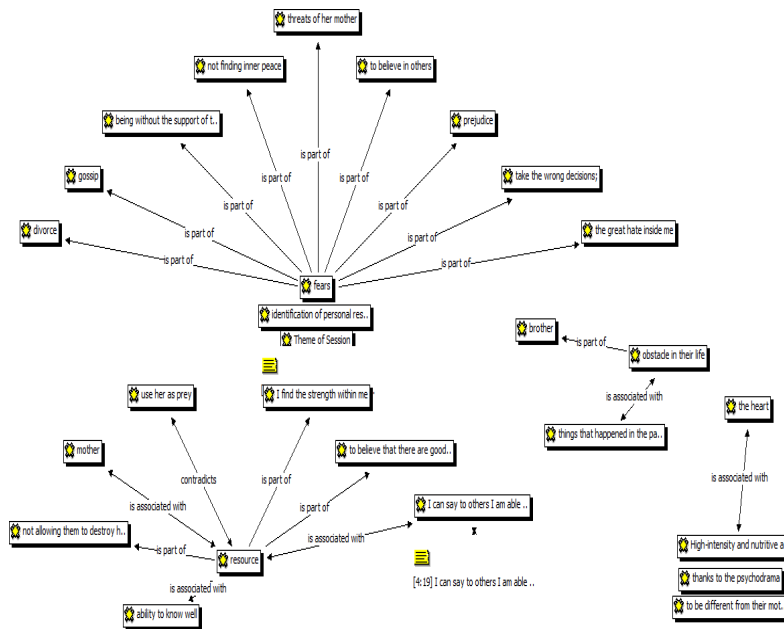


Figure 3. Active techniques allowed participants to identify their resources and their fears

Conclusions

Working hard on roles and on the reverse-role, a fertile ground was created where the participants were able to access their inwardness, taking again the right to be themselves in a perspective of growth and inner freedom.

The ability of “role reversing”/ or of “experiencing the other” creates the possibility of a meeting. Buber and Moreno make us reflect on the fact that a healthy person has the potentialities and capacities for this kind of meeting as soon as he/she is able to “reverse” or “to experience the other” (Fonseca, 2012). The more the personality is in suffering the greater the

difficulty in interpreting roles and changing them, both in psychodrama and in life (Fonseca, 2012). Women in the group were allowed to access their resources, and to share their suffering and became more motivated to experiment new roles and new possibilities in life.

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Change.

*A group experience using the body and archetypes
to recognize and prevent violence**

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Summary. *Our project involves an intensive workshop for women that adopts a psychological and body approach towards the individual and the group. The reference model we use is a psychodynamic one with a special focus on Jungian's Depth psychology, the field of women's psychology and on two specific authors: Valcarengi and Bolen. The myth and story of the Greek goddesses are used as archetypes, namely patterns of existence and behavior. The work through the so-called "virgin and vulnerable" goddesses, has been the key to explore women's 'forms' and roles. These aspects highlight different feminine skills with a specific focus on those aspects related to conflict within relationships. The intervention implies adopting techniques like psychodrama, dance-movement-therapy and Self-Bioenergetics-Analysis in a constant integration of body and mind.*

Key words: *Body, psychodrama, awareness, archetypes, empowerment*

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This work proposes several projects developed by the writers in different social contexts in the Piedmontese region: Women's House of Ivrea, Centres for counselling and gender-related violence prevention, in the House of the Neighbourhood of San Salvario in Turin.

The project involves an intensive workshop for women and it adopts a psychological and whole body approach towards the individual and the group, within a so-called "holding environment": a warm and nonjudgmental environment where women can express their deepest emotional aspects together with their individual potentialities, with the purpose of gaining awareness and empowerment, as well as preventing violence.

The reference model we use is a psychodynamic one with a special focus on Jungian's Depth psychology, women's psychology and in specific two authors: Marina Valcarenghi (2003) and Jean Shinoda Bolen (1984). The intervention takes place on two levels: a psychological and corporeal one, with a constant focus on the integration of body and mind, and it implies the adoption of the techniques of psychodrama, theatre, dance movement therapy and Self Bioenergetics Analysis.

The experience in a 'protected' group, allows the development of body-emotional skills (emotional regulation) through the activation of body awareness, enhancing self-consciousness which is rooted at the individual and group level experience, based on the connections of body sensations, emotional experiences, images and words. The body is an essential component and an elective place for exploration and self-seeking. Recent discoveries in neuroscience have shown that individual identity and the mind, are essentially a social phenomenon deeply rooted in intersubjectivity and the expression of a single mechanism rooted in somatic genesis (Gallese, 2007).

The myth and story of Greek goddesses are used as archetypes, namely patterns of existence and behavior that we recognise from Jung's collective unconscious. The work developed from the Jungian analyst J. S. Bolen (1984) through the so-called 'virgin and vulnerable' goddesses, has been the key to explore women's 'forms' and roles. These aspects highlight the different feminine skills with a specific focus on those aspects related to conflict within relationships. As Jung says (1934-54), the use of imaginative language facilitates the emerge of authentic inner images, which can be looked at, listened to; images that one can become aware of as they are not filtered and conditioned by logical thinking and rational thought.

Particularly, the 'vulnerable' goddesses embody the Archetypes of women's traditional roles (mother, daughter and wife), roles that are focused on a relationship. Hence the identity and well-being of the women/goddesses depend on the presence in their lives of a significant relationship. Such Archetypes express a need of belonging and bonding typical of women, a need that makes them focus on the other and makes them vulnerable. In the myth, all three goddesses are victims: «they are raped, abducted and dominated or humiliated by male gods» (Bolen, 1984, p.17).

The title of the workshop (change) describes an approach oriented towards reflection, towards gaining awareness, and an approach that aims to change. Work that moves on a process of reflection and awareness tending towards change.

The idea is to create a protected environment that enables women to look at their situation and develop the proper skills to break free from the cycle of violence that is often perpetuated from mother to daughter. The archetypes of Demeter and Persephone, representing the archetypes of the mother and the daughter, allow these women to enter into these crucial female roles and to explore them deeply through a creative imaginative way.

In particular, the present work is addressed to a group of women between the ages of 26 and 65 years old, that took place at the Women's House of Ivrea, where we worked in particular with different forms and states that the woman experiences in the mother-daughter relationship, analyzing it through psychodramatic representations of significant moments with their mothers and daughters, real and illusory, retracing and 'mending' wounds and/or memories while, searching for new meanings.

By giving priority first to the body and emotional experience, it has been possible to build a new environment, intended as a mental and physical space, in which it was possible to experience and share the as-if dramatic fiction, as the reality of the 'here and now' in which psychodrama plays a fundamental role in the study of individual stories (De Leonardi, 1994). By building a group where one could bring and share personal difficult situations and one's suffering, the topic of the work emerged through three key words, identified by the same participants: space, mother, body.

Space: the working group, identified a fundamental need for these women to carve out a clean and dedicated space where they could stop and remain on their own outside the multiplicity of tasks and roles they have to accomplish in daily life. Thus, the specific focus of the mother-daughter relationship showed the importance of providing a body and mind space as

necessary elements for the daughter in order to grow up and become an independent woman with a Self of her own made up of her body and mind.

Mother: Working with the goddesses Demeter and Persephone proved to be important in order to break the chains of continuity and perpetuation of the cycle of violence and pain, and also as an opportunity to reflect on the female 'task' to give 'birth' as an inner creative quality that must be re-discovered and valued.

Body: In the workshop, the body was identified as the bearer of the corporal self that outlines one's own being 'here and now', as a different person but at the same time similar to the mother, in a state that is in constant change and therefore needs greater attention and care.

The adoption of a space only for women has proved to be appropriate and effective as it has encouraged the development of women's personal and social skills, allowing for a sharing and a contact able to contain and respond to the support needs of those for whom it is more difficult to ask for help and support.

In the group, the bodies of the participants expressed their difficulties and their suffering related to their past experiences and personal growth; each participant looked for a new contact and for a different and more suitable approach in living their relationship with themselves and the others.

The experience of a group that contains and shares, has allowed to reprocess the negative and crystallized experiences, revealing slowly a strong resource of empowerment. In fact, women feel more capable of dealing with certain situations and learn (i.e.: understand in their mind and feels in their body) that they are not alone or unique in these experiences.

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*Protagonists through drama**

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Summary. *The following article deals with an innovative intervention of “empowering psychodrama” specifically addressed to women that have been victims of violence or are still living in situations of domestic violence. In particular, some features of this intervention, named Building Resilience, seem to be well-suited to making the women aware of their personal and social resources; so, they can revise their past experiences and are helped to actively and positively reorganize their own life. Some of these features are: the group dimension, the possibility of experiencing new points of view, the analogical and symbolic dimension that help the “practice of spontaneity”, the setting within the framework of a women association, the net working, some parallel individual psychological sessions, the presence of two psychologists.*

Key words: *Domestic violence, building resilience, empower, psychodrama*

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Psychodrama can be immensely powerful and life-changing (Gausseau & Gasca, 1991); specifically, women victims of violence are guided to remember and redefine their past experiences by using wider perspectives they can actually experience first hand.

Psychodramatic techniques can help these women become aware that they play an active role in the maintenance of intimate partner violence as well that they would be able to structure relational patterns alternative to dependent and violent ones.

Building resilience can be defined as an intervention of “empowering psychodrama” addressed to women that have been victims of violence or are still living situations of domestic violence. The main purpose of this intervention is to promote a sense of psychophysical well-being and personal safety; to encourage relationships and sense of belongings; to promote recognition of their own needs and emotions; to develop awareness of personal and social resources; to develop affirmativity, creativity, spontaneity; to encourage development of an internal locus of control; to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence; to encourage trust in future changing. Methodologies used are sociodrama (during the warming-up) and analitic psychodrama (jungian) and their techniques: role reversal, dubbing, mirroring, virtual scenes.

The intervention is addressed to a small number of women already supported by “Donne & Futuro onlus” association (Turin); each of them have already attended some (from 4 to 20) individual psychological sessions. The first cycle of seven meetings enabled the women to become “confident” of both other members and psychodramatic techniques; at the end of first cycle, involved women felt belongings to the group and they have asked us another cycle of meetings.

Obviously, we are completely aware that a single cycle of seven or eight meetings is insufficient to reach our clinical objectives; we believe that more cycles of psychodramatic sessions are necessary not only to support these women for a longer period but also to allow new members to join our empowering psychodrama group.

Additionally, we believe that during the psychodrama cycles some individual psychological sessions are needed as well, in order to fully deal with what they experienced during the group interventions. We would like to point out another critique of Building Resilience’s general plan is fortnightly meetings in order to make women’s participation possible (on the one hand women still involved in violent relationships are very influenced by their partner’s control and moods and, on the other hand, women who are trying to rebuild their life and their independence have to cope with trials, managing childcare, everyday planning and they live up to

social expectations and family connections with a lot of psychological and material efforts³³). As a matter of fact, every meeting has been confirmed via text messages, in order to remind each woman.

What about the strong points of Building resilience? Because of both the characteristic setting (within the framework of an association whose mission is to help women victims of violence and their children leave a violent situation and to promote their psychophysical well-being and their social and professional integration) and the net working with the other association's professionals and volunteers, we can use a global view of women's personal way (social, legal, housing developments) and we can have more instruments to sustain women's emancipation. Indeed, another important positive point is that Building Resilience plan at the same time two psychologists who alternatively conduct and observe group dynamics; participant observer can also take part during psychodrama plays, for example with suggestions to conductor or dubbing.

Although first intervention was short, we have already observed some gradual developments and changes in the women; for example, one young woman decided to leave her husband after eight years of violent relationship. In the first part of intervention, she looked really ambivalent, unhelpful, "paralyzed" and she used to excuse and "protect" her perpetrator (e.g. she hid her husband's behaviour from her parents and from her mother-in-law); afterwards, also because of having the opportunity to compare with others experiences similar to her own, she wasn't affected anymore by her husband's false promises and she was able to leave the cycle of violence at last, by using her own resources (she fled to safety by seeking refuge in one of her friend's house).

After a lot of resistance, another woman (passive-aggressive and deeply identified with the victim role) could play the aggressor role as well, beginning to foresee her responsibility and the complexity of the situation; furthermore she was able to take some small initiatives (e.g. she asked legal counselling about her marriage rights) and, during a sociodrama play, she felt spontaneous «for the first time after a very long time», according to her own words.

Women that already left their perpetrator, like both the other participants, would just like to «leave their past behind rapidly and to begin again everything in a different way»; because of this "magic belief", they are often at risk of ending up again in a violent relationship and, as a

³³We cannot forget that a lot of victims of violence report PTSD symptoms, as well.

consequence, of becoming more and more depressed and isolated or to become aggressors themselves (for example, towards other men or with their own children). Psychodrama can help them to reframe their own experiences, to remember their past mistakes and to learn from them, by linking them to internalized relational patterns and by underlining their autonomy and their resources and potentialities, at the same times.

According to the literature (Herman, 1992), we think that just through the group support experience, women that are victims of violence can not only overcome isolation, shame and stigma (thanks to meeting with others that have experiences similar to their own) but also rebuild personal power and create new social ties, both previously destroyed by the violence cycle.

Because of the long time women take to come out from the cycle of violence (Walker, 2000) group intervention could be more appropriate to effectively support their emancipation than just individual psychological intervention (that is also less economically sustainable); furthermore, for women who have already left the perpetrator, empowering psychodrama could prevent the establishment of new violent relationships and could improve their parental self-efficacy and competence.

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*Psychodrama and sociometric work with women victims of trafficking in The Netherlands**

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Summary. *This paper explores how Psychodrama and Sociodrama exercises with women victims of human trafficking, is fundamental for the recovery process allowing to build relational networks. According to Moreno (1953) each person lives in a Social Atom, that it is the smallest social unit. The social atom is composed by all the people (real of fantasized) that are essential for one's person life. Based on this concept, Sociodrama techniques are used to work in groups with traumatized and isolated people. Several other psychodrama techniques have proven their positive therapeutic effect in the work with trafficked women.*

Key words: *trauma, trafficking in human beings, psychodrama, sociodrama*

Sociodrama can be defined as a dramatic play in which several individuals with assigned roles act out with the purpose to analyze and

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