



## The Operative Group with Women in Social Vulnerability

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**ABSTRACT** – The research studied the results obtained from an operative group with women under vulnerability conditions, considered from the perspective of psychoanalysis. We configured it as qualitative, adopting participant observation as a technique for data collection. A group with women who requested psychological care in a social institution in the state of São Paulo was attended for a period of one year, weekly, with an average of six to eight patients and duration of one hour, aiming at personal and group emotional development. There have been changes in the perception of intersubjective relationships with external range to the group and promotion of mental health. The operative group has shown to be a positive tool for its participants, where subjective issues of the subjects and the group could be elaborated.

**KEYWORDS:** operative groups, social vulnerability, psychoanalysis, mental health

## O Grupo Operativo com Mulheres em Vulnerabilidade Social

**RESUMO** – A pesquisa estudou os resultados obtidos de grupo operativo com mulheres em condições de vulnerabilidade a partir da Psicanálise. Configurou-se como qualitativa, adotando a observação participante como técnica para coleta de dados. Foi realizado um grupo com mulheres que solicitaram atendimento psicológico em uma instituição social no interior do estado de São Paulo, pelo período de um ano, semanalmente, com média de seis a oito pacientes e duração de uma hora, visando desenvolvimento emocional pessoal e grupal. Ocorreram mudanças na percepção das relações intersubjetivas com alcance externo ao grupo e promoção da saúde mental. O grupo operativo demonstrou ser uma ferramenta positiva aos seus participantes, no qual questões subjetivas dos sujeitos e do grupo puderam ser elaboradas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** grupos operativos, vulnerabilidade social, psicanálise, saúde mental

The group exists since the first civilizatory movements, in the first conditions of grouping and occupation, which served for the protection and evolution of the species. The group structure enables the formation of identity and collectivity at the same time. Its use and meaning has changed during history, giving new configurations and understandings of all its dynamism. We currently find in the group a potential that has been developing since the 1950s by the study of group dynamics proposed by Kurt Lewin, and we found in its application great therapeutic effectiveness (Zimmerman & Osório, 1997).

It becomes undeniable that the individual and the group exercise a reciprocal influence, even more so when we observe the unconscious manifestations of the group situation of a mass (Freud, 1921/1996). New understandings broaden the use of the group, leaving from the simple union of people to a new dynamics organized by fantasies, resistances and desires, in which the subject achieves collective amplitude, corroborating for the idea of the formation of a group psychic apparatus, as defended by Kaës (2017).

The first group we participate is one who has the family function, which takes care of biological, affective needs

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■ Submetido: 26/07/2020; Aceito: 15/05/2021.

and provides the first limits and rules that organize baby / child learning and their entry into society. It is not possible to choose who will accomplish this function on the part of the baby, knowing that he/she is already born inserted in a context, a type of family, a culture in which passively he/she receives information in the early years of life. From this moment, we begin to constitute our identity and we contact other groups, which by the relationship of identifications and the emergence of autonomy will weave the singularity and the manifestation of desire, creating the possibility of a more authentic choice through the bindings in our groups (Zimmerman & Osório, 1997).

In the work with small groups, we can classify them according to their variations such as age, work environment, their configurations, approaches and purposes (Zimmerman, 1993). We highlight the purpose for being a factor that organizes the management of the group and the practice of the coordinator, providing a dialectic specific of the group work. There are two types of purposes, the operative and the therapeutic. The operative is distinguished by its focus on teaching-learning, exploring the task for roles mobility, restructuring the conceptual operating reference scheme (Pichon-Rivière, 2005; Fernandes, 2003a). All this process that allows mobilizing the roles generating understanding and overcoming of stereotype are developments that directly interfere with the mental health of the operative group (Castanho, 2012).

There is no possibility of conducting a group with an operative purpose without bringing therapeutic results, or that therapeutic groups do not bring learning. The ability to influence mental health positively is inherent, and it impacts on the preference of the Ministry of Health for its use in primary health services (Brazil, 2011). In the field of

Health, we realize that the use of the groups presents great relevance in the maintenance of health and in the articulation of the social insertion of the subject (Fernandes, Souza, & Rodrigues, 2019). It becomes more significant when we find that one of the fundamental brands of social vulnerability is the fact that the individual is isolated and marginalized due to shortcomings and / or difficulties encountered in their meaningful relationships with the community to which he/she belongs. In the area of social assistance, groups are a tool for building ties, strengthening relations and promoting mental health (Menezes & Avelino, 2016; Maia, 2017). In the context of social vulnerability, these characteristics are fragile, there is the exclusion or deprivation of information, rights, material resources, and they may express themselves through education, income, difficulty accessing services, among others (Didoné et al., 2020).

Maia (2017), in the experience of developing an operative group with families in CRAS, notes that handcrafted activities associated the task to subjective contents. The feeling of the participants at the end was satisfaction by learning and building from themselves and their experiences with new resources. In the social assistance network the users themselves strengthen the use of group practices, motivate others to participate and recommend it to nearby people (Fernandes, Souza, & Rodrigues, 2019).

This article derives from a master's dissertation and aims to demonstrate the applicability of the operative group with women in a social vulnerability condition, which do not have financial conditions to access private services, are faced with long queues in public health service units and demand for mental health care. The group enables a speech space, for listening, welcoming suffering and understanding, and refunding their own vulnerable condition.

## METHOD

### Design

The research delineation was developed through a qualitative approach, being a strategic study. For Minayo (2010), strategic research is based on the theories of social sciences focusing on the concrete problems that emerge in society. Thus, this type of research arouses a view aimed at the real, aiming at the action of society or government, contributes to the promotion of mental health for the population in the context of social vulnerability. It can be said that it acts in an intersection between the clinical dimensions and, therefore, in the field of health, and an inherently social dimension, connected to the area of social service. In this form of intervention, there is a superposition of the clinician and the social.

The qualitative research was able to incorporate the issue of the meaning inherent to acts, relations and social structures. We believe in the close relationship between the object and the subject, providing the emersion of meanings, beliefs and values of reality in focus (Minayo, 2010). The work with the participants came from the conception that their speeches are marked by different words, by singular knowledge of each subject.

The focus of interest of this research being a qualitative methodology was broad, having data described through direct and interactive contact of researchers with the situation of the object of study. The phenomena was understood according to the perspective of the participants and, from there, the interpretation of the phenomena was made. We did not care about the numerical context, but with the deepening on the

understanding of a social group, fundamental to qualitative research (Gerhardt & Silveira, 2009).

Because it is the investigation of an operative group with women in a vulnerability condition, the study aimed to make room for the reception of the participants' vulnerability and suffering issues and in the course of the process recognizing and expanding the ability to solve priority problems, reflecting on the speech that guides the condition of singular vulnerability of each one of them in order to problematize everyday life and to improve the subjective conditions of each woman. From raising tasks to discuss proposals for action which the group demanded, the group becomes a time to rethink and rescue the experiences, in a process of collective construction of knowledge and creation of open space to the debate of issues that women themselves put in reflection.

## Participants

Participants in this research were women over 18 years old, who were on the waiting list of GEAPSC psychological care - Group of studies and community social psychotherapeutic care, and accepted to participate in the group with the purpose of research, agreeing and signing the Informed Consent Term. GEAPSC is a non-profit legal institution, established in 2002 in the interior of the State of São Paulo by a team of volunteer psychologists, aiming at psychological care for people in social vulnerability.

There were a total of eight women who participated in this group. Amanda, 21, single, is a student of the last year of the graduation in Mathematics at a Public University, who did not work and faced financial difficulties to stay there. She sought care for frequent sadness and concentration difficulties. Sara was 58 years old, married and mother of two children, graduated in Pedagogy, but she did not work in the field. She was unemployed and had family problems, married at age of 19. Lisa was 40 years old, a widow and had a son. She was unemployed and deeply suffered for her husband's death. Intense mourning remained after a year with permanent crises and the frequent report of her mother's helplessness. Anna was 41 years old, has three children and had difficulty dealing with her boyfriend. She had no financial conditions to pay for psychological treatment. She reported self-preserving and the contempt of her mother. Bete, 78, a widow and retired, but still worked as a cleaner. She had fragile social and family bonds. She went to the group to learn how to deal with the anguish to take care of her six-year-old great-granddaughter, while her granddaughter was arrested for trafficking. Mariana, 39 years old and unemployed, was trying to understand her feelings about her ex-husband, who betrayed her and left her debts. She referred trouble raising her children. Simone was 28 years old, unemployed, reported on the "lying manias" told to the husband, who was always open to dialogue, but she insisted on lying in relation to financial spending. Camila,

50, reported having fibromyalgia and depression. She was retired and had financial difficulties mainly for the purchase of medication. Fictitious names were adopted to preserve the identity of the participants.

## Procedures for data collection

In this study, we use annotations of the operative group with prior authorization of the subjects involved as an instrument for data collection. The operative group occurred over a year, with weekly periodicity and duration of an hour, closed structure and containing five to eight participants and a coordinator, the researcher. The inclusion criteria were: women, in a social vulnerability condition and above 18 years. Exclusion criteria were: serious pathologies, mental disorders and suicide attempts. The information was collected through the reports of the participants themselves in the preliminary interview to the group, carried out by psychologists responsible for the screening in the institution. Participants worked on a task, built in the group, where they were invited to reflect on their knowing / doing, through a debate directed to the choice of the most appropriate strategies for coping with the present challenges. It was by solving concrete problems arising from real life, that several knowledges were mobilized and articulated, leading to the development of new skills that have provided new responses to the conditions of complex social reality, in which they sign up for every day. The focus of the operative group is teaching-learning, thus leading up "the possibility of knowing the unconscious group dynamisms that can make postures and previous models more rigid or flexible, making it difficult or facilitating the registration of the new" (Fernandes, 2003c, p. 209).

We also use as a technique for data collection the participant observation, which has its origin in Anthropology. As in the definition of Becker (1994), collection occurs also through the participation of the researcher, allowing the observation of relations and behaviors. It aims to establish between the researcher and the group a relationship that is limited to the fieldwork, participation in the most profound way possible, through an observation and experience of moments resumed as important. The observation was selected as one of the data collection techniques in this study due to the possibility of capturing a variety of situations to which there would be no access but through questions made to the subjects. Even in the group situation, some data escape due to not spontaneous situations. Based on Gonçalves (1994), the direct observation of the process enables the clarification of its internal logic, since it allows monitoring and recording the movements, speeches and actions. For the recording of the observations, we used the field diary following the proposal by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), who says that the content of the observations is composed of a descriptive part and a reflective part. The descriptive part describes

in detail and the reflective part is made of the researcher's personal impressions, points to be clarified, changes in the perspective of the observer, feelings, problems, evolutions of his expectations and opinions during the study. The Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of FAMERP with a favorable opinion of n. 3.382.605 and Caae n. 13382619.5.0000.5415 approved the present study.

## Data Analysis

We use the content analysis method with the contribution of the theory of operative groups and psychoanalysis, from an approximation to the dialogue and contextualization of the research participants that focused on the relationship between the participant and the group. During collection, analysis started making it more systematic and formal. Thus "content analysis parts of a foreground reading of the speakers, testimonials and documents, to reach a deeper level, surpassing the manifest senses of the material" (Minayo, 2010, 308).

For Bardin (1977), the phases are organized in three: pre-analysis, which consisted of the field diaries together with the notes of observations made throughout meetings, the hypotheses and objectives of the group (Bardin, 1977; Gomes, 2007). The exploitation of the material was carried out with several readings of the data collected and organizing the theoretical statement and meaning nuclei (Gomes, 2007). In the last stage, the interpretation, the raw results were meant

in order to punctuate interpretations of the objectives or new discoveries (Bardin, 1977).

Psychoanalysis of groups based on the contributions of the authors Enrique Pichon-Rivière and René Kaës contributed to the understanding of the material provided, going beyond the manifesto, where there is the singularity of the subject, in the alterity that in a group emerges and orientates the meeting of each one own subjectivity. Using the speech as a tool, which when "directed to the other is not without effect ... can not only transform who hears, but who does" (Cruz, 2015, 95), thus enabling the exchange of feelings, information, support, opening for the frailties and potentials that are projected into the others who also suffer, positive consequences are obtained (Silva, Castoldi, & Kijner, 2011).

Influenced by the dynamic unconscious, where by the group there is the possibility of presenting them in their various roles and by the bonds, something extracted is fundamental because it "has at the heart of its conceptualization the emotional experience" (Fernandes, 2003e, p. 46).

Through this, we analyzed the dynamics of operative groups relating them to the latent subjectivity of participants in the construction of meanings. We adopt the following steps: comprehensive reading of the selected material, exploitation of the material by identification of meanings underlying the speakers and the elaboration of interpretive synthesis, seeking to take into account the context, understood as the social and historical context of the patients and the meeting with empirical data (Gomes, 2007).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thirty-one meetings were held within eight months, starting with eight participants and remaining with six. The analysis was distributed in three nuclei of meaning: the fantasy of abandonment, personal suffering (religion; what is to be a woman?; the ideal group of the group) and the importance of the group.

### Abandonment Fantasy

In the first configurations of the group, it becomes primordial structuring it as a special space for speech, listening and the task. We defined days and schedules, physical supports (room, chairs, and table) and psychic supports (secrecy). However, in this group prepared to be fertile, we can come across subjects fully resistant "which prevents the work of treatment, all that blocks the subject's access to their unconscious determination" (Chemama, 1995, p. 192).

The idea of "duckling" arises as a fantasy, bringing conceptions of love they deserved to have, the position they occupy and the desire to turn into an object capable of being loved. In this meeting, the theme focused on the family:

*Anna: I disappoint more and more, the problem of disappointment is that you know you are capable, I know of my capacity, intelligence, but I could not go ahead, I believe it is a family block, my mother has six children, three women, three men, and I have always been the ugly duckling. . . I cannot stop, I'm not prone to stop, but every day it's harder, and I see myself alone, I have a father, I have a mother and I have brothers, but I have no one.*

Resonance appears *a posteriori* in the speech of one member of the group, where "communication is born from individuals and proceeds in their total network" (Fernandes, 2003b, 148), articulating individual fantasy to a configuration of an imaginary process of group order. It is valid to understand that the myth and fantasy sustain something of the same order, to organize the whole experience around a definite final story, even if there is no knowledge and autonomy about it. All "new" history contain in its core vestiges of a story told by others, which revives in the subject of the unconscious its unique form.

The myth is a tale that develops to say something more that itself through riddles and mysteries. It is "a sacred story; it reports an event that occurred in the primordial time

“(Eliade, 1972, p. 9). However, it also has parcels of puzzles, confusions, which “seem to be, arbitrary, meaningless, and absurd” (Lévi-Strauss, 1989, 20), but configure a logic that is usually found universally. Freud (1914/2012) presents us this same idea, in which apparently disconnected events have a significance in the daily life of the neurotic, that is, that we still have somehow in some psychic or mythical traits. Lacan (1952/2008), in turn, demonstrates us how the myth in particular makes a function in our uniqueness. We take the myth to demonstrate the psychic organization of the group, their fantasy and their manifestation modes.

What emerges as the “ugly duckling” takes shape as a myth in the group and presents other stories that contemplate the meaning that “is not linked to the sequence of events, but rather, if you can say so, to a group of events” (Lévi-Strauss, 1989, p. 66).

**Lisa:** - Mom, are you going with me to my house? Because, imagine how I was, twenty years with a person I had just buried him (weeping voice). Imagine the state I was in. Do you know what she said to me?! No. I saved my car and went alone, I was alone, and I stayed there, alone for five months after which I sold the house and went to another place. Yesterday this happened with the car. Everyone wanted to help me, comfort me, what about her? So you think, IS THIS A MOTHER OR IS THAT A BIRTHGIVER? For me, this is called a mother who begets, unfortunately. Therefore, I think this pain is due to this rejection...

**Amanda:** Continuing what Lisa said about family, this week I stayed at home, and my grandmother on my mother's side is just like Lisa's mother, she makes differences between son and grandson.

**Mariana:** It's complicated to deal with this situation, what Lisa said moves me... Mother, this theme of mother... but I also feel this rejection and, as you said that she did not seek you out in the moments when you felt you needed her need the most, I feel it every day, because we want to be close to our mother every day. There are times that are complicated, you want them a lot. Look, we all have mother issues!

The mother as a depositary object allows others to transfer their frustrations into the same object, and, in this, an unconscious pact is elaborated as identification, which is “a process in which our identity is constructed, our subjectivity is constituted in this process - recognizing these others me in us” (Pagés & Ávila, 2003, p. 85), where the unique affections of each participant can be cast on the same representation, allowing for the first bond.

Let us think then that it could be alienation. However, this process would take place by the total surrender to the drift of the Other. The subjects who are in the group do not alienate themselves, but momentarily fall asleep on the identifications, which provide the bond while there is a suspension of the mobilization of change. Then, they subject themselves, showing that each one “is submitted and structured in this subjection”, where “it is also inscribed

in the mutual relations between the subject and the other” (Kaës, 2011, p. 222).

The subject makes use of this space as his own and invested by him, building unconscious bridges that form and organize the group's body. There is then a subjection of the group, placing the suffering as the responsibility of another self, and so the first fantasy emerges. The fantasy “is a small pocket novel that we always carry with us and that we can open anywhere without anyone seeing anything in it, on the train, in the cafe and most often in intimate situations” (Nasio, 2007, p. 9).

Fantasy is necessary to deal with the anguish of the impotence of carrying out unconscious desires and helps the identification of the subjects' attachment to a group, being an organizing factor of the first dynamics, and that “each member brings a reference scheme to the group, and, based on the common denominator of these systems, a group ECRO will be configured in successive “spiral turns” (Pichon-Rivière, 2005, p. 144).

Questions about the relationship with the mother and family, creates a space for the object to be described in another way, detaining aspects that broaden the perspective, giving condition to new symbolizations.

**Mariana:** My mother is not thrilled with my victory, but with defeats she is thrilled. I feel it, that she is thrilled! . . . But she won't change, she's 70 years old, she won't, it's no use, there are things that... I changed with her. I changed. Until then, I suffered from being defeated because of my mother. It still hurts, of course, a lot.

**Anna:** I miss this hug from that mother's affection. But, then I have some neighbors who are more than my mother, but they are not my mother!

After attributing the blame for all the problems to the mother, based on a reflection made by the coordinator “Has the relationship with the mother always been like this?”, there is silence, “one of the powers of the group is rooted in the possibility that groups can offer to install a delay, a drift – as Freud –, in the same recourse to a task” (Jasiner, 2007, p. 33).

In this sense, when pointing out an unknown, the hole is presented, which dismantles the fanciful speech to get in touch with another aspect, then it returns the subject displaced from the position he held and is referred to the lack that consists in the very structuring of the subject and the group. A process begins where the configuration of the lack of maternal love becomes the group's lack for sharing the same signifier: “That night I remembered her”, “I miss this hug from that mother's affection”, “Nowadays I say good things, but I cry. This thing is very complicated, people, it's very sad”.

It was necessary to crack the link between myth and fantasy, a myth that positioned the subjects and the group itself incapable of reflecting, as “the myth fails to give man more material power over the environment” (Lévi-Strauss,

1989, p. 28). On the other hand, the fantasy that articulated the mother's position as hostile, actually speaking of a desire, "is the enactment of an imperious desire that cannot be satisfied in reality" (Nasio, 2007, p. 10).

I use the story of the "made duckling" to demonstrate that the entire reconstruction takes place in the midst of this myth, reproduced in the oedipal condition, and which follows the structure of a timeless unconscious (Freud, 1915/1996), where what affects the subject and makes him suffer is not only marked by its chronological time or recent events, but by the return of childhood issues that organize adult life. Freud also scores (1931/2019):

In the first line, the jealousy of other people can be mentioned: siblings, rivals, alongside whom the father also has a place. The child's love is immeasurable, it demands exclusivity. However, a second characteristic is that this love, after all, also has no goal, is incapable of full satisfaction and, fundamentally for this reason, it is doomed to end in disappointment and to give way to a hostile position. (p. 293).

The unloved and rejected child among the brothers repeats itself. They present in the other mother the insufficiency of a function that will obviously never satisfy the group, as it is a request from the Superego, which by characteristic will always demand a lot and, consequently, what has been achieved will never be enough. Rediscovering this love that becomes representative of the lack repeats itself incessantly, as it is always seeking and not finding. The drive investment shifts to the group imaginary, creating this space where the lack can be filled, associating the space of speech, listening and respect as a maternal, complete environment, where the duckling has the opportunity to become a swan, with valued characteristics, being able to be loved and who rediscovers the love in the group, in others who share the same fantasy. In addition, when confronting the relationship between reality and fantasy, holes appear and try to be sutured, but there is always emptiness, impossible to cover, but which keeps trying to be imagined. This gap insists on opening through what Freud (1921/2011) points out to us as the ideal of the self.

For Kaës (2011), de-subjection is a complex process that is based on the experience of separation from unconscious alienating alliances that produced alienation. In the group what is said cannot be erased, it is supported by intersubjective relationships and returns as a question in the group's task. According to Jasiner (2007),

the place of the task refers to the unfinished, incomplete, which is never wanted at all, which remains to be realized and that the time marks an illusion, an ideal, and each time, from the device, it is planned that the other will be necessary for realization. (p. 28).

Therefore, the task has this function of investment, organization and disorganization of the current structure, of resignification in three levels, the intrapsychic, the intersubjective and the group space.

## Personal Suffering: The Religion

When the group is formed, it integrates parts of the subjects' history in this "group moment", configuring a logic, where some aspects become more decisive at the expense of others, especially in the way they understand reality and suffering. It is characteristic of the group to use religion to explain and support two points: the first is religion as a support to go through suffering, without which it would be impossible; the second is the design of suffering, which they feel they are destined to go through.

In these fragments of sessions, we can find in the speeches the perception of God, as the one capable of helping to bear suffering.

(Session 2) **Sara**: *The pain of losing someone close is really great, I lost my parents and this is a pain that corrodes, that goes away with time and **God can help a lot.***

(session 19) **Camila**: ***You take this sadness and the love you have for God, that is great, give it to God.***

(session 20) **Beth**: *My husband was very good to me, but now I suffer raising Silvia (granddaughter), now Gisele (great granddaughter), for these little things. I have everything. Thanks to God, no one needs to help me, **who helps me is God.***

The cultural development process is marked by the attempt to master nature, using various explanations throughout history, whether through myth, the gods or science itself. However, he insists on failing. There are always riddles that are not possible to answer, increasing our frustration, helplessness "and, along with it, the longing for the father and the gods" (Freud, 1927/1996, p. 26). That is why culture finds in religion unquestionable certainties to euphemize contact with our own lack. During the sessions, another aspect of the power of divinity appears, where it proposes destiny, this unknown and meaningless entity for humans.

(Session 2) **Vanessa**: *I lost my dad, I got close to him in the last few moments and that loss hurts, **but God knows what He is doing, so it is on His time.***

(Session 10) **Simone**: *That was a trauma, because I took care of them (refers to the brothers). To this day, I think, **God writes straight with crooked lines.** I was not there to go through this (death of brother).*

(Session 15) **Amanda**: *My last dream is to get married, **God willing,** to build my family.*

(Session 24) **Beth**: *I always told her about this young man, he was arrested inside my house, I had a criminal inside my house, I told him: - You are a thief! Look at the courage, because I saw it, do you believe he wanted to kill me inside my apartment? I noticed it: **God took him away.***

Fate and permission are directly linked to the divinity to "reconcile men with the cruelty of Fate, particularly which demonstrated in death, and compensate them for the sufferings and privations that a civilized life in common

has imposed on them” (Freud, 1927 / 1996, p. 26). We can define that “Divine Providence expresses the divine will in the laws that govern the world. Evidently, these rules are necessarily benevolent, since God would not contain anything in himself that would preach his destruction” (Coppieters, 2003, p. 117). Only their appearance would be severe, but for purposes that would protect us from outside forces and that would be rewarded in some way, whether in this life or after death (Freud, 1927/1996). According to Freud (1921/2011), the group is resistant when it comes to giving up its drive investments and repels anyone who seeks to do so.

**Coordinator:** *So, don't you control anything?*

**Mariana:** *No, we do not.*

**Coordinator:** *Are we here for nothing then?!*

**Sara:** *Stop it. Of course I do, I came because I wanted to, even though I am dragging myself.*

**Anna:** *I think I have no control over anything, because I think about my whole life, I structure everything, when I get there...*

**Sara:** *It does not go the way we plan.*

**Mariana:** *It never goes.*

**Coordinator:** *If it is providence, what do you want to change?*

**Anna:** *Providence in a certain situation.*

**Sara:** *(laughs)*

**Anna:** *But in this situation, it involves many things, which cannot be the same person, if it is going to be the same person, why come this step?*

Obviously, deposing God was not an interventional choice. It would entail several problems, as denying what so far is constitutive of subjectivity, intermediary of relationships, and structuring of the psyche of the subjects and the group would fail in the ethics of analytical listening (Lacan, 1959- 1960/2008), probably leading us to a wild interpretation (Freud, 1910/2013). Thus, the risks would be unimaginable, removing from the group the mechanism they use so as not to deal with the anguish of not knowing. This would lead the group to devastating resistance, even to its dissolution, or on the other hand (unlikely), acceptance of the exchange condition, which would lead the coordinator to assume the position of holder of the truth, that was previously in the hands of God, which would lead the analyst to fail again in his listening.

Religion is an important part of culture, directly influencing people's psychic lives. It provides an apparatus of explanations that signifies life experiences, guides morality and social organization since primitive times (Freud, 1914/2012). Durkheim (1960/2008) finds the supernatural among the primordial aspects of religion, and it is necessary to be highlighted, being an explanation of facts.

A notion that is generally considered to be characteristic of everything religious is that of the supernatural. By this term is meant every order of things that goes beyond the reach of our understanding; the supernatural is the world of mystery, the unknowable, the incomprehensible. Religion would

thus be a kind of speculation about everything that escapes science and, more generally, distinct thinking. (pp. 54-55).

We can then think of religion as an unfolding of the soul world, more organized and with its transmission model being made by the family in order to base behavior, that is, in its moral potential.

## What Does it Mean to Be a Woman?

The second point to be discussed opens up space for how the figure of the woman comes to constitute a representation in the group. In the seventeenth session, we reflected on: what would it be like to be a woman?

**Amanda:** *The woman has a lot of determination, there are women who are married, single, mother, independent. I think that all women on the street, regardless of age, live with insecurity and fear of what will happen, there is a lot of verbal violence. Being a woman is being discriminated, society judges us. Being a woman is all that, **you have to be strong, determined.***

**Coordinator:** *Is this the reality?*

*(All silently agree, simply with a nod).*

**Beth:** *We have to be really strong. However, not all women have the same capacity as us; one is different from the other. I think since I was born I have been like that. Whatever comes ahead, you must face.*

**Coordinator:** *Is woman facing it? You agree.*

**Mariana:** *Yes, it's the foundation, support, the family, force and courage, but in short it's strength, it's fortress, being a woman is being strong.*

**Coordinator:** *In addition to fighting, do they have to be the basis of everything?*

**Anna:** *I believe that is right. When there is a problem in the family, the first person they look for, son, husband, and is the family support, is the female base.*

The main characteristic that builds women for this group is the strength she possesses, for daily facing the adversities of life and also for being the “base”, referring to a double meaning, the one who can provide for the family, be fertile, and the one that must support, as a structural base, the investments of third parties, being strong, or, in other terms, passive. Nevertheless, the term passive should not be taken in its moral aspect, but in its libidinal aspect, considering that “a great deal of activity is needed for a passive goal to be established” (Freud, 1933/2019, p. 317). Moreover, it is due to this proportion invested to be passive, to receive what the other deposits in me, that I can think of the group as the maintainer of a singular way of suffering.

We resorted to Molina (2011), who corroborates the idea of women as a position of existence, and because it is a position, it is susceptible to change. Nonetheless,

Language formations precede individuals and inscribe them in certain positions in the symbolic order; “man” and “woman” are the first signifiers that designate us as soon as

we arrive in the world, before any possibility of choice, before the infant becomes a subject of desire. (Kehl, 2008, p. 9).

Providing subsequent generations with defined positions is a fundamentally cultural characteristic, where femininity will only be built from the identification with these positions, by the subject's choices, "femininity is an inapprehensible object of thought, and on the other hand, for women themselves, is part of the register of the ineffable being that has no need to be thought of in order to be" (André, 1998, p. 190).

Nothing that is said to be a woman is questioned, everything is right. Women are strong and must continue to be. The representation that is made is the emergence of the position occupied by them among the restricted aspects that culture has provided and the choice they made of these aspects, based on their identification.

### The Ideal Bearer of the Group

Moreover, there are those in the group who embody the "Woman" who possesses what they all lack, assuming the foric function of the ideal bearer. It is through Beth that this becomes possible. She is the oldest of the group (78 years old), widowed for 16 years, takes care of her 06-year-old great-granddaughter, as her granddaughter is detained on drug trafficking. In a period of her life, she lived with a drug dealer, her granddaughter's boyfriend. They all lived together in the same house and Beth claimed that he planned to kill her. She feels abandoned by her family (brothers and sisters), but reports that she has no rancor and declares in several meetings that we must be strong, in addition to not feeling guilty.

(Session 12) **Beth:** *I do not blame myself like that. I may have done wrong things in my conscience, but I do not blame myself. But there are people who say, - I am to blame. This is sad for you to hear. It is on a daily basis that good things will happen; everything changes, on a daily basis it will change.*

A function is presented that puts Beth as the ideal bearer, not blaming herself. She shows us that she does not feel guilt like the others in the group. In a meeting that was defined to read a letter expressing who they were, only Beth wrote and, therefore, she was the only one to read it. After reading it, it moved all the participants.

**Sara:** *Wow.*

**Beth:** *This is what I found to write, it took me two days to think and then I wrote it.*

**Sara:** *What a lesson.*

**Anna:** *It is great.*

**Sara:** *I liked it, Beth, now I got the courage; this is a great reflection for us.*

Beth presents admirable aspects to the group, such as faith, strength, coping with problems, but something essential was the presentation of the letter. She was able to perform the proposed task, which no other participant did, putting herself in a different position. What the Self has not been

able to do, only the ideal can. Beth is the practical example of this. She causes admiration from the other participants, she moves from "not doing" to "doing" breaking with ECRO.

(Session 21) **Anna:** *I think she is very strong (referring to Beth), I want to get to that stage.*

**Beth:** *Where I live, everyone comes to talk to me. - Ah I love you, you are a warrior. I pay attention to all the same.*

**Camila:** *You are a person of faith.*

As Freud (1921/2011) elaborated, the subjects of the mass choose an object and place it in the place of the ideal of the self, thus identifying each other through the Self. Beth is this object, and brings traits with which they identify themselves, like faith, and also for having attributes they desire. We must not forget that Beth occupies the foric function, and "the subjects who fulfill them enjoy certain benefits and suffer some inconveniences" (Kaës, 2011, p. 165).

We broadened our view of Beth as someone who has benefits for accepting to be placed in the ideal place, but that can only be confirmed insofar as this position is sustained. It gives in to the unconscious, which presents us with its transforming character, the real proof of what the group aims for. The ideal bearer is a concept that arises together with the proposition of a foric function. The phoric function is a place assumed by a member of the group, where he states something of the group and its relations, "it is a bearer of signs: a traffic light . . . of the symbolization process that can rely on these signs" (Kaës, 2011, p. 170). In order to be the ideal bearer, it is necessary to carry the characteristics of the ideal of self. Freud (1921/2011) describes it as an instance that separates itself from the Self, and that to the extent that the Self cannot satisfy external demands, it would be in the ideal of the Self that he would find this satisfaction. He can incarnate "in the figure of the leader, who receives and represents the abandoned part of the formations of each one's ideal" (Kaës, 2011, p. 164).

### The Effect of the Operative Group

The group is a meeting space that crosses the field of meanings, where one hears beyond what is said, "a meta-communication, that is, it simultaneously communicates something else" (Fernandes, 2003e, p. 49).

(Session 10) **Lisa:** *For me the group is important because I see that everyone has problems, because we think it's just us! You start to hear different stories in which each one acts in a different way.*

(Session 26) **Camila:** *That thing, thank God I can still smile on the outside, but there are times when we cry inside, right, but we come here, and we talk, talk, talk. But I can go home well. I have not solved everything here yet, that is what she said, here we can talk about our ailments...*

Identifying that others have problems is seeing through the other oneself who was until then alone. In situations like this, anguish is shared, and in the simple act of listening, the



feeling of welcoming is heightened, providing momentary relief. The speech that is provided by the group and where it is possible to suffer provides opportunities to listen to different stories, puts the subject to think, reflect from the place of the other, who - in an attempt to help them - finds tools for their own issues.

*(Session 20) Beth: I love participating, I really wanted to come. Here I wanted to continue, a place to open my heart. I have a brother, I have a sister, but they don't care, so here is an encounter.*

*(Session 27) Sara: To me it feels like a family, it feels like a family, you know?! It is very pleasant, for me it's very good.*

It is from the family that one discovers oneself and becomes human. It is generally the mediator between civilization and this purely instinctual organism that comes into the world. It provides us with language, transmitted through affects and their representations.

The family is an encounter, whether through blood ties or other ways. That is where the subject starts walking. And the group is the space where you learn to walk again, in other ways. It is a new Other, which allows us to speak and gives us the opportunity to listen to our own group voice. It is there that a desire can arise; it is the space that was able to absorb what no previous family could, where the lack of a member is spoken and felt. The group embodies the family metaphor, tells us what we miss in each other's families, the place where we can say without moral judgments, but which also has its own flaws.

The group's dialectic remounts a scenario capable of bringing the subject closer to his past, present and future, contrasting with other subjects and who creates their own reality, in a becoming of experience that cannot be apprehended in time, "the subject is submitted to the test of the unconscious alliances of which he was an integral part and of which he has to free himself to raise awareness that these alliances were, on the one hand, constitutive of his subjectivity" (Kaës, 2011, p. 218). It is necessary to emphasize that the change is not only in the scope of behavior, but that it crosses it, modifying how the unconscious subject positions itself in relation to what makes him suffer, in the face of desire and lack.

*(Session 22) Anna: Although I have missed my mother a lot for many years, today I decided to send her a message (All enjoy the action).*

Resistances are being fragmented, thought through, and put to the test to the extent that it is possible to withstand the anguish.

Active adaptation to reality and learning are inextricably linked. The healthy subject, as he apprehends the object and transforms it, also modifies himself, entering a dialectical interplay, in which the synthesis that resolves a dilemmatic situation becomes the starting point or thesis of another antinomy, which must be resolved in this continuous spiral

process. Mental health consists of this process, in which reality is learned through the confrontation, management and integrative solution of conflicts. (Pichon-Rivière, 2005, p. 12).

This fragment of the session demonstrates that the learning of reality that Pichon indicates us can go beyond the limits of an objective reality, moving towards a learning of psychic reality organized by the unconscious subject's fantasy, which always seeks the fulfillment of desire. Anna reports to the group that there is a longing for the mother for many years, which makes no sense when we relate this longing to the real mother, as during the sessions the main complaints are made around meetings with this mother, as well as frequent conflicts and divergent opinions. Her discourse is organized by the fantasy that seeks ways to satisfy the unconscious desire to replace the mother and retake her hypothetical place.

In the learning relationship and in the advancement of resistance, it is necessary to consider the fantasies and their respective desires, so that the subject can focus on the particularity of his/her mental health. In addition, when we learn a little more on the representations, "killing" and "missing", we are faced with totally different affects, which separately the Self would have difficulty in dealing with. The idea of killing becomes very distressing and even unbearable, especially when it comes to the mother, but when a docile compound such as missing/longing is added, the suspension of repression is allowed, so that it appears in the representation.

Another aspect to be highlighted is how the group exerts influence on the individual's individual psyche, but in addition "the group existence allows to live realizations of unconscious desire according to the original modalities, inaccessible otherwise" (Kaës, 2017, p. 313). Anna's experience outlines two possibilities for us: firstly, enabling the group to update the unconscious fantasy and desire, and secondly, the experience that the group's psychic apparatus itself produced, capable "of elaborating its answers to the questions that everyone asks oneself about origin and end, sexuality and death, desire and the interdict, difference and similarity, relations between generations" (Kaës, 2017, p. 313).

*(Session 22) Sara: This question is revealing, it pokes deeply, this is very cool, it's painful, it hurts, but it's very revealing, I'm discovering myself at fifty-seven, I'm learning to know what I really want, my dream, my goal, the path I must take.*

As already expressed, the subject of the unconscious is not temporal, so he learns about himself, as if he were still in infans, as if he never knew who he was. Learning is not the same as just cognitively recognizing the world, but getting closer to emotions, dreams, goals, which can be captured for a moment in the experience, because learning is also something of desire and "desire [is] always a desire for Something Else" (Lacan, 1957/1999, p. 16).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The group as a device presented itself as a possible tool to articulate and install a misunderstanding, where certainty, destiny and vulnerability itself could be questioned, and, besides that, in transference, the cradle of the bond, the sensitivity to bear anguish was developed and could improve different perspectives on some problem of the woman and/or the group. The task-centered model has an effect that affects the subject at two main levels, the manifest and the latent, reorganizing the subject's position. In this context, we can understand that the operative group with women in

a condition of social vulnerability proved to be effective over the course of the meetings, and developed symbolic capacities that had been dormant until then. In addition, the operative group provided the possibility to seek autonomy, to regain a perspective at themselves and restructure their own way of promoting health. The singular speech moved among others without losing its identity, attaining power through the group contribution, and returning as a product, which demanded responsibility not only for what was said, but also for everything that remain unsaid.

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