

**Abandon the coat
Experiential group about clinical psychologist's identity**

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A this research was driven by the fundamental idea that one of the main methodological competencies of a psychologist is to be able to think one's emotions (especially those formed within a relationship) and to use them to build theories on the relationship itself. In this context, the project aims to explore the role identity of the trainee psychologist, that is to say the mental representations (fantasies, subconscious associations, myths) of those who have just finished their university journey and are about to embark upon the world of work in the field of applied clinical psychology.

Keywords: role identity, mental representations, experiential group.

INTRODUCTION

This research was driven by the fundamental idea that one of the main methodological competencies of a psychologist is to be able to think one's emotions (especially those formed within a relationship) and to use them to build theories on the relationship itself. In this context, the project aims to explore the role identity of the trainee psychologist, that is to say the mental representations (fantasies, subconscious associations, myths) of those who have just finished their university journey and are about to embark upon the world of work in the field of applied clinical psychology.

The group-analysis format, already in use at the University of Palermo Psychology course for its formative potential for the integration between theory, practice and personal involvement, was deemed of particular interest for this analysis.

This experiment is in continuity with University of Palermo's ten-year history of including this technique as part of their courses, on the grounds that group experiences should form part of the non-conventional didactic techniques used to shed light on the personal implications of psychology work (Ruvolo, Profita, Lo Mauro, 2007).

The group-analysis method proved itself ideal for an exploration of the theme of the psychologist's identity.

Group relationships favour the creation of awareness and the elaboration of one's own symbolic-emotional representations in relation to the Other, be they a colleague, a user, or a patient. Furthermore, it constitutes fundamental training for the clinical relationship.

The group-analysis group is also a useful instrument for a co-constructed, peer-led training. This is for two reasons: first of all it is a favourable setting for transitional experience, for experimenting with the creative parts of the Self, but also for the integration, re-constitution and concretisation of potentially very significant parts of the Self in relation to groups, institutions and organisations that the individual belongs to.

The group-analysis group is then a simulative ("as if") system for reflection on one's own professional identity. This aspect, coupled with the awareness that what happens within the group does not have the same consequences it would have in the outer world, is reassuring for the users and helps them maximise their freedom of expression and stimulates their learning (Lo Verso, Di Blasi, 2011). Group-analysis methodology also allows for positive experimentation with what will later be instances of institutional

transfer in a psychologist's professional life. Moreover, it provides an environment for authentic interpersonal debate. In so doing, it contributes to the construction of new meanings about the profession of psychologist for those involved.

Specifically, this study involved seven subjects, all training in Psychology at the time. The opportunity for this formative experience was promoted to students in the Universities of Reggio Calabria, Messina, and Palermo. Most of the eventual participants were students of the University of Messina.

The experience took place at the Istituto Mediterraneo di Psicologia (I.Me.P), a social co-operative based in Reggio Calabria, active since 2007 in the field of community mental health, and in advanced training in psychology.

The project was articulated into four 3-hour sessions around the following themes: “Being psychologists”, “Identity exploration and building”, “Empathic mirroring and relational work”, “Project development”.

In this complex environment, the researcher was at once data collector and analyst, but also direct observer of the processes of the group-analysis group. At the end of every session, the observer and the facilitator exchanged their reflections on the themes covered and on the group dynamics emerged, and discussed potential interventions of an explorative and connective nature to propose at subsequent sessions.

The audio-recorded sessions were analysed through a textual analysis methodology inspired by Grounded Theory, and supported by the use of the Atlas.ti software. The outcome is a series of graphs that map the theory underlying the groups' narrative and the process of its development.

Strengths and limitations

This contribution to the research represents a small fragment of knowledge to add to the general considerations around the personal experience of the identity of the psychologist (Rizzuti F., Guidi M., 2011; Albasi C. et colleghi, 2007; Battistelli A., Majer, V., Odoardi, C., 2009). That is the cognitive-affective characteristics, which makes the identity of the psychologist from the point of view of those, who, at the end of their academic path, enter the world of clinical psychology.

We take into account that this study develops from the analysis of a small sample group of trainees, but psychology is a field where it is more likely to

proceed building the structure of a theory with little steps, rather than through big revolutionary discoveries. It is discussed in this paper how disclosing the relevance of the cognitive-affective side of being a psychologist, might give a contribution to the comprehension of this aspect of the profession, generating new questions and new studies.

On the other hand, it is possible to underline some of the aspects, to support our methodological choices and validate the results acquired from the small, but significant, sample group.

1. The small group as instrument of formation

A small group – like the one assessed in this study – could be generally considered as a border line between the individual and the community, personal reality and objective reality. It is an ideal tool, which can start a new culture in psychology. We can define, in other words, this small group, as a work management training lab, that will allow the future psychologists a full immersion in the complex task of growing as a professional figure, through self-awareness, and through processing the symbolic-affective representations of others, such as colleagues, or patients, or the context, and the institutions of reference. The group setting becomes a laboratory beyond the routine, a mental space on the mental representation, which brings out deep psychological facts, in relation to the context

Training through groups, means that it's not possible to have the same set and setting every time, which involves paying great attention to the contextual elements. Although this way certain standard criteria of repetition and generalization of the results, cannot be satisfied, nevertheless a deep analysis of the contextual elements can validate them within the training group. In our research, a particular relevance has had the project work of preliminary evaluation of the group setting. Given the complexity of the elements that formed the material at the basis of the research, and their mutual connections and interactions, a clinical work it's been necessary to assess the whole domain of individuals, interactions between them, context of the group, mediators, and influences from the institutions. An instruments to make an easy visualization and analysis, is the *Grid of Analysis of the set(ting)* (Giannone, Lo Verso, 1994, 1997, 1998), that gives a view over the architecture of the composite intertwine of variables of set, setting, users, probable customers, external contacts, and social interaction. The Grid of

Analysis of the set(ting) it is a complex tool, essentially qualitative, for searching more accurately the variables and the their mutual connections in the clinical situation (Ceruti & LoVerso,1998). A second tool more typical of clinical observation is the one related to the *parameters for typology of the groups* (Di Maria, Lo Verso, 2002). This instrument is specific to focus on the group setting, based on a more detailed information of the variables, as: the request, the job location, the type of setting, group type, frequency of the meetings, number of users, type of training. This grid facilitate the task of conducting, putting the group together and choosing the methods and techniques of the clinical work, which have to be as much congruent as possible.

2. The group of clinical-social elaboration.

In this case study it's been privileged a particular group format, the group of clinical-social elaboration.

This kind of format is psychodynamic. It allows the surfacing of memories, experiences, emotions, connections to a specific issue, that might not be known to the person - as it happens in focus groups - but includes a wide and complex range of significance, since the influence is to be found mainly on the emotional scale rather than on the informative scale. (Carli, Paniccia 2002; Giorgi, Giunta, Coppola, Lo Verso, 2009).

So the topic is not tightly pre-established, just outlined, in this way it is easier to pass the barriers of arguments particularly hard to confront, like the personal experience of the identity of the psychologist.

The intervention of the conductor in this type of group format is mostly to connect the participants (Di Nuovo, Lo Verso, 2005). The conductor supports the cohesion of the group, gives significance to the complexity of the relation between the participants, takes care that the coherence of the topic is preserved, and stimulates the surfacing of contents and dynamics (ibidem).

A further important element of this type of group format is that the participants are not rigidly selected, they choose voluntarily to take part in the group. This is a most relevant aspect, because they are motivated to invest their time and effort within the group. Moreover, this approach makes relevant, latent, emotions, to emerge more quickly. Behaviour, personality, experience and emotions of each single participant can be exchanged among the group, whose members, starting to trust each other, learn to be more open about their personal experiences and emotions.

To form the sample group then, it is clear the importance of qualitative contributing factors like the motivation of the subjects involved, able to transfer a more deep and complex vision of the phenomenon investigate in this study - rather than the choice of individuals that are just representative of the population, for the specific case of this research.

3. Data processing method

The methodological type of qualitative research used for the analysis of this study is the Grounded Theory (Glaser, Strauss, 1967), largely practiced in clinical psychology, and based on the research of units of significance, starting from the medical transcription of clinical documentation. The Grounded Theory is an innovative method based on the inductive reasoning of the research process from the data to the theory. According to this theory the researcher discovers the method in the same context of the research, just analyzing and decoding the data, clearing his mind as much as possible from other theories he might apply, or preconception.

This short digression on the methodological choices is to point out the coherence and accuracy of the tools to support the data in this study, although restricted to the specific case examined here, and not statistically representative, the research it's been rigorously conducted, and the data can be reasonably used for future researches.

Results

The first session was centred around the semantic nucleus "Being psychologists" (Fig 1), which reflects the group's effort to define the meaning of their identity as psychologists, and shows a compartmentalisation between their personal and their professional identities. More specifically, the subjects define being psychologists as a

combination of commitment and vocation. Being psychologists is described as the result of hard work and determination on one hand, and on the other the result of a choice originating from within. Within this logic, personal identity is

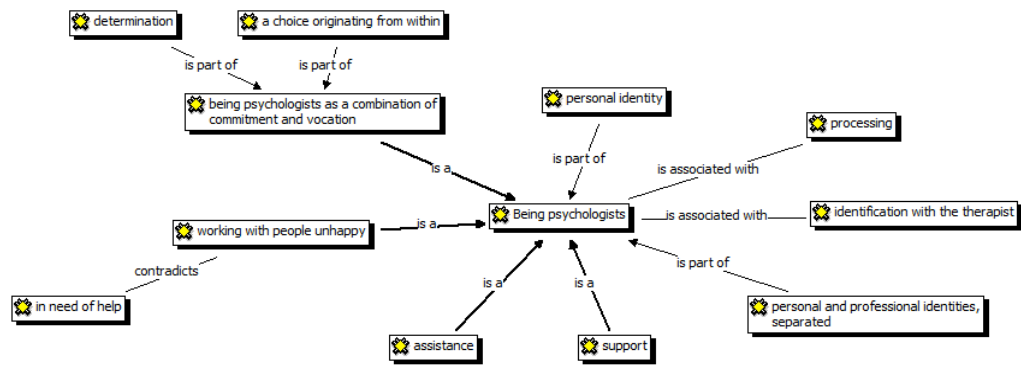


Fig.1 - Semantic nucleus “Being psychologists”

considered an integral part of being a psychologist and is thus connected to the professional realm with the inclusion of personal characteristics and attitudes that are said by the subjects to predispose them to this line of work. Whilst the psychologist, according to this group’s imaginary, “puts something of their own into this profession, because many things can’t be found in books”, a more detailed analysis reveals that the personal and professional identities nonetheless remain separate. This emerges more clearly in observing the semantic nucleus “personal and professional identities, separated”(Fig.2), which shows how personal insecurities in the private sphere need to be translated into confidence in the professional sphere. As one member of the group put it, “I am insecure, I need to be confident”, which in turn connects to the concept of “someone else sees me”.

P.1 «I should be confident... I should be calm... because just as I am observing another person, the other person is seeing me... I must not... I mean you can feel what a person in front of you gives you, they can feel it too»

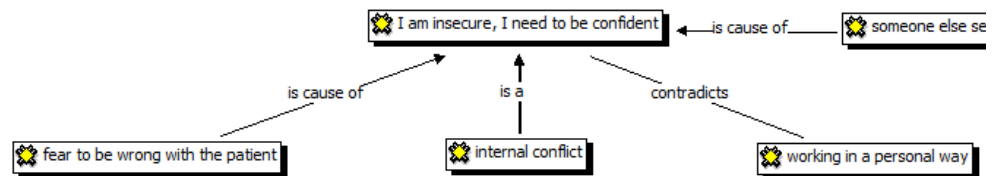


Fig. 2 - Semantic nucleus “personal and professional identities, separated

What is therefore evidenced is a definition of the identity as psychologist that is founded on interpersonal elements, and more specifically on others’ expectations, often grandiose, about the figure of the clinician.

In talking about the very reasons that brought them to take part into this study, the group members talk of their desire for confronting themselves other people in the sector, and hearing their considerations and reflections. They also define being psychologists as “something that is always enriched through exchange with others, never a definitive identity but in continuous evolution”.

P.3 «it occurred to me instead of ‘being psychologists’... the word ‘flux’ came to me... I had a flash on the fact that since I’ve started university I’ve changed my mind on what being a psychologist is a thousand times»

Consequently, whilst on the one hand the definition of the identity of psychologist is in itself relational, the dialogue with the Other, and in this instance with the group, is the environment in which the identity’s explicitation, destructuring and re-structuring can take place.

Building from this set of concepts, the group journeyed on to the theme with further exploration and construction of the identity of psychologist through the study’s second session. During it, a member of the group shared an experience “on the field”. In the company of a group of women, shortly

after their pregnancy interruptions, she intervened to appease what she perceived as a climate of collectively-aided anxiety by drawing on her expertise as a trainee psychologist. There is an evident parallelism between that situation - a group composed solely of women, finding themselves in the same room and undergoing a similar experience at the same time - and the current group-analysis group.

Furthermore, the difficult to dominate, "rampant" anxiety that characterised that episode will later turn out to also be the emotional experience of the group-analysis group when exploring of their identity as psychologists.

The discussion of this episode focussed on the emotional involvement of the participant who felt the need to intervene, and on the inability to react as experienced by a male colleague also present, who, despite being as good a psychologist as her, failed to act, as if he was unable to empathise with the emotional climate. In relating this event, the participant's personal and gender identity begin to align themselves with her professional identity.

This discussion informs the semantic nucleus "the psychologist's work"(Fig.3), in which personal identity elements are introduced as more closely related to the professional realm. This is both in the sense of the inescapable implications of this line of work ("*certain situations emotionally involve me*"), but also in the sense of an efficient resource beyond technical and theoretical competencies ("*being a good psychologist is not enough*"). It is apparent, therefore, that the group's attitude has now shifted - they are now more open to the identity of psychologist being a combination of personal and professional spheres, which were previously seen as separate.

However, the software highlights that, as the discussion progressed, a new semantic nucleus became affiliated to the thematic nucleus "the psychologist's work" with an inclusive relationship ("WITHIN"): a nucleus made of codes associated with fear of failure ("the seed that leads to abortion", "abandoning the patient", "I would like to be a therapist, but..."). In this phase, dreams for the future and professional ambitions directly connected with personal traits (for instance a love for horses and hippotherapy, or for music and musicotherapy) coexist with images of destruction.

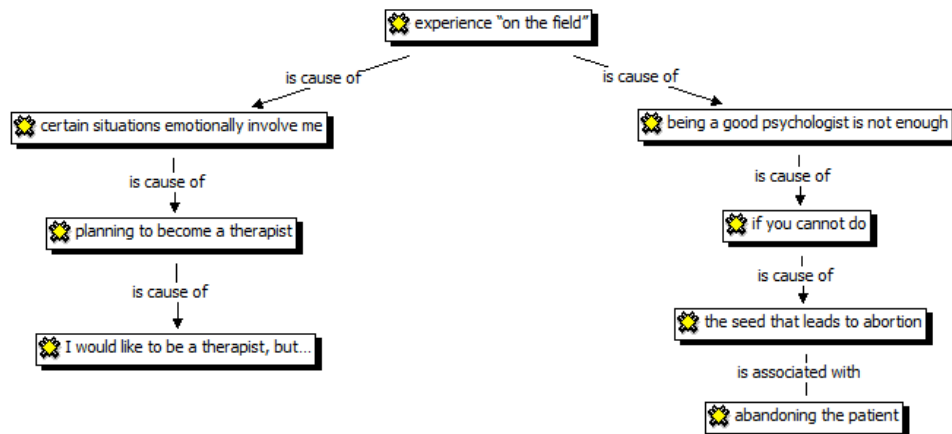


Fig. 3 - Semantic nucleus "the psychologist's work"

Dreams in particular become a significant instrument for the group to continue sharing their hypotheses and reflections on the identity of psychologist. For example, a participant recounts an apocalyptic dream she had on the eve of the study's first session: faced with imminent destruction, the participant had preferred to save - she recounts with evident pain - her university books rather than her beloved disc collection (here representing the personal identity). The symbolic elements of this dream can be seen to signify a choice, when confronted with the progressive crumbling of the identity of psychologist as a pristine professional figure (a process already underway since the group's first session), to attempt at all cost to save and preserve the professional identity (the books), and with it its illusions. Confronted with a potential loss or failure in the sphere of personal identity, the group seeks refuge in the comfort deriving from the mastery of their professional techniques. The dream does not, however, merely evidence the focal preoccupation of the group, that of saving the books and thus the professional identity: it also poses the question of the relationship between professional identity (the books) and personal identity (the discs), and the often-felt difficulty to harmonise the two.

P. 3 «I dreamt it immediately before coming here, the dream was a bit different in the sense that you could hear the news there was an imminent catastrophe and you could basically see some... some cracks in the ground forming, for many kilometres, so there was this sense that the world was

about to end (...) I remember that other times I worried about saving other things, material goods that for me... because for me the cd is a physical thing... I was in front of my books, I wanted to finish my studies... (cries) it's something that I've understood I really want to do...»

The first reaction of the group to this dream, an anxious and defensive one, is however followed by a progressive realisation that there is (trans)formative and evolutive potential within the group itself. Participants start describing the university training as a succession of thirty exams that hold different subjective meanings to different people, they call it *a personal journey*. This way they start integrating the professional and personal identities again - however, this joint identity is still frustrated by doubts and by fear of being unsuccessful. Another dream recount follows: a participant dreamt that her much-loved dog bit her hand whilst she was trying to stop it from running under a car. The car may be taken to symbolise the presence of a fearsome Other which threatens the progress of the group as it introduces fear of being judged. Towards the end of the session this is echoed in the general mood of the group which, instead of building on the openness and hopefulness shown earlier in the session, air the most disparate fears (cockroaches, travelling by ferry, etc).

This process of incremental destructuring as started in the second session (through the imagery of abortion and of apocalypse) takes an even starker turn in the third session, to the point of *rupture*: one participant drops out of the process and numerous others are absent. Of the original seven, only three attend this session.

The textual analysis evidences, however, a further progression that the group makes. After a second session which had seen the group exploring the possibility of reuniting their personal and professional identities as psychologists, the third one sees the emergence of painful parts of the Self which had so far been cast aside as degrading to the professional identity. Of particular significance towards this part of the analysis are the small lapses and the preoccupation that the members show for the group space during this session.

Discovering about the drop-out sparks in the group angry reactions which will monopolise much of the first half of the discussion. Meanwhile, as the software points out, significant codes for this part of the session are “*but what with the others?*” and “*some chairs are missing*”, evidencing a preoccupation for forgetfulness and lack of attention. The chair incident

arose because the chairs were laid out by one of the participants who had access to the room in use - whilst for previous sessions it had always been the researcher to do so. When interrogated as to whose chair may have been missing, the participant in question suggests she may have been forgetting a fellow group member whom she characterised on the basis of something mentioned in an earlier session: that her family and friends tease her because, despite being a trainee psychologist, she still is subject to negative emotions such as crying or becoming angry.

These lapses become a vehicle for aggressiveness towards the absent participants: an aggressiveness which reflects the fear of failure and the inability to sustain the emotional weight that this experience is putting on all participants.

The session progresses in its attempt to conjugate painful parts of the Self with the professional identity of psychologist, through the contribution of one of the participants who recounts an experience that particularly alarmed her (Fig. 4).

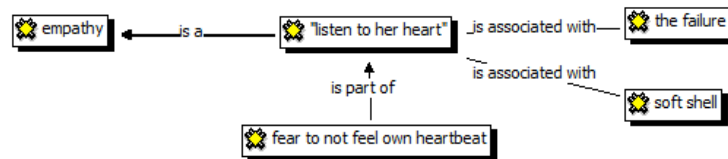


Fig. 4 - Semantic nucleus “listen to her heart”

In the context of a discussion about the necessity for a psychologist to have a “*soft shell*” which at once protects but allows empathy through, the participant reminisces an episode in which she worried she could not feel her heartbeat (her own Self) when she was exhorted to “listen to her heart”, and therefore how that would affect her ability to listen to other people’s hearts (as would be her professional requirement).

In this way the participant empathises with the absentees and the drop-out who had earlier been the target of frustration: she acknowledges how it is sometimes hard if not impossible to make it and as such reintegrates failure not as a part of the Other’s identity only, but as a part of her personal identity too. In linking it to her professional identity she also shifts the

acceptance of failure from the personal sphere to the professional one. This is a fundamental step in the process of this group's experience.

In order to further expose the meanings related to these "*present absences*", the facilitator and researcher decide to lay out chairs for those missing too. The dynamics that this act sparks are spoken of through codes that the software relates to a semantic nucleus around the act of acknowledgement. Acknowledging the issues allows the group to speak of them frankly, and such the issues become a resource to the group itself.

The group is progressively building a mind map which manifests itself most clearly in the fourth and last session, which opens straight away with the interventions of those who had been absent for the previous session and are eager to contribute.

They decide to share episodes from their life outside of the group and apparently unrelated: one says she has finally found the courage to put an end to a stagnating relationship, an act she had been postponing because it would have required questioning herself and her choices; another tells how she met an acquaintance who asked her whether she was sure she wanted to take the difficult path of becoming a psychologist. It is interesting to note how both these episodes relate one more time to the fear of failure, and the decision to share them seems to imply a need to affirm that, despite their absence, the group has somehow still had an influence over their life.

At this point, the researcher also shares a dream she had the night before. The setting is in a village known and dear to the researcher, who has invited all the group participants there to view an open-air screening of some short films; upon turning around, however, the researcher realises that the participants have gone and all that's left are their white coats. Abandoning the white coats can be seen as a symbol for abandoning the pre-existing, stereotypical idea of what a psychologist is, a departure that the group is finally ready to acknowledge. The next contribution, in fact, is that of another participant who recalls having wrapped herself in a thick scarf during the first session, as if to protect herself, and realises now that she does not have the scarf with her for this session nor does she feel a need for it.

The overall journey of the group through these four sessions, therefore, can be described as a reverse navigation, as they describe it, "*from death to the birth of new questions*". The deconstruction that characterised this journey is accompanied by a re-construction, articulated around new ideas for the

future, new questions and new meanings. It is worth noting that in most cases the resolutions that the participants are taking away from the process have to do with integrating more of the personal realm into their professional identity (Fig. 5), and dedicating themselves to an independent process of inner discovery in order to achieve a better knowledge of their own selves.

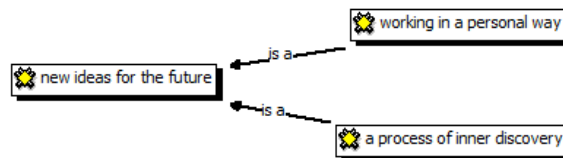


Fig. 5 - Semantic nucleus “from death to the birth of new questions”

In the textual analysis of this group’s output, the software identifies a relation of inclusion (“WITHIN”) between the semantic nucleus “being psychologist” and that of otherness, to be intended as the presence of an Other. Throughout the sessions, and again as identified by the software, the approach towards a joint personal and professional identity of the psychologist was in reality a continual oscillation between two poles: openness and opportunity versus negation.

The product of this type of textual analysis is supercodes, that is groupings of codes according to two elements: property and dimension. Property is defined as the general or specific characteristic of each code, whilst dimension indicates the position of the code on a continuum (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In this analysis, we have based our dimensional classification on the continuum on Carli and Paniccia (2010)’s principles for classification of the emotional analysis of text (AET) - a classification according to emotional density. Therefore, for this investigation, the property of the supercodes (Fig.6) is “being a psychologist as a professional and personal identity”, and the dimensional spectrum they are found on is the gradient between the two aforementioned poles of openness/opportunity to negation.

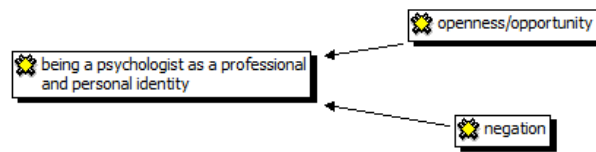


Fig. 6 – Semantic nucleus “The property and the dimensional spectrum of the supercodes”

More specifically, for this group, a definition of oneself as a psychologist that includes both the personal and the professional realms happens via the encounter with the Other. This encounter can result on the one extreme in annihilation and on the other in complete openness to new opportunities; the codes that reflect the encounter speak of a progressive emotional and semantic integration of the personal identity with the professional identity of psychologist, in this way creating a wider identity of self as psychologist that includes both.

The graph below (Fig. 7) shows the salient points of this process of integration.



Fig. 7 – Semantic nucleus “The salient points of this process of integration”

The group was at once a space for anxiety and fear of the Other, and an environment to exchange and accept sometimes painful concepts about the reality of being a psychologist.

This process of evolution is accompanied by a similar one in which Otherness was progressively defined as a resource for support, dialogue and exchange rather than a threat (Fig. 8) .

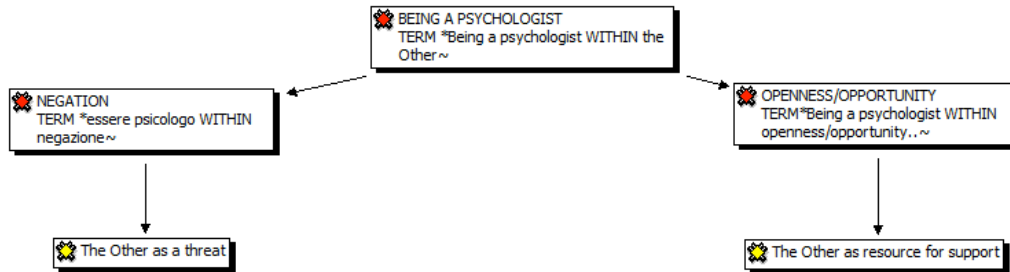


Fig. 8 -Semantic nucleus “the dialogue with the Other”

In conclusion, the three supercodes identified by the software for this analysis were as follows: “being a psychologist WITHIN Otherness”, which highlights the relational nature of this definition of the profession; “being a psychologist WITHIN negation”, which signifies the risk of failure associated with the difficulties of integrating one’s personal identity in the professional one; and “being a psychologist WITHIN opportunity”, which summarises the positive view towards this integration of the personal and the professional, rich in resolutions for the future.

The connections between these three supercodes, as abstracted by the software, thus create the *core category* as follows (Fig. 9).

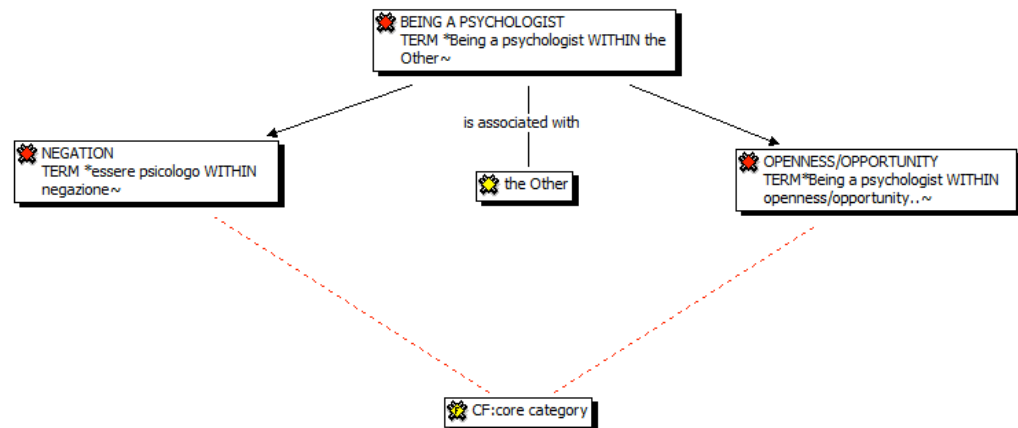


Fig. 9 –Semantic nucleus “The Core Category”

This deduction allows us to state the following: not only is the definition of the identity of psychologist in itself relational, but furthermore the dialogue with the Other, and in this instance with the group, has the potential to be an environment for the explicitation, deconstructing and restructuring of an individual’s definition of their identity as psychologists, in a way that can aid them in the practice of their profession.

This discovery, that a dialogue with the Other is a strong resource for the broadening and consolidation of one’s identity as psychologist, is in support of the use of the group-analysis group as a learning tool, as it uses exactly the dialogue with the Other as an instrument for change.

The formative experience becomes thus an intersubjective experience, which should constitute a fundamental training ground for the trainee psychologist, especially if nearing the end of their training, as they may not yet have been confronted with an experience to contrast their idealised and pristine expectations of the profession, of the psychologist as superhero. Experiencing the dynamics of a transformative dialogue with the Other means to abandon the coat, softening the shell, reintegrating the very essence of our humanity (often discarded as a weakness) as the fundamental basis of being a psychologist, together with the technical and theoretical competencies, which in turn would in themselves be meaningless if they

were not underpinned by a mental attitude able of making sense of the Other's experiences.

Conclusions, clinical and research implication

In the last decades the National Health Service in Italy has been aligned to the European standard. This action model based on the privatization of the national care service has also influenced the formation of the professional figures, and in particular, in the field of clinical psychology, which is still today the foremost supplier of psychological support to the population (Carli, 2005, Bosio, 2004; Legrenzi, 2000).

In the Universities, as well as in the psychotherapy private schools, it's been realized a segmentation of the academic path in favor of iper-specialized methods. This segmentation of the techniques, if not supported by a solid formation to the relation - as affirmed by Carli e Paniccia (2010) - could rest on undefined basis that might take away dignity and credibility from the profession.

Reasoning on the formation, means to declare and practice those theories at the foundation of the academic path, analysing the implication that the individual experiments in the relation, which the academic procedure, as well as the psychological procedure, imply (Carli, Paniccia, 2007). On the other hand, clinical psychology is foremost centred on the relation, and it is within that relation that the problems at the care of the psychologist can be confronted.

This perspective is not well accepted from those students that think to gain power over others and competence, only through technique and practice, at disadvantage of the careful consideration about the profession.

Aside this common way of thinking among students, the ethical responsibilities of the psychologist, of great significance, make a priority to work on the dynamics of emotions and the inevitable personal implications of the psychological profession, that will clarify the necessity of the training on the relation for the future professional figures, encouraged first by the training agencies, that should deconstruct the figure of the psychologist as

"technical ", promoting the figure of the psychologist who works with consciousness.

The study, supports these considerations, highlighting, in particular, the basic steps of a learning experience from a relation, in which theory, practice and personal implications come across and mutually enrich each other. In this study, the training group was for the trainees a place where training becomes practice, a space to experience the dynamics of emotional symbolism that can be analyzed, understood and traced to the objectives of the training itself (Carli, 2002).

The relationship among the members of the group was, on the other hand, conferred of a space where to speak freely through images, dreams, slips and acts, things on the identity of the psychologist who often find little room within training agencies that encourage the fantasies of omnipotence and mastery of the techniques of its users and that speak to the complexity and implications of psychological work. This finding is particularly interesting because, in addition to highlighting the potential of formative / transformative process of group analysis, would further support the depth and significance of the results obtained about the personal experience of the psychologist albeit on a small sample.

The process of group-analysis, has finally favored - as evidenced by the data - the integration of personal and professional identity in the definition of the identity of the psychologist, that this study found forcibly and defensively compartmentalized in subjects at the end of their academic career waiting to enter the world of work, and those consumers who will be asked the effort, to abandon their defences and their preconceptions, in a process of learning again all aspects of their own personality, even the most painful ones.

In this view, a formation of this kind, where claims and unrealistic goals will be given up (the saving power of the psychology profession), where new meanings are constantly de-structuring and built again, where time is used to overthink instead of acting - constitutes a fundamental training to guarantee a quality service to users based on ethical responsibility.

Referring to the initial question that led to this study, we finally conclude that the subject are not only aware of the inevitable personal implications in the psychological work, but how this awareness is represented - at the beginning of the group experience - as an achievement uncritical and without connotation, but managed through procedures designed to reduce its complexity and the anxiety that can generate. The analysis of the thematic and emotional content of clinical documentation and the evolution of the group process, allowed to highlight the ability of the process of the training group to:

- facilitate the construction of a "thought over" the basic awareness about the inevitable personal implications in psychological work commonly carried on by the compartmentalization between personal and professional identity of the psychologist;
- encourage the acceptance and coexistence of strong emotions that arise from this awareness (at first handled with defensive actions), and a new understanding of the more painful personal issues.
- encourage the de-structuring and, restructuring of the definition of the identity of the psychologist, often full of hyper-idealized representations and expectations of power around the professional figure of the clinician.

These results are crossed with the theory developed in this research, finding in it a fundamental theoretical and clinical support. The theory deduced from this group experience, allows us, in fact, to show that if, on the one hand, the definition of personal identity of the psychologist rests on intersubjective components, the relationship with the other, in this case the group, can become on the other hand a space for its manifestation , dividing and reconstructing. This theoretical factor assumes an importance so crucial in respect to the ethical purposes of this research, so far as supports the usefulness of a fundamental tool based on the relationship with the other, or the group analysis, for a formation co-constructed in clinical psychology that will use the relationship with each other and the emotional dimension as the main vehicle for changing and building a creative and self-reflective dialogue on the figure of the psychologist.

The wish, which concludes this work, is that - in the awareness of the personal nature of a training path such as the one in clinical psychology, and recognizing as equally important, a clinical action, first of all as ethical, since it affects the reality and humanity of other people, the agencies responsible for the training of clinical psychologists (universities, schools of psychotherapy, vocational training centers) should reserve a space for the dialogue on subjectivity and relationships, taking all the risks that the training of this kind can cause for trainers and trainees, often deepened in a dimension extremely reassuring that assumes a linear transmission of content that is independent from the complexity of the relationships.

The data in the literature and the results of this study highlight the need of a cohabitation with the complexity of the relationships and their emotional echo inside. Such coexistence, in fact, is crucial to the extent that it contributes to a redefinition of the work of the clinician and, consequently, of the clinical relationship with the other that regains, this way, the fundamental characteristics of multiplicity, circularity and transformation.

In this regard we want here, bring two sentences that are significant and that, perhaps, represent the greatest achievement of a group that has risked but, in the end, has grasped the true nature of the clinical relationship that is defined first of all, in terms of a risky navigation but extraordinarily rewarding. These phrases have been reported by the participants at the end of the study as expressions able to summarize their learning experience.

"Who wants to sail until it is past all danger, must never put to sea"

"Ships are safest in the harbor, but that's not why ships are built"

These phrases speak of risk-taking and curiosity typical of the sailor, constituting the essential features of a navigation with good equipment, or the basic mental disposition of the clinician capable of signifying the experiences of the other.

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