

Research on the gender in the composition of a workshop of photography for schizophrenics, its role in the therapeutic efficiency

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Abstract

The present research studies the effects of the gender, in a workshop of expression of a photolanguage type within schizophrenic adults. The initial question was the one of a possible influence of the composition of the groups of therapy, in terms of gender, during the observed processes. What is the incidence of the distribution of gender on the processes of change? Could we define a preferential composition of a group, facilitator?

More precisely, we wondered about the interest of the unisex groups within groups of therapy.

Keywords : group, schizophrenic patients, mediation, image

In the practice, the unisex group is most frequently present, either by chance, or due to a bigger implication of the women, or still by the fact of the social criterion recruitment (groups of battered women, unmarried mothers or still groups of men on paternity, the violence, etc.). It seems that the clinicians neglected the incidence of this report in their publications. Indeed, among rare articles in French, let us quote Currat and Michel (2007), which raise exactly this question of the gender in the composition of psychotherapy groups.

Concerning the study of mixed groups of therapy, Rose (2002), observes that the women approach more gladly intimate matters, show themselves more attentive to their interlocutors, privilege the relational values of sharing and confidence. On the other hand, the men approach more impersonal subjects, actively look for a dominant position and a certain autonomy within the group, finally show themselves more aggressive towards the other participants. Also, Wallach (1994) finds that the competition is certainly masculine. Finally, Mc Nab (1990) still specifies that the men often take the position of an observator and show themselves more set back than the women. The latter got involved more quickly and more actively in the group. These few observations are in reality very surprising, so much that they resume certain social stereotypes connected to the gender. How to exceed this report? Our research constitutes here an attempt to find a methodological, clinical approach, to move forward on this subject.

Nitsun (2006) counts only four articles appeared in the newspaper Group Analysis on the question of the gender for the period 1986-2002. We shall resume here his observations on these few works and his personal investments.

The gender is confidentially bound with the sexuality because it concerns the expression of the masculinity and the femininity. During this period four articles were published, written by women and a great majority of articles on group analysis

written by men. This joins the remark of Burman (2002), on the fact that the majority of articles on gender are written by women.

Elliott (1986), following Stoller (1968), distinguishes sex and gender, the first one indicating a physiological datum whereas the second is an interpretation : positive / negative identifications with the one or the other sex, which reflects the native bisexuality. Furthermore, this author distinguishes the conscious and unconscious identifications. It suggests that the therapeutic group is considered as well by the men as by the women as a feminine activity. The part was given to the emotion, to what does not see itself, in the hidden would be the same partner in the feminine. This would thus give certain advantage to the women in these groups (against the usual male dominance). So, we notice that it often produces splits in the groups between men and women. The men are inadequate, distraught, powerless. The threatening nature of the bisexual identification produces intense fears to both sexes. The split process brings the members of the group to think of the perceptions of the attributes of the other sex as destructive: the women become potentially more penetrating (as a penis), the men show themselves subdued and depressed.

If these aspects can come to analyse and express themselves, the patients can then begin to investigate their bisexual desires and identifications. Of course, the particular way the therapist lives his own male and feminine identifications also influences the group's degree of flexibility.

Here we wonder if the qualification of unisex group as "feminine" or "male" can have a sense, is a group of women "feminine"? A "male" group of men ? If the group does not have sex, it would have a gender ?

However, we note that Nitsun considers this work already as somewhat exceeded by the authors' reflections more recent as Judith Butler (1990).

Colon (1991) deals with the feminine therapist in the group, his authority, his power particularly in groups constituted only by women. How to combine the functions of the group analyst, and group driver, when someone is a woman therapist? How is this mixture received by the members of the group? How does the therapist assume these roles? He could have a split between the "paternal" functions and "the nursery schools" there. This author underlines that the theory of group analyzes did not traditionally pay attention on the impact of the gender of the analyst on the development of the group.

The group therapy can bring changes through the language.

Rose (2002), was interested in the study of the latter in the groups. She underlines that the language has a major function in the creation of our sense of the Self connected to the gender : linguistic styles, stereotypes are always associated to the men and to the women. The language is an intrinsic part of the social construction of the gender. So our sense of the latter would not only be expressed by the language, but also created by the latter.

Burman (2002) approaches as for her the theme of the gender on the group by focusing its reflection on the sexuality and the power. She underlines that the "silence" can make in groups on the erotic dimension, specially gay-erotic dimension, in the transference-contra-transference relation. She gives the example of two groups

which illustrate forms contrasted by transfer on a woman driver, showing the complexity and the ambivalence of what takes place at this level in the group. She suggests to work on two points: the social processes of the gender bound to the authority and to the power; the transmission of these processes through the transférentielles relations in the group.

Nitsun notices that it is about the first article which he meets by bringing directly the reflection on homosexuality, then, he denounces the comments on conservatism which reigns in the psychotherapists field.

After this reminder of the previous works, we shall present the research which we made in a hospital ward

We used the technique of the photolanguage, created in 1965 by a group of psychologist of Lyon (and particularly developed since by Claudine Vacheret), used here for the interest presented in the short-term practice. Photos are used as mobilizers of associative processes and verbalizations. The research project was presented to the whole service and patients in order to obtain their agreement and participation.

The research concerned 8 schizophrenic adults (diagnosed to the DSM IV) hospitalized, from 29 to 54 years old. First of all, they were distributed in two unisex groups of four patients each (a group of men people, a group of women), then a mixed group was established from these same volunteer patients (they were again four, two women and two men). The patients made a commitment to follow five sessions (where the small number comes from).

The experiment lasted five weeks, that is, five sessions for each of the unisex groups and only two sessions for the mixed group (one at the beginning and one at the end of the experiment). These conditions were partially imposed by the institution. So, we were not able to make an interview with the patients, as we had predicted it, wishing to avoid biases and to recollect a richer and more complementary clinical material of that of the observation of the groups. Another limitation came not obtaining the standardized material of the photolanguage. We thus had to establish ourselves a series of black and white photos, by staying closer to this technique. We developed them around the following themes: earth and sea, safari animals, cities, landscapes, sky. Every theme contained eight photos.

Three groups were animated by the same animators (a man and a woman). The sessions lasted 1:30 and all began with the same question: they were asked " to choose a photo with a glance ", the choices were then followed by a moment of comments.

To observe these groups, we established a railing of observation inspired by railings of researches on the groups in the already existing mediations (unfortunately, we found no method of this type in previous researches concerning precisely the gender in the therapeutic groups). Furthermore, we were inspired by the works of Jean Marie Enjalbert's, on the groups of schizophrenic patients, and particularly on his indications as for the profits that we can expect from the group work with these patients (2002), namely: the confrontation unlike the other one through moments of

abandonment of the fusional state; the access of the regressive problems; moments of arrangement of the illusion and the defenses against the anxiety; found, from the limits of the group the limits of the body.

Here are the categories of the items, which we used: a confrontation differentiated the other one; resort of the defence mechanisms; group limits; specificities of the pathology (particularly the emergence of archaic processes, by inspiring us here of the analysis of the TAT). We were kept in the observable items, the group's behaviour and the situations.

We shall find this railing in appendix. The latter was filled after the sessions. We shall compare the railings of the first and last sessions. The items were quoted in terms of frequency of appearance of the behaviour, at four levels: absentee (0), weak (1), means (2), hardly (3). Once these levels were calculated, we were able to obtain the averages.

We made the general hypothesis of an evolution of the behaviour (targeted by the railing) in three groups at five sessions (either a decrease, on the grounds that the average of the frequencies of appearance of the behaviour of the items of four categories obtained in the last session would be lower than that of the first one). But especially, we emitted a central hypothesis according to which the unisex groups would present a better evolution than the mixed group.

Results

For the four categories of items, the averages obtained in the last session are lower than those of the first one and similarly for the unisex groups as for the mixed group. It emerges from it that all these studios had a beneficial role for all the patients.

By comparing the results of four categories, it seems that the biggest difference is situated at the level of the category of the specific items in the pathology: the latter are more represented in the mixed group than in two others.

Comparison by item of the mixed group to both unisex groups, to last session

By resuming each of the items, it appears more exactly than to the last session:

The male group obtains better results (thus a frequency of lesser appearance) than the mixed group in the following six items: systematic contacts, behavior of imitation, group fallacy, repetitive behaviour, hallucinations, invasion by the imagination.

In the same way, the feminine group obtains better results than the mixed group in the following six items: withdrawal, systematic contacts, behaviour of imitation, repetitive behaviour, group fallacy, invasion by the imagination.

The mixed group obtains better results than the male unisex group in three items: denial, split, and non-adaptation to the instructions. Compared with the feminine group, it obtains better results in items indifferent meeting, denial, regression, not adaptation to the instructions.

Are equal their scores in items slowness of implication, indifferent meeting, expression of the frenzy.

Are invalid the scores in items late arrival and early departure.

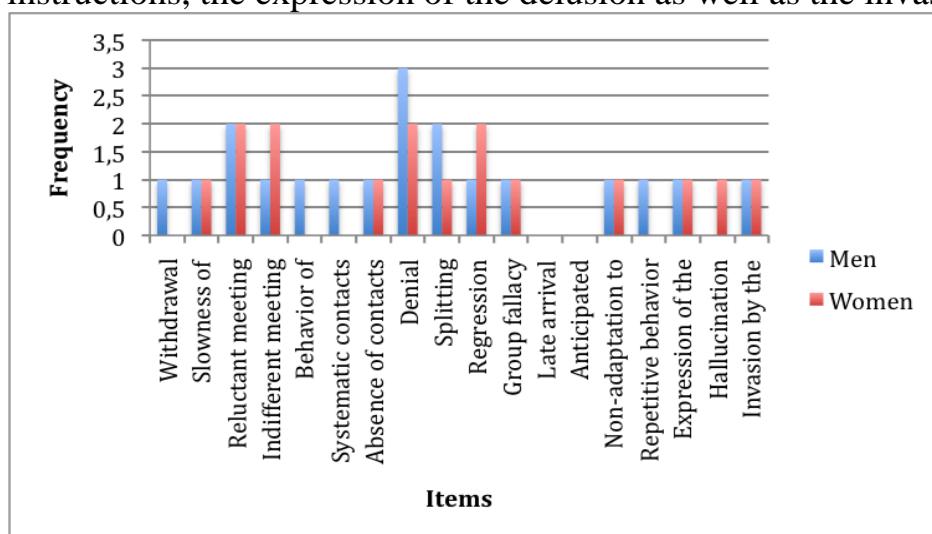
Comparison by item of the mixed group to both unisex groups, to last session

In the last session, it appears:

That the group of men obtains better scores than the group of women for items meet indifferent, regression as well as hallucinations.

The group of women obtains better scores than the group of men in items withdrawal, behavior of imitation, contacts systematics, denial, split, repetitive behavior.

Their scores are equal for items slowness of implication, reluctant meeting, absence of contacts, group fallacy, late arrival, anticipated departure, not adaptation to the instructions, the expression of the delusion as well as the invasion by the imagination.



We are far here observations of the previous authors, and it because of the choice of criteria psychopathologiques bound to the expectations of therapeutic evolution of the group. It would thus be interesting, for the clinicians, to develop the other researches in this direction.

In summary, our results go to the direction of our hypotheses, evolution of all the groups, an evolution more important in the unisex groups than in the mixed group as regards the unsuitable behavior and the pathological specificities. We are however conscious of the limits of the very research, particularly considering the number of patients and the number of sessions (the reduction of the time of hospitalization returns any difficult medium-term follow-up). We were brought to create a tool of observation, the railing was realized by A.C Truquin. We consider that this one should be the object of a study to verify the relevance in this frame. Finally, we missed clinical data, for we were not authorized by the institution to lead interview with these patients at the end of the experiment.

In the psychic functioning of schizophrenic patients, we consider that the question of the difference of the sexes is not established (no more than that of the differences of generations). We can then question the effect which can have or not on the mixing of the group? Can the difference of gender make sense when the difference of the sexes is not recognized (as in the psychosis for example)?

The question thus settles according to the pathologies and it would be interesting to

compare groups of neurotics, of borderline states and of psychotics, to see how the gender impacts on the therapeutic evolution of these groups.

Our research is very modest. Contrary to previous certain authors (Rose, Burman etc.), our criteria were the ones of the therapeutic efficiency of the composition of the groups, and not a more general, sociological study, on the gender in the groups. Staying in closer of the private hospital, we observed that many questions settle and would deserve to be the object of complementary researches. Our regret is not to have been able, of part the conditions compulsory for the research, to develop a clinical approach of the patients taken individually, nor analyze the transference-countertransference relation in these groups. However, studios with mediation which use the photography offer a frame convenient to the research. It would thus be interesting to take back this one, with pathologies as the neurosis and the borderline states, to kick away the influence of the pathologies on the impact of the gender in the therapeutic groups.

Railing of observation (Built by Aude-Clémence Truquin)

Domains		Items Frequency	0	1	2	3
Relation to the other one	Implication in the group	Withdrawal				
		Slowness of implication				
	Meeting	Reluctant meeting				
		Indifferent meeting				
	Qualitative aspect of the contact	Behavior of imitation				
		Systematic contacts				
Defence	Primary defence mechanisms	Absence of contacts				
		Denial				
		Splitting				
	Groupal defence mechanisms	Regression				
Notion of limits		Group fallacy				
		Late arrival				
		Anticipated departure				
Specificities of the pathology		Non-adaptation to the instructions				
		Repetitive behavior				
		Expression of the delusion				

	Hallucination			
	Invasion by the imagination			

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