

Women Writing Group as a Mean for Personal and Social Change

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Abstract : This presentation will explore the main processes identified in women writing group, as an interdisciplinary field with personal and social effects. It is based on the initial findings of a Ph.D. research focus on the intersection of group processes with the element of writing, in the context of gender. Writing as a therapeutic mean has been recognized and found to be highly effective. Additionally, a substantial amount of research reveals the psychological impact of group processes. However, the combination of writing and groups as a therapeutic tool was hardly investigated; this is the contribution of this research. In the following qualitative-phenomenological study, the experiences of eight women participating in a 10-sessions structured writing group were investigated. We used the meetings transcripts, semi-structured interviews, and the texts to analyze and understand the experience of participating in the group. The two significant findings revealed were spiral intersubjectivity and archaic level of semiotic language. We realized that the content and the process are interwoven; participants are writing, reading and discussing their texts in a group setting that enhanced self-dialogue between the participants and their own narratives and texts, as well as dialogue with others. This process includes working through otherness within and between while discovering and creating a multiplicity of narratives. A movement of increasing shared circles from the personal to the group and to the social-cultural environment was identified, forming what we termed as spiral intersubjectivity. An additional layer of findings was revealed while we listened to the resonance of the group-texts, and discourse; during this process, we could trace the semiotic level in addition to the symbolic one. We were witness to the dominant presence of the body, and primal sensuality, expressed by rhythm, sound and movements, signs of pre-verbal language. Those findings led us to a new understanding of the semiotic function as a way to express the fullness of women experience and the enabling role of writing in reviving what was repressed. The poetic language serves as a bridge between the symbolic and the semiotic. Re-reading the group materials, exposed another layer of expression, an old-new language. This approach suggests a feminine expression of subjective experience with personal and social importance. It is a subversive move, encouraging women to write themselves, as a craft that every woman can use, giving voice to the silent and hidden, and experiencing the power of performing 'my story'. We suggest that women writing group is an efficient, powerful yet welcoming way to raise the awareness of researchers and clinicians, and more importantly of the participants, to the uniqueness of the feminine experience, and to gender-sensitive curative approaches.

Keywords : group, intersubjectivity, semiotic, writing

Conference Title : ICFPT 2019 : International Conference on Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : January 24-25, 2019