

Coping with resistances to change in group- analytic psychosocial interventions

Apostolis Angelopoulos
HOPE in Group Analysis
Greece

What psychosocial intervention is?

- **Activities:**
trauma counselling, non-violent conflict
resolution programmes, disease prevention,
life skills, poverty and unemployment,
aggression and substance abuse reduction,
social adaptation of minority groups,
education and self-esteem building initiatives

What psychosocial intervention is?

- The intervention of “psy”- experts, which is oriented to various **groups** and **communities** focusing on the solution of a **diagnosed** social problem.
- PI is characterised as **psychological approaches to social problems.**

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

3

Contemporary needs

- Some Greek data:
 - One to three Greeks suffers from sleep problems;
 - One to three youngsters is chronically unemployed
 - and almost one to two (46%) chronically unemployed people appear depression symptoms;
 - One to three teenagers never goes out with friends and one to six teenagers has already an experience with drug use;
 - The epidemiological rates of depression got up to 24% of the general population, and annual anti-depressant consumption has been raised as to 350% during the last 13 years.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

4

The group-analytic philosophy of PI

- a) The **Group – Analytic Psychotherapy** (Foulkes);
- **Locating disturbance in the group.** The very fact of expressing a symptom or a problem is valuable to be viewed as group phenomenon in dealing with it in a positivistic way as if it was a “thing per se”.
 - Central concepts of Group Analysis which are very relevant to PI are: the concept of **matrix** (the web of relationships) which is extremely useful in establishing social networks in community, the **ego training in action** principle, and the conductor as a leader, who does not lead and **trusts the group**.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

5

The group-analytic philosophy of PI

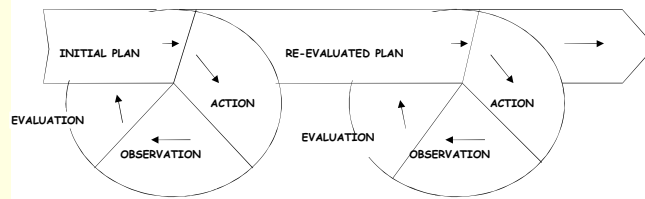
- b) The **Participatory Action Research methodology (PAR)**;
- Basic elements:
 - I) achievement of positive results both for practice and research,
 - II) the circular nature of the process providing feed-back mechanisms and critical reexamination of the project, and
 - III) equal participation of all interested persons in every phase of the process.
 - Sharing of all points of view, even conflicting ones.
 - Positive criticism: It is relatively unimportant who is wrong and who is right.
 - The atmosphere facilitates mutual trust and the sharing of decision making.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

6

Participatory Action Research

CIRCULAR NATURE OF PAR



www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

7

The group-analytic philosophy of PI

c) The movement of **Democratic Therapeutic Communities**;

■ Humanistic principles of Democratic Type Therapeutic Community as stated by Rapoport:

- “**Democratization**”
- “**Permissiveness**”
- “**Communalism**”
- “**Reality confrontation**”

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

8

The group-analytic philosophy of PI

- d) The theory of Median and Large Groups (de Maré);
- Patrick De Maré: **dialogue in large groups towards transformation of primary social hatred.**
 - Large Groups and group-analytic networks:
 - The potential of the major possible participation;
 - The strengthening of the participants and the evolvement of their creative tendencies;
 - A safe ground for the development of communal characteristics;
 - The active clarification of meanings;
 - The integration of different views into an idio-culture capable to produce new symbols and moral.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

9

Resistances to change

- Change in group-analytic PI should refer to the fostering of people's activity and indigenous coping strategies – which are not evident or conscious because of social and cultural assumptions.
- Resistance to change should be recognized only in reference to individual and group behaviours that occur during the intervention.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

10

Resistances to change

- Resistance to change relates to the fear of the unknown and of potential danger to the status quo.
- It is both an individual phenomenon and a collective one. Lay community is mainly oriented to individual adaptation through the establishment of common rules and behavior legacy. Collective properties are somehow underestimated or unrecognized.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

11

Resistances to change

- A group-analytic intervention should be able to **contain** resistances despite their often aggressive and vulgar way of expression (because of the large group dynamics).
- Experts should help the communities to find **forms of group activity** and **safe contexts of analysis**, in order to elaborate these dynamics.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

12

Resistances to change

- Experts often restrict their activity to the management of individual or small group phenomena, whereas collective cultural or large group dynamics often treated as **illusionary** or reduced to **one-to-one psychoanalytic interpretations**.
- The emergence of a **matrix**, which takes on different forms or cultures is doubted.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

13

Resistances to change

- Persistence to the static features of hierarchy as socially represented **antagonistic bipolar constructions** (healthy - ill, scientist - lay people, leader - led etc.).

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

14

Resistances to change

- Individual behaviours are more difficult to be related with resistances of the group or the community, when PI takes place in broader systems because of the **responsibility – guilt pattern**.

Resistances to change

- Containment of resistances demands a creative potential from the experts and lack of structural rigidity.
- Trust the group.
- Find the core needs that underlie the forms of interaction.

The contribution of Group Analysis to PI

- The clear distinction of psycho-therapeutic and of socio-therapeutic processes,
- The focus of interest from the individual attitude change of a target group (socio-psychological analysis) to the creative dynamics of the group due to the network of healthy relationships between its members;
- The holistic approach of the group or the community, and at the same time the focus on the personal participation of every single member;

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

17

The contribution of Group Analysis to PI

- The approach to the relationship “expert – members” as a multidimensional dynamic interaction in contrast to the models focusing mainly on leadership or knowledge transmission;
- The distinction of dynamics into small, median and large group;
- The respect to personal and group resistances and the creation of safe contexts of analysis;
- The liberation of the process from strict tasks, structural rigidity, authoritative knowledge and ideological transmission.

www.apostolisangelopoulos.gr

18