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Study of the discourse of four mothers of deaf female adolescents.
Comparative analysis of the sequence of moments after being informed about the diagnosis

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I. Aim

To study drives and defenses as well as their state in four mothers' reactions when they received the diagnostic of the handicap of their respective daughters.

II. Sample

In the four cases (Mónica, Cristina, Amelia and Carla), the narration (during the first interview) of the moment that follows the acknowledgement of the diagnosis of the daughter's deafness. Additional note: Two of the mothers were married but they found themselves in a situation of loneliness; the other two were separated from their couples and, some years later, were able to get married again.

III. Method

The David Liberman algorithm (DLA), which allows to research drives and defenses as well as their state in the discourse.

IV. Procedure

1) To detect the sequence of drives and defenses, as well as their state, in each mother in the sequence of moments after the acknowledgement of the handicap of her daughter. 2) To compare the corresponding outcomes.

V. Analysis

V. 1. Drives

In Mónica and Cristina's cases, the first manifestation that follows the diagnosis is discouragement (O2); Amelia feels she melts (IL) and at first Carla is unable to utter a word (IL), next she disbelieves the news (O1) and finally she becomes angry and guilty (O2).

For the analysis of the second and third moments two types of relationships were taken into account: 1. the one with the deaf daughter and 2. the one with their husbands.

Regarding the case of the daughters: In the second moment: Cristina resorts to her lucid thinking and to the illumination of God to decide what to do (O1); Mónica resorts also to her lucid thinking (O1) and to somatic overstress (IL); Amelia does what she thinks to be correct (A2) and Carla is fascinated with the possibility of her

daughter being able to hear through a cochlear implant (GPH) and cries for years (O2)

In the four cases the girls are sent to oral schools.

In the third moment Mónica, Cristina and Amelia feel that they have to take a quarrelsome stand against a world that doesn't include handicapped people (A1); Carla feels that, after her daughter receives the cochlear implant and is reeducated, she will be able to communicate satisfactorily and that the girl will be successfully included in society (GPH)

Concerning the relationship with their husbands: In the second moment, in the four cases although they are married, they are in a situation where the couple is felt as someone extremely dependent, fact that implies an energetical overstress for them (IL). Regarding the cases of Mónica and Cristina, both couples end up with an important health problem: brain stroke and cancer which forces the women to become the head of the family (IL). In the other two cases, both mothers feel that the handicap gives them the strength or energy (IL) to quit the relationship after consciously considering an option (A2): "I needed all the energy for my daughter" or "you are either an ally or an obstacle"

In the third moment, Cristina thinks of her husband as a sort of butler (O2); Mónica starts working three times harder as a consequence of her lack of holding from someone empathic (IL); Amelia and Carla find new couples and start "new families" (GPH)

V. 2. Defenses

We consider there are main and complementary defenses. Also, some defenses can be pathological because they interfere with the possibility of the psychic apparatus becoming more complex, or they just de-complex it. In opposition to this, some defenses are normal.

Functional defenses in accordance with the goal can be observed in Cristina, Amelia and Carla's cases and in two main situations. In Cristina's case in the first moment: "*I started crying in anxiety*" (O2) and in the second moment an A2 drive can be found, in an attempt of controlling the reality: "*I started reading to get information*". In the cases of Amelia and Carla this defense can be observed in relationship with the treatment they choose for their daughters and when they decide to divorce.

Repression can only be found in Carla and Amelia when they refer to the lives they led after the divorce. In Carla's case, when she is fascinated by the video where she sees a deaf boy playing the guitar and in her current relationship with her daughter.

Failed disavowal can be found in Mónica when she resorts to her lucid thought ("*It is a lie that in this world there is room for everyone*") which allows her to uncover a

lie in an idea she used to believe in and finally she concludes that it is impossible to find empathic interlocutors in the world. In Cristina's case it can be observed when she finds that her daughter is still deaf and she supposes that she has been a victim of economical speculation from the professionals. In Carla, this defense can be seen when she can't believe the diagnosis and when she cries for years without being able to accept the deafness.

Successful disavowal can be found in Mónica when she decides that she has to help her child urgently and that she has no time to cry at the moment. In Cristina, when she resorts to divine illumination to make her decisions. Amelia resorts to this defense when she decides to fight against a world which does not consider handicapped people and Carla when she refers to the communication with her daughter.

Failed foreclosure of the affects can be found in Cristina when she feels that she has been a victim of speculation (third moment), in Amelia when she feels that she melts after hearing the diagnosis and in Carla when she becomes dumb, cries, feels angry and guilty, also after receiving the diagnosis.

Successful foreclosure of the affect can be found in Mónica when she decides to work three times as hard as before, in Cristina when she begins eating with no control after she learns her daughter is deaf and in Carla and Amelia when they recover energy thanks to their daughters.

The following tables synthesize the analysis of the drives (Table 1) and the defenses (Table 2) as well as their predominance (Table 3) in the mothers, in the sequence of moments after receiving the diagnosis of the handicap in their daughters.

Table 1. Drives

| Moments | Mónica | Cristina | Amelia | Carla |
|----------------|--|---|--|--|
| First | O2 (Eg: "I would have all the time of life to cry about it") | O2 + IL (Eg: "I started crying in anxiety and I ate with no control") | IL (Eg: I melted) IL (Eg: The diagnostic was a surprise for me) | a. IL (Eg: I didn't utter a word for the first 4 or 5 days. I cried. It felt as if someone had thrown a bucket of cold water on me) b. O1 (Eg: I couldn't believe it) c. O2 (Eg: I was angry with myself. I was angry with her. I felt guilty) |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--|---|---|--|
| Second | Daughter | O1 (Eg: "It is a lie that in this world there is room for everyone") | A2 + O1 (Eg: "I started reading to get information" "I had flashes of divine confirmation") | A2 (Eg: I put my daughter in a school for deaf children) | GPH (Eg: HF showed me a video of a deaf boy with an implant. I thought: "This can happen to my daughter too" O2 (Eg: I cried for years...)) |
| | Husband | (Husband gets ill) | (Husband gets ill) | A2 (Eg: I spent a great amount of energy in my marriage: I needed that energy for my child) IL (Eg: The diagnostic gave me strength to leave my husband) | IL (Eg: I was overwhelmed: my daughter, my job, the housework...) A2 (Eg: When you have this kind of problem, the other person is either an ally or an obstacle. He was an obstacle. I had to choose) |
| Third | Daughter | IL (Eg: "I started working three times more than what I had been working") | O1 + A1 + IL (Eg: "I consulted professionals that only took my money and lied to me; I felt I wanted to strangle them") | A1 (Eg: I will have to go on fighting for my daughter's rights) | GPH (Eg: Now we can communicate. She is much more like the daughter I had in mind) |
| | Husband | (Husband dies) | O2 "My husband is a sort of butler..." | GPH (Eg: I could make a family with my actual husband) | GPH (Eg: With H and the girls we are a family) |

Table 2. Defenses

| Moments | | Mónica | Cristina | Amelia | Carla |
|----------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| First | | Successful disavowal | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + successful foreclosure of the affect | Failed foreclosure of the affect | Failed disavowal + Failed foreclosure of the affect |
| Second | Daughter | Failed disavowal + successful defense in accordance | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + Successful | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + successful | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + Successful |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | with the goal | disavowal | foreclosure of the affect | repression + failed disavowal |
| | Husband | Failed foreclosure of the affect | Failed foreclosure of the affect | Successful foreclosure of the affect + successful defense in accordance with the goal | Successful foreclosure of the affect + successful defense in accordance with the goal |
| Third | Daughter | Successful foreclosure of the affect | Failed disavowal + failed foreclosure of the affect | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + successful disavowal | Successful defense in accordance with the goal + successful repression + successful disavowal |
| | Husband | (husband dies) | Failed disavowal | Successful in accordance to the goal | Successful in accordance with the goal |

Table 3. Main and complementary defenses and drives

| Defenses | Mónica | Cristina | Amelia | Carla |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Main defense | Foreclosure of the affect (successful) | Disavowal (failed) | Successful disavowal | Successful disavowal |
| Complementary defenses | Disavowal (successful) Disavowal (failed) | In accordance with the goal (successful) Disavowal (successful) Foreclosure of the affect (failed) | In accordance with the goal (successful) Disavowal (successful) Foreclosure of the affect (successful and failed) | In accordance with the goal (successful) Disavowal (successful and failed) Foreclosure of the affect (successful and failed) |
| Main drive | IL | O1 | A2 | GPH |
| Complementary drives | O1 O2 | IL O2 A1 A2 | IL A1 A2 GPH | IL O1 O2 A2 |

VI. Conclusions

In the 4 cases we are able to detect 3 different moments of psychic processing in the outcome that follows the diagnosis of deafness in the daughters.

- a. Moment of Shock: direct manifestations associated to the trauma

- b. Moment of getting over from the shock: first strategies in order to manage the shock
- c. Moment of reconnection to reality: acceptance of the diagnosis and global reorganization

In the first moment of shock: Mónica resorts to successful disavowal, Cristina forecloses her affects and resorts to certain defenses in accordance with the goal; both Amelia and Carla fail to foreclose their affects and Carla also resorts to failed disavowal.

For the second and third moments we found different psychic processing in relationship with their daughters and their husbands:

Regarding the case of the daughters, in the second moment, the four of them are able to resort to defenses in accordance with the goal to take the first decisions they will adopt regarding the deafness of their daughters. All of them opted for oralization. They also resort to other defenses such as disavowal, foreclosure of the affects and repression.

Concerning the case of the husbands, also in the second moment, both Mónica and Cristina resort to failed foreclosure of the affect. Amelia and Carla successfully foreclose their affect and establish defenses in accordance with the goal: they decide to quit a relationship which is of no good for them.

In the third moment: Mónica, who resorted to a failed disavowal in the previous moment, now resorts to foreclosure of the affect which leads her to have a risk of somatic compromise; Cristina fails in her attempt to resort to disavowal and to foreclose affects and ends up feeling as a victim of speculation from the professionals. Amelia and Carla, who failed to foreclose affects at first, can still resort to successful defenses in accordance with the goal, disavowal and repression which makes them have good relationships with their deaf daughters.

Also, in the third moment, Monica's husband dies, Cristina's marriage is unsatisfactory and she thinks of her husband as a butler; Amelia and Carla find new couples and lead a satisfactory family life.

These results allow us thinking about how a therapist can intervene with the mother according to the moment of psychic processing of the trauma of the diagnosis.

It seems that not foreclosing affects at the first moment can lead to a more complex and functional process of the situation in the following moments, i.e., a better relationship with the daughters, being able to quit couples that can't cope with the situation and even finding new couples and leading a satisfactory family life.

When the defenses are more regressive there seems to be a greater difficulty in processing the child's handicap and the unsatisfactory marriage relationship, which leads to certain somatic symptoms or to a perception of reality where the world is felt as deceiving or speculating.

Therefore, these results are useful to think about the different aims the therapist can propose according to the situation of the mother. Each moment presents different characteristics and the therapist should take this into account in order to be empathic and to elaborate an adequate strategy that considers the psychic condition of the mother regarding this problem.