



A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF THE PEER SUPPORT THERAPEUTIC INSTRUMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT AS A RESULT OF WARS AND CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT: This article explores Peer Support intervention as a therapeutic tool for displaced individuals affected by conflict, from a psychoanalytic perspective. Conducted as part of a Clinical Psychology doctoral project at ISPA-Lisboa, the study uses a qualitative approach involving interviews with seven displaced people from Syria, Lebanon, Brazil, Iran, Palestine, and Jordan. Participants, some with physical war injuries, served in peer support roles regardless of their injury status. Using the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method, the study examines themes of Naming, Identity, and Identification to access deep intersubjective processes. Findings suggest that Peer Support fosters identity redefinition and self-positioning within social bonds, addressing the unique identity needs of displaced individuals. This method of intervention offers a therapeutic function by creating a relational “self-other” axis, helping individuals reclaim identity and psychological stability amid forced displacement.

KEYWORDS: Peer-to-peer; psychoanalysis; forced displacement; armed conflict.

Introduction

The current migration crisis is considered one of the greatest humanitarian crises in contemporary times and brings together researchers and scholars with extensive productions on the subject. In the 2023 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),

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there is an estimated 110 million people in forced displacement in the world. Every minute, 25 people are forced to move. Of these, 62.5 million are internally displaced, which most often means remaining in the same conflict zone, and 75% are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, which are also experiencing their economic challenges and instabilities (UNHCR, 2023).

Geographical displacement implies significant loss and internal disorganization. Material, symbolic, and imaginary losses, losses of the place of belonging and affiliation. It is important to note that a large part of forced displacement is due to armed conflicts and wars. In this context, which we will call humanitarian, subjects with lived experience of mental health impairment and war wounded are greatly neglected in their rights and access to care; and are even more vulnerable to violence. In addition, war-wounded patients still deal with the physical scars of the effect of violence on their lives. The dispossession of rights and the suppression of the individual from the category of "human" can cause traumatic psychic effects for some subjects, manifesting suffering in the body and/or as symptoms. They become geographically and psychically displaced bodies. Thus, we are faced with vicissitudes related to the clinic with a socio-political dimension, since the patients' experiences of suffering are also articulated with social and political experiences.

Considering International Human Rights (*IHL - International Humanitarian Law*), it is understood that such norms were created to protect civilians and humanitarian and medical workers during armed conflicts and aim to guarantee the health care of patients in the context of war, but these rights are regularly violated. Hospitals are bombed or embargoed civilians are denied access to health care, and sometimes some are even denied legal protection (ICRC, 1949). Lives that can be disqualified from their human value.

Medical, social, ideological, and political discourses significantly impact individual subjectivities and the expression of psychic suffering. Consequently, the exploration of this psychic suffering and the potential for interventions that emphasize subjectivity are at the forefront of humanitarian discourse (IASC, 2007). These discussions prompt a deeper inquiry into the pathways for mental health care and treatment within environments burdened by political strife, heightened vulnerability, and social turbulence. Moreover, in contexts where violence dominates and the threat to life is both real and arbitrary, the task of symbolically processing and articulating the impacts of such experiences poses significant challenges to clinical practice.

Mental Health intervention, therefore, is essential in this process and has received increasing attention and investment as a field of action, not only as specialized care with psychologists and psychiatrists but also in the development of strategies that enable this support

to the patient beyond a clinical *setting*. An alternative to offer this support is, then, the *Peer-to-Peer support approach*.

Peer-to-peer support appears in this scenario as a possibility of intervention through identification, and this is because the *Peer Supporter* is someone who has gone through a similar experience and offers support to other peers.

According to the experience gathered by the authors, this modality of support seems to be efficient at the beginning of mental health care; and this mechanism is not something recent, it is a strategy studied from which valuable and efficient results have been shown to involve subjects in health care (DAVIDSON et al., 2012). The present publication proposes to discuss the *Peer-to-peer approach* and what particularities it has as a therapeutic function in the light of psychoanalysis.

This article seeks to critically evaluate the Peer-to-Peer Support model within humanitarian settings, highlighting the creation of spaces for re-identification and assessing its efficacy as a psychoanalytic listening tool and an alternative therapeutic approach for individuals affected by displacement or injuries from conflicts. The central research question addressed by this study is: How does psychoanalysis interpret the role and effectiveness of Peer-to-Peer Support in the treatment of refugees affected by war? Moreover, the paper examines the legitimacy of Peer-to-Peer Support as a viable option for alleviating the suffering of these individuals.

This study draws its conclusions from an analysis of seven interview reports conducted as part of a doctoral research project. The participants, who volunteered for this study, were all migrants affected by forced displacement resulting from war or conflict. The group comprised individuals from Lebanon, Brazil, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Iran, including four women and three men. The instrument used for data collection was the FANI – *Free Association Narrative Interview* (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), an instrument that allows access to processes of intersubjectivity and that privileges the observation and analysis of the content brought by the participant himself instead of a theme pre-established by the researcher.

The themes selected in this article to support the discussion refer to subjective questions brought up by participants during open interviews about their personal experiences in becoming a Peer Supporter. Based on the contents of the individuals themselves for the direction of the research, an excerpt of the analysis of the results is presented here. The themes selected by the experts who discussed the contents for analysis and discussion of this article were: Naming, Identity, and Identification.

1. Data Collection

Peer support raises questions related to identification, and we are keen to understand the intersubjective relationship and its effects—specifically, how subjects assimilate this experience and integrate new content into their own identities. A crucial factor in choosing our method, as Hollway (2008) suggests, is examining how social processes and forces are assimilated by individuals. Both internal and external processes are jointly contributory, exerting reciprocal effects.

These encounters warrant careful evaluation, considering their impact on identities, effects on identification processes, and the discursive transformations of the subjects involved. Therefore, the methodology employed is qualitative. This research takes an exploratory approach, emphasizing the observation of encounters and their subjective effects. The priority lies in understanding the phenomenon, the meanings attributed to it by participants, and the integration of these meanings into their narratives. Throughout the peer support process, individuals' motivations and goals are likely to evolve; these changes facilitate independent transformations. The subjective impacts of these encounters and the elements internalized by the subjects are highly valuable for this research. Methodologically, the study subscribes to Hollway's psychosocial framework, acknowledging the interdependence between the social and the intrapsychic within a research paradigm. This paradigm is manifested in the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, from which emerges the narrative to be analyzed and interpreted (HOLLWAY and JEFFERSON, 2000; HOLLWAY, 2001, 2009, 2010, 2019). Data collection was confined to humanitarian organizations aiding individuals forcibly displaced by war and conflict, where the Peer-to-Peer approach is operational.

1.1 Research Participants

Participants were recruited from networking and contacts of humanitarian and non-governmental organizations. Participation was voluntary, through online interviews and with consent to have the content of the experience collected and analyzed for future publications consequent to the PhD, keeping personal data anonymous. Participants are *Peers* who develop and coordinate activities or participate in peer support; adults, over 18 years of age.

1.1.1 Characterization of the Participants

- a) Peers in forced displacement who have or do not have physical trauma resulting from wounds resulting from conflict zones and coordinators or *Senior Peers*. All the participants have in common the theme of migration and are crossed in some way by the issue of war and conflicts;
- b) Nationality: most of the population comes from the Middle East or works in the reception of individuals from this region. In particular: Iran, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Brazil, and Lebanon.

1.2 Method

The instrument used for data collection as mentioned was the FANI (HOLLWAY & JEFFERSON, 2000). Narratives are considered transitional elements for the understanding of psychic phenomena. Key steps have been established:

1.2.1 Interview and observation with the participants

Open interviews were conducted to understand the participants' perception of their current condition, challenges, expectations, and the support they received as well as the process to become a Peer (in the case of activity coordinators). Interviews contribute to the understanding of the effects on the subjective experience after the injury and during treatment. The interviews and recorded meetings were transcribed and the contents, as well as the effect of this content on the researcher, were discussed and analyzed by a group of peers. From this analysis of the reports and discourses, as well as their effects on the researcher, the concepts were chosen for discussion. The analysis of the interview data unfolds in two distinct phases: Comprehensive reading such as a thorough examination of the narrative, while the second phase is a detailed look at the participants' dynamics throughout the interview, where attention is directed to the convergent and divergent themes.

1.2.2 Theoretical discussion and qualitative analysis of the results

The psychoanalytic research of cultural, social, and political phenomena is based on the emphasis on specificity that the techniques called data collection (interview and observation) assume in the research. We understand that these techniques enable direct contact with the subjects

referred to the phenomenon to be investigated, and their use is one of the possible paths in psychoanalytic research. (ROSA, 2004) Psychoanalysis has its dimension of subject and object, in which the effects of the encounter between the researcher and the participant are part of the investigation.

Guided by the dimension of the utterance and the enunciation of the discourse, psychoanalytic research produces knowledge by intercepting the transmission of dogmas and idealizations, through the knowledge of a series of contexts and histories, plus articulations outside the official history (ROSA, p.182, 2010).

Another important point to be considered, according to Hollway & Jefferson (2008), is the psychic defenses that operate during interviews. Defenses against anxiety that are mobilized at an unconscious level. Memories related to traumatic events or those that cause some anxiety will be forgotten, or even not remembered, but their content insists and their expression is recalled in a modified, more bearable way. Thus, the meaning is modified. By allowing the direction of the narrative by the interviewer and not by the interviewee, space is opened to associations, providing a type of narrative not structured by conscious logic and chronological order, but rather leads to the possibility of revealing contents of unconscious logic.

It is necessary for the investigator to be aware and to examine his subjective involvement in this process, as it will have effects on the way and form in which he interprets the content and information collected (HOLLWAY & JEFFERSON, 2000).

Therefore, to acquire a greater perception of these influences on the interviewer-interviewee relationship, content analysis takes place in two moments.

- a) The analysis of the narrative by peer group process. An intervention group is convened to listen to the narrative and share the effects, their thoughts, and interpretations;
- b) Analyze the dynamics of the interview and the most significant convergent and divergent themes. The highlighted themes will be the themes selected for analysis and discussion.

The analysis takes place not only of the relationship of the subject integrated to the social bond but also of the subject constituting himself in the culture that forges the subject's discourse. Thus, in this encounter between the subject and the researcher, something also arises to be discussed and analyzed. In psychoanalytic research, the encounter between researcher and

participant is not at all neutral, it is an intersubjective encounter. In which the unconscious actively operates in this relation.

1.3 Selected Themes: Naming, Identification, and Identity

The themes and concepts could not be defined a priori, since it is precisely at the moment of observation and interview that questions can be raised. The subject's narrative about the lived experience and his/her perception of reality and the effects of this narrative through the encounter with the interviewer is what guided the choice of relevant topics to be discussed, as well as the motivation to be a *Peer-to-Peer* and unconscious issues that lead the individual to this choice. The expectations of each individual in participating in the *Peer to Peer proposal*, as well as the subjective interests and unconscious identifications in becoming a *Peer Support*.

We then analyzed 7 interviews using the FANI method for this first phase of the research that gave rise to the present article. A group of psychologists and peer researchers discussed the interviews and from then on the main themes selected as important and as common content of all participants were the issues related to becoming a Peer. The theme of subjective effects after the traumatic event and/or forced migration experienced and its identity transformations was something reported and how important it was through identification with another (Peer) in the process of support and recovery.

Thus, based on these themes, the three concepts selected by the group of psychologists to be analyzed from psychoanalysis are *Naming*; *Identification* with Peer Support and mother tongue; Being a Peer, and the question of *Identity*.

The **Naming** appears during the process of becoming a Peer, and in the reports, it was very marked that being a Peer was happening through shared experience and the intention to help the other. Through the process, many were recognized by other peers as a helper and even by the institutions in which they ended up being professionally hired. Some vignettes about the Nomination:

"I didn't decide to become a pair. It came by itself." "It just happened." (S. Female, Jordan)

"I was doing it without knowing the name of it, of what I do." (Male, Syria)

Five of the seven participants became officially recognized agents, including being hired to be a Peer Supporter and provide psychosocial support services.

"An expert sat down with me and asked me ... of the training on Peer counseling and at that time I didn't know anything about the idea of counseling (...) And because we were already working on this program when we were there at the accommodation center for people with disabilities, Syrians. But we didn't know we were providing Peer counseling. We didn't know that this was the name of this program. Because at that time we were accommodated in the center for Syrian people and any person with a disability who came to the center, we were sitting with her/him and we explained a lot of things about our experience, such as acceptance and independence, how you can become independent." (O. Male, Syria)

"Yes, when I saw the impact of peer-to-peer sharing of experiences, I feel like I can do the same and I can support other new patients with injuries (...) The services, it was like volunteering, but you don't know how much it impacted me emotionally because it gives me hope. It gives me motivation. It gives me like, you know, I'm giving something to people that I missed when I was in their shoes. Yes, they are named. There are a lot of people I remember with us, but they only name my name and O. Because they saw that we have motivation, high motivation to help other people. It's very important to be a peer counselor." (K. Male, Syria)

Two participants were already psychologists, but the unique experience through identification led them to peer support.

"They already identified it in the group. We have a psychologist who speaks Arabic, so here we have a Syrian family or a young Syrian woman, or a Syrian girl who needs care, but she doesn't speak Portuguese or speaks very little, if you can attend to her, yes. And so it went, so it was actually an identification that the group made. It's the mother tongue, it's a language of welcoming, right? So, gee, there's another person here on the other side of the world. Who shares something of my common history, you know? Even though I didn't share the same traumatic event, but I can understand these signifiers of language. I realize that this made it a lot easier in the consultations. In fact, people who had a lot of resistance to other professionals when they came

to me, I saw here as soon as the language, it opened a lot of doors, yes, you know?" (R. Female, Lebanon)

This topic revealed an important point to be discussed, the recognition of others for this subject as a discursive place of those who, through their experience, can offer support and care. It is not just any individual, but those who are given a place to speak. And this is crossed by the path of identification.

This leads us to think about the second selected concept: **Identification.**

"And I say, I didn't necessarily go through the same thing as you, but I have these experiences as a family. So, I grew up living the war in other ways, because I saw my family members, I heard it on the news, I had very close losses, right? So I say no, I didn't live exactly what you lived. But I can understand what you're saying and validate it, can't I? (...) As if I had somehow rescued my past, my family's past and honoring their trajectory... yes, so it's a way of honoring, yes, all my ancestors who had to migrate and who still migrate, isn't it, somehow" (R. Female, Lebanon)

"Then she started looking at me and started asking questions. She thought she began to accept that there was someone who could help her. Is there anyone who could understand what I feel. Then she started crying a little bit about it." (W. Syria, Female)

The lived experiences then appear as the link path. For those who have lost their homes, parents, and even parts of their bodies, disbelieving in humanity, and reconstituting the meshes of the social fabric and re-building bonds with each other, is an arduous task. The similar image of the other plays an important role at this moment and operates in these first identification rescues.

For those who may still have the opportunity to reconnect in another place beyond the similar experience but with original traits such as the mother tongue, the encounter is even more powerful.

"They are put on the sidelines. An immigrant, a refugee, he is often portrayed as a person who cannot speak for himself. It's a person who doesn't have their issues validated in some way, so there always has to be someone speaking for them. So when they find a professional, it's, and that's where other issues come in. There's the issue of the language itself, you being able to

communicate with the person, right? In the same language and the understanding is cultural, right? This whole issue, all these codes of ethics, is one of values." (R. Lebannon, Female)

"There's a greater identification like that, right? So someone who understands what I'm talking about, who has been through what I've been through and because some of our facilitators today are group leaders as well. So she even changed roles and they coordinate the whole group. And so I see that there's a much greater identification with the participants, so then it's possible. Isn't it because when you arrive in a country, isn't everything so different? What's it going to be like and everything? But I have someone who is here. And that's already in another phase and it's sharing this isn't the journey with me like that, so I see it that way they serve as this model like that. And to deconstruct sometimes, right? The fears or all of these? The tensions, you know, of being in a new country, a new context." (A. Female, Brazilian)

These encounters, which emerged in an "organic" way in the lives of these participants, had effects not only on the patients but also on themselves. It is an encounter that, based on the rescue of these bonds, says something about the Peer as well. Identifying aspects that also have an effect on the Peer and shaping their identities. Concept 3 chosen: Being a Peer and the question of **Identity**.

"So a Peer, he has to go through a lot to get to where he is and be able to make all these bonds, and be able to generate this transformation in the life of the other. But it all comes down to the question of really knowing oneself. (...) The most important thing is that the Peer accepts themselves first. How he can cope with the challenges he faced. (...) So my experience has helped me to support them and help them manage their challenges or problems, because I think peer counselling starts to be part of my personality, not just when I'm providing peer to peer support." (W. Syrian, Female)

"I think that for a work that reaches people, we need to understand and have these connections, so, starting from within, from those who know and from those who are there and validate this experience and validate this place, and then we can build together, (...) For effective work, we need to get out of this place that I know I understand. So I'm going to give you what you need, because we don't know, we don't understand, we don't know what the person needs and start from this place of hearing that it's not easy, right?" (S. Jordan, Female)

"And that encourages me to be more responsible. Because now I have. I think I have a good background and a good success story with disability. And so I have to share my experience and my knowledge with someone else. (...) The Community will not change or improve without our efforts. As a person with a disability, because I can talk about my problems. I can send my message and more than someone who doesn't have a disability. Idea of incorporation. Because it is, right?" (K. Syrian, male)

To even start having new goals and re-construct one's identity as well. A discursive place in this web of the social fabric. One of the participants was patient one day and identified with his coach and the important traits of the subjective constitution, the relationship with the father and the mother, are rescued in this moment of re-organizing identity. The relationship with the father can be re-edited in this encounter to re-organize and re-launch this trait.

"And one day I will be your replacement. I'm going to be a coach and I'm going to coach people with disabilities and I'm going to empower them to be leaders to change their lives, their reality and their community. So he encouraged me to be that. How your child is to achieve this goal. Then he when he heard me cry and said to me – I'm going to support you until the end to be a coach." (O. Syrian, Male)

From these three main concepts and the vignettes selected and presented here, we propose an analysis and theoretical discussion based on psychoanalysis that answers the question posed in the article: *considering the existence of peer work in the care of refugees in the context of wars, how can psychoanalysis think about the functioning of the Peer-to-Peer mechanism?*

2. Data Analysis and Discussion

2.1 Naming, Identification, and Identity: A Psychoanalytic Reading

Peer-to-peer approach appears on the scene as a possibility of intervention facilitated by the way of identification. Identifying aspects is the basis of this encounter and, throughout the process, can have effects on both parties. Subjectivities are also being re-shaped and new identifying aspects are incorporated from the encounter with the other.

The concept of identification is vast in the psychoanalytic reading and has been worked with convergences and divergences by different authors. In this article, we are guided by the reading of Freud from Lacan (1961) for a theoretical basis. According to Freud (1921), identification is a bond with the other, and we can understand that there are effects on subjectivities from this linkage. Primary identification is part of the very constitution of the subject in his first objective relations. Cruglak states that "the primary identification operates at the beginning of the series of identifications, it is the matrix of the series" (2001, p. 23).

Through identifications, the subject adds elements to his discursive repertoire and signifiers, elements coming from the other.

One of the common points in the interviews was the issue of identification through the mother tongue. It is worth mentioning that the mother tongue is related to the first identifications. Speaking in one's mother tongue has its implications, and so does speaking a second language. On the one hand, the familiar language allows access to places that evoke affection and memories that refer to a recognized otherness. It becomes an instrument for saying oneself, almost as in a game of marked cards in which the subject knows the effect he wants to have on the other who listens to him. The second language requires more caution, the subject makes use of unknown and unpredictable territory. Words lend themselves more easily and prove versatile to the purposes since the form in which they need to appear is not entirely mastered. Using a second language allows for a judicious choice, or not. Speech in the mother tongue regurgitates. In clinical practice, the choice of the word also has its value and meaning depending on the place in which the subject is in relation to the language.

According to Melman (1992), knowing a language is different from knowing it. To know a language means to be spoken by it, and what it says in you is enunciated by the title of the *Je*, of the agent-self. A subjective position in a discourse. Knowing a language requires a mental translation, we speak more of the same place, we communicate, we narrate. The language that is known is the so-called mother tongue. "The mother tongue is the one in which, for the one who speaks, the mother has been interdicted" (p.32). It is the forbidden object that becomes a mother tongue for us, making it our *heimlich* (*the uncanny and familiar*) and in its ambivalence of something strange, that resists signification and that remains "unknown" (FREUD, 1919). It is the one in which, thanks to the play of the signifier, the desire for what is impossible is heard.

In the face of all this, it is possible to say that speaking a foreign language and losing identifying aspects is disidentifying. Would it also be depersonalizing?

In forced migration, there are several aspects related to losses. Loss of symbolic references, of the homeland, of cultural issues, bonds that are broken, material and even physical losses - as is the case of some participants in the research. The war that breaks out in their countries forces mobility that was not always desired before. The violence that prevails also has physical consequences, loss of parts of oneself and transformations of parts of one's own body (burns, mutilations and amputations). A moment of intense suffering and psychic disorganization. For some, the possibility of addressing a narrative to someone in their mother tongue may represent a minimum of stability, a first step towards a commitment to the reconstruction of social bonds, to the recovery of trust in the other until then lost.

The experiences shared in the interviews, unanimously, touched on the issue of mother tongue and recognition of cultural traits as a means of identifying aspects as important points in this process of subjective "reconstruction". The cases interviewed refer to the importance of the bond with the mother tongue and it seems that issues related to the traumatic experience are not a priority at the beginning of the treatment and recovery process. The most urgent is before this moment and perhaps for this reason the rescue of more archaic identifications of the subjective constitution is necessary.

It is also important to point out that, given the discourses collected, for the Peer Supporter there is an important aspect in the very process of elaboration, signification, and recovery of their own experience and history when being in this place of offering support. By becoming a Peer, the individual has not only been given a place or assigned to that place but also needs to nominate himself and be appointed by others in that place.

We found that the nominations are configured as mooring operations, where a certain signifier starts to make a kind of anchoring for the psyche. We have seen that in their most varied forms, the names in some way mark the subject, inscribe it in a certain way in the symbolic. In the same way that identifications are constant and successive, inscribing and re-inscribing, so too are naming operations – in their multiple facets – constantly presented, not only in the affirmation of a baptismal name, but at all times when we are socially summoned to give an account of something, when they are questioned by the Other and we need to face our desire (SOUZA & DANZIATO, 2014, p.60).

In other words, the nominations create marks on the individual that contribute to a different construction of meanings, with "new" inscriptions in the chain of signifiers, allowing the individual to rewrite their narrative and offering the possibility of subjective repositioning within the discursive bond. From this position of Peer Supporter, who is named by others but also names

themselves, one also provides a listening ear to the testimony of this survivor of inhuman acts. According to Koltai (2016), these testimonies are understood as a mixture of confession and reflection that the subject makes of himself and as a human political production on the effects of the violence of history on human subjectivity. We are dealing with a historical subject, a holder of a history, thus witnessing the relationship of his individual history with the history of the world. The Testimony assumes a place of transmission, contributing so that the experiences are not forgotten, but that they can detach themselves from what happened and move forward from then on.

Something also reported in the interviews is the need to keep the history of ancestry alive, to remember the dead, and to give them dignity of life. As a resistance to this erasure and inhumanity. The Peer then represents this place of the living link of the witness.

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel told us in his *Phenomenology* that self-consciousness can only be constituted if recognized by another self-consciousness (Hegel, 2014), that is, an individual, or subject if they wish, as self-conscious, humanized, understanding themselves alive, can only have this existence and faculties constituted if it is initially caused from the recognition of another individual. In Hegel's own words, we read: "Self-consciousness is in itself and for itself when and because it is in itself and for itself for an Other; that is, it is only as something recognized" (HEGEL, 2014, p. 142). This construction has its importance for psychoanalysis, especially because Lacan sustains it in a very interesting way when he speaks of the mirror stage and the imaginary relation, a relation that occurs between oneself and another.

This relation, which we here call imaginary, in the wake of Lacan, is what occurs between two beings, two persons, two selves, two self-consciousnesses when they relate to each other sustained by the consistencies of life, taking into account what can be apprehended by the senses, for example, and having as a consequence the creation of certain imagos, perhaps fantasies, about the other. to what the other thinks, to what he thinks about me. And the sense of sight plays an important role in this relationship. (LACAN, 1998b). We could have gone down some different paths in the theme of identity, but we chose to direct our analysis to the question of the imaginary axis of relations, much explored by Lacan in the 1940s and 1950s, and which has as central aspects, among others, the constitution of the self in the mirror stage and the logic of Schema L. Lacan's understanding is that the self, or the idea of the self, is a historical and collective construction, dependent on an other that is present to perform a function. There is a mistake in

understanding that a mirror would be enough for the child to recognize and constitute himself, just like a pigeon that ovulates seeing only its image in the mirror.

The idea of the mirror stage can be summed up in the words of the psychoanalyst himself:

It suffices to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis attributes to this term, that is, the transformation produced in the subject when he assumes an image - whose predestination for this phase effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in theory, of the old term *imago* (LACAN, 1998a, p. 97).

Although Lacan himself says that this construction of the self precedes the social function of the child, he also tells us that knowledge is paranoid, that is, it comes from outside. The assumption of the image seen by the human infant on a surface in which he recognizes himself, or rather, in which he recognizes his body, can only be understood as a consequence of previous knowledge coming from outside. In this sense, a baby receives external information saying "his arm", "his leg", his belly" and that at a certain moment - Lacan places him around eighteen months - these parts are associated in a body, seen in the mirror, inverted. Lacan continues:

This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history: the *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal impulse precipitates itself from insufficiency to anticipation - and which manufactures for the subject, caught in the lure of spatial identification, the fantasies that follow one another from a shattered image of the body to a form of its totality that we will call orthopedic - and for the finally assumed armor of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure all their mental development (LACAN, 1998a, p. 100).

This bodily identity, this self, is the collapse of the previously loose and named parts of the child by some others. An identity collapse that is sustained by an image seen outside of itself and mirrored. This is the self, and it is the self that participates in the so-called imaginary relations. There is another concept, distinct from the self as image and body, and which could be thought of as the agent-self, the subject of a sentence, of an action. This agent-self is no longer the one constructed from "an indeterminate specular transitivity" (LACAN, 1998c, p. 208), but is defined "by the subjectivation of a *competition* with the other in the function of logical time" (p. 208).

This agent-self, distinct from operating from the identification, the vision, and the construction of an image, is constituted in the logical relation of a collective existence. Despite these differences, in both cases, it is a relationship with others who recognize or desire this self. It

is, as Hegel tells us, the fact that there is another self-consciousness that allows the existence of a first self-consciousness.

That said, there is a type of relationship between the individual and his fellow man that is based on these early stages of a person's constitution; structures that remain for all life, as we have already seen, and that will base various relationships throughout the vicissitudes of existence. This is what is called the imaginary axis of Schema L, a schema presented by Lacan in 1955 and in which we can find two axes of relation: *a* and *a'* - imaginary axis; *S* and *A* - symbolic axis (LACAN, 1961).

On the imaginary axis, we find *a*, which is related to the *I*, that same specular self that we dealt with above, and we also see *a'*, which are the other speculums, the similars with which *I* relate from, say, my sense organs, my body. This axis also constitutes the wall of language and that makes a barrier, in a certain way, to the symbolic axis, which is related to true speech and which is composed of *A* and *S*. *A* being the great Other, true subject, and *S*, which for now we can relate to the subject (LACAN, 1961).

Well, in the understanding that analysis itself would take place on the symbolic axis, between *A* and *S*, the analyst transferentially occupies the place of *A* and, from there, plays the role of creating the unconscious, after all, the vector of the symbolic, unconscious axis goes from *A* to *S* (EIDELSZTEIN, 2018).

The *Peer-to-Peer approach* as we understand it, works on the imaginary axis, precisely because it foresees similar people who connect and act as sustainers of a body, of a fantasy of self, of the world, of life, for someone who had this body, these fantasies shattered. It is from the imaginary axis, the one in which a self is formed as "a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history" (Lacan, 1998a, p. 100), that the instrument analyzed here can work. It is from a certain mirroring that the individual survivor of a context of war or conflict may have a certain chance of reconstituting his history, body, and fantasies.

It is interesting the participants' reports about their perceptions of the benefit of Peer Support, a meeting, and a space where a "successful" story is represented to others. This work is something like offering a possible model to be achieved, as in the primary relationship in which completeness of self is desired through the unity of the other. It seems to be from this imaginary "re-construction" that identifying aspects with the other is re-established, as well as a rescue of possible re-links. After any connection with another that has been destitute and dismembered, one becomes able, through mirroring and identification, in one's most radical singularity, to become one again. From then on, it was possible to move through new avatars in the language in a different

direction. Some find in the rescue of family memories, art, writing, a passage to what can be remembered but also past. That is, historicizing it, and that from then on, one can choose other paths in this Other place.

Koltai (2016), arguing about the testimony of survivors of war atrocities and the analysis of the literature produced by them as a therapeutic tool, states that in addition to the link with the dead remaining "alive", it is also a resistance to the destruction of the marks of civilization, which insists on belonging to the human species. A protest against dehumanization. He also points out that the survivors evoke the groups to which they belong and that it guarantees in some way an unconditional bond. The other from the same group, and here we make an association with the Peer Supporter, who assumes the role of a witness of the testimony, functions at that moment of the encounter as an analytical function in the sense that he can listen to and "sustain the word of the friend allowing him to come back to life?" (2016, p. 27). The presence of the other, of the Peer, functions as a guarantor of otherness, intermediate and provisional but indispensable in this encounter of the self and the other.

Another relevant aspect to be mentioned is the subjective place of social transformation. From the re-appropriation of themselves and of another place in this discursive relationship and social bond, these individuals developed important strategies to support their community. Aiming at independence and autonomy, the multiplication of activities aimed at social transformation reverberates.

3. Final considerations

As a final consideration, this study has provided a thorough analysis of the Peer-to-Peer Support intervention within a humanitarian context, revealing its potential as a psychoanalytic tool for facilitating re-identification and offering an alternative approach to mental health therapy for those displaced or injured by conflict. Our findings underscore the importance of such interventions in addressing the complex psychological needs of migrants affected by war, highlighting the role of shared experiences in therapeutic settings.

We start from a problem which is: considering the existence of peer work in the care of refugees in the context of wars, how can psychoanalysis think about the functioning of the Peer-to-Peer mechanism? Well, because of the work now being done, how can we answer this question?

Initially, we understand that psychoanalysis can think about the work of peer support from the imaginary axis, as thought in Lacan's Schema L, in which it is understood that the self-

other relationship is very closely linked to identification issues. It is from this that Peer Support works, in the sense of being a first moment of welcoming and sustaining identity for these individuals who have been deprived of part of their subjectivity.

On the issue of validity, our research showed that this instrument has a circumscribed function in a primary time of mental health care, it is valid for important initial care of this individual whose identity may be weakened by the vicissitudes of war or conflict, but who can find in the support of a partner with whom he can mirror himself. If you identify yourself, a unique support.

The process is then based on the meeting between peers, which affects both. The Peer who offers listening and support also re-edits and re-elaborates specific issues from their experience. And the process "happens naturally," in other words, the place of the Peer is constructed, but he is also named in that place. Peers need to recognize and legitimize the Peer Supporter's discursive position. From then on, and through the identifications and the imaginary relationship with this Peer "model of success", it is possible to create something different and unique, the similar marks that offer the opportunity for radical difference and singular reconstruction.

From identifications to the incorporation of aspects that shape one identity to another. It is possible to subjectively reposition oneself in the social bond. Identities that, through encounter, can also transform realities and build new stories and narratives.

In conclusion, this study has provided a thorough analysis of the Peer-to-Peer Support intervention within a humanitarian context, revealing its potential as a psychoanalytic tool for facilitating re-identification and offering an alternative approach to mental health therapy for those displaced or injured by conflict. Our findings underscore the importance of such interventions in addressing the complex psychological needs of migrants affected by war, highlighting the role of shared experiences in therapeutic settings.

Significantly, the research indicates that Peer-to-Peer can serve not only as a form of immediate relief but also as a stepping stone toward long-term psychological resilience and social integration. The participants' diverse backgrounds—spanning from Lebanon to Iran—reflect the universality of the intervention's applicability and the profound need for culturally sensitive therapeutic options.

For future research, it is important to explore the long-term impact of Peer-to-Peer Support on the mental health outcomes of displaced individuals. Additionally, future studies could focus on the training and support structures necessary for peers, ensuring that they too are

supported as they assist others. Ultimately, as the need for mental health services continues to grow in crisis-affected regions, the Peer-to-Peer model stands as a beacon of hope and a potential blueprint for global mental health strategies.

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