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Understanding Violence

A Case Study of the Approach of Practitioners to Survivors of Violence

by

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I dedicate this thesis to my mother and to the loving memory of my father – for their endless love and unconditional support, both material and emotional.

Declaration

The work presented in this thesis has been produced solely by the author under the supervision of her thesis supervisors. The contributions of the researched subjects and other people are properly acknowledged within the relevant sections of the thesis using pseudonyms in accordance with the BSA Ethical Guidelines. The material in this thesis is submitted for a degree to the University of Warwick only and has not been submitted to another university.

Abstract

Overcoming actual violence is the driving, although hidden force behind modern modes of thought and investigation, the conceptualisation of civil society since Hobbes, Ferguson and Rousseau, and the unprecedented global effort at preserving human dignity in non-violent politics based on human rights undertaken in the 20th-century. It can even be argued that sociology as a discipline emerged from philosophy precisely as an attempt to contain violence by means of understanding the ways in which people can peacefully co-exist in a society. And yet violence itself is a phenomenon traditionally avoided by sociology. This thesis approaches the issues related to violence through the prism of the ways in which practitioners working in support of survivors endeavour to understand the problem. It is thus a second order critical study of sociological explorations of violence. The thesis begins by mapping the field of sociological exploration of the problem and reviewing the debates related to the theorisation and research of violence. In destabilising the category, the theoretical component of the thesis reveals that the process of understanding violence is a non-linear, always incomplete, and difficult process. The empirical research looks at the approach of practitioners in dealing with the consequent contradictions and ambiguities. Its findings show that in order to link understanding violence and supporting the survivors, one needs to define violence dynamically through the concept of trauma and to build a containing framework in which a holding environment can emerge. The holding environment is presented as a concept, which in practice demonstrates that the understanding employed to address violence is not simply an activity of mind but a social and relational category. This requires re-considering the properties of understanding violence and their linkage with other activities of mind in the social realm and with the practicalities of living. The thesis finishes with a recommendation for further research into the collective aetiology of the trauma derived from violence, for the purposes of designing an approach to sociology based on understanding as a non-violent response to violence.

INTRODUCTION

1. The broad aims of the project.

Overcoming actual violence is the driving, although hidden force behind modern modes of thought and investigation (Neiman, 2002), the conceptualisation of civil society since Hobbes, Ferguson and Rousseau (Keane, 1996; 2004), and unprecedented global effort at preserving human dignity in non-violent politics based on human rights that was undertaken in the 20th century. It can even be argued that sociology as a discipline emerged from philosophy precisely as an attempt to contain violence by means of understanding the ways in which people can peacefully co-exist in a society. And yet violence itself is a phenomenon traditionally avoided by sociology. This thesis aims at bringing the topic back to the domain of sociology by exploring one of its aspects – the process of its understanding.

It would be too ambitious to outline and evaluate all existing approaches to address violence, hence this research is intended only to revitalise and keep alive the discussion of possible strategies. This is needed because despite numerous attempts to practically enforce such strategies, ‘the typical response of any society to violence and its aftermath is poorly conceived, poorly coordinated, and rarely persistent’ (Krauss, 2006: 9). One area on which the present research focuses is that of the epistemological aspects of addressing violence. This is important because the physical world, the subjective world and the theoretical world are not straightforwardly connected. Popper (1979) speaks of the need of a mediation between the physical world and the world of its theoretical explanations. This mediation, according to him is made possible through the subjective world:

I shall say, there are three worlds: the first is the physical world or the world of physical states; the second is the mental world or the world of mental states; and the third is the world of intelligibles, or of *ideas in the objective sense*; it is the world of possible objects of thought: the world of theories in themselves, and their logical relations; of arguments in themselves; and of problem situations in themselves. The three worlds are so related that the first two can interact, and the last two can interact. The first world and the third world cannot interact, save through the intervention of the second world, the world of subjective or personal experiences. (Popper, 1979: 154–155)

Considering this hypothetical structure of the human realm, this thesis explores the process of understanding violence phenomenologically by researching the ways in which a non-governmental organisation established to provide support to survivors of violence and to promote healthy communication between people links understanding with its practice. From here the endeavour is to highlight the qualities of such an understanding and to suggest an approach by which violence can be brought back to the domain of sociology.

Proceeding from the basic social-epistemological assumption that the classical epistemology and its ancestors are grounded in an idealised conception of knowledge, which is unsupported historically, this project is interested in the way in which violence is interwoven with the social, individual and moral epistemological modes and in their effect on shaping an ontology that allows violence to persist and perpetuate itself in the human relations. It endeavours to make a general contribution to social theory, sociological methodology and to a transdisciplinary understanding of violence by problematising the production of knowledge about

violence, searching for modes of thought and investigation allowing understanding violence and exploring the potential of such an understanding to enhance the development of a sociological approach to the problem, which in turn could frame public debates and assist in developing policies addressing the problem.

2. Empirical context: ‘YANG’ Foundation.

The research is based on a case study of one non-governmental organisation and the ways in which it employs understanding as means for healthy communication between people and as a tool to address the occurrence of violence in the society. ‘YANG’ Foundation was established in the 1990s as a women’s non-governmental organisation. Later it became a member of an international network. The team of the organisation consists of a core of 23 members, mainly women from the helping professions: psychologists, psychotherapists and clinical social workers and administrators.

The present research focuses on exploring the ways in which the organisation establishes social attitudes of tolerance towards difference, respect to suffering, and non-acceptance of violence and stimulates understanding in society, although inevitably it touches upon the interwoven strategies to achieve the other goals listed above as they are described in the ‘YANG’ legal statute. This requires considering the activities of the organisation, which mostly concern three main interrelated areas: work in support to various groups affected by violence, policy making and preventive work and transfer of their experience.

This research approached the organisation as a case study and attempts an ethnography of the process of understanding violence, in which the researcher

occupied multiple roles. Behind the research is my own practice at a similar organisation between 1998 and 2003 and my subsequent re-joining the area as a participant observer through this research that also expanded to include research within the research involving 14 organisations from three other countries. Thus, it can be said that the research can be qualified as an action research due to its explorative and collaborative nature that resulted in a depiction of the key characteristics of the ways in which an organisation working on the issues of violence approaches the problem in order to work for the recovery of the victims. The main tool in this process was my own reflexivity and subjectivity combined with the reflexivity and subjectivity of my informants in a dialogue with existing theories. The result is an emerging theory of understanding trauma from violence as one of the possible vehicles for understanding and addressing violence. In this process I have been guided by an endeavour to unpack the ideal understanding of violence rather than to evaluate the extent to which the organisation actually attains its goals, which can be the subject of an evaluation exercise or of separate research.

3. Outline of the thesis.

The thesis is presented classically in four chapters: literature review, methodology, findings and a discussion of the findings. The literature review maps the main debates related to understanding violence, which include (but are not limited to) the moral issues surrounding the justification of violence and the related problems in defining, conceptualising and researching violence. The chapter also establishes the theoretical framework and endeavours to formulate the possible directions of a sociological approach, one that accounts for the phenomenology of violence and its cultural construction and symbolic codification. From here the chosen

methodology is qualitative, focused on the research as storytelling and a collaborative endeavour. Hence this chapter not only describes the research process, but also discusses issues of subjectivity and reflexivity – including polyvocality, power issues, and the use of understanding as a research tool. It also deals with the research as a process: the development of a research rapport and the arising ethical issues, the role of the preliminary stage of the research and the characteristics of the actual research, which is a programme for development of service providers working with survivors of trafficking as one form of violence. Finally, this chapter discusses the process of data analysis and the stage of writing up as parts of the research itself. The third chapter presents the trauma-centred approach to violence that I discovered in the practice of ‘YANG’. The fourth chapter discusses the quality of understanding that arises from this approach with the consequent implications for enhancing a sociological approach to violence.

The thesis does not deal with violence itself even though the whole thesis is motivated by exploring a particular aspect of violence – the process of knowing it. On the contrary, I will be arguing that it is a phenomenon that does not easily fit in the traditional categories and conventional ways of approaching the human realm. Secondly, although this is a deliberately limited design, following Heitmeyer and Hagan (2003:8), I will be focusing on the phenomenon of violence in the contemporary industrialised world, which excludes forms of violence such as genocide, war (as violence between states), generally violence in the ‘Third world’, endemic violence such as clan warfare, terrorism and political guerrilla activities, and state violence in what was previously called the ‘communist sphere’. Thirdly, a source of knowledge about violence which I neglected here is the field of legends,

myths and literature. Humans, especially men, 'have been addicted to violence since myths and legends first circulated and recorded history began', hence we can legitimately 'seek understanding from the stories and enduring works of literature that have dealt with it' (Foakes, 2003:1). It is a very wide and rich area, which can be a focus of research on its own. Finally, I will be trying to avoid six thematisation traps, which do nothing to further the aims of reducing violence as they were summarised by Heitmeyer and Hagan (2003:8). I will briefly outline them below.

Violence is a tricky issue with the following 'traps' identified by Heitmeyer and Hagan (2003:8). A 're-interpretation trap' arises when violence is exclusively personalised, generally pathologised, or even biologised, because in such cases all socially causative relationships are disregarded. As a result, those in power might take this as a pre-text for moral self-exculpation, on one hand, and repressive administrative measures, on the other. The 'scandalisation trap' takes effect when a dramatic vocabulary of violence is employed, in a climate dominated by mass media, as a more effective or quicker way of obtaining a hearing. The 'inflation trap' comprises expanding the discourse of violence in everyday affairs, creating the impression that there are virtually no remaining areas where violence is insignificant or absent, since it is lurking everywhere. The 'moralisation trap' arises on the basis of discourses of concern, with their simplistic perpetrator/victim structure and a morality that clearly identifies good and evil. The 'normality trap' perceives and interprets the violence of particular groups as a 'normal' transient stage of development, or even as 'natural', thus involving the danger of trivialising violence. The 'reduction trap' involves a withdrawal from the great complexity of the phenomenon of violence into simple explanatory analyses or the attribution of violence to the personal characteristics of individuals. These traps accompany any

populist theorising, but the issue of violence hides particular tendencies towards slipping into such simplified conclusions.

4. The problem with knowledge about violence.

An interdisciplinary reader on violence would acknowledge the representational and actual ubiquity of violence (Bradby, 1996). Unsurprisingly there is hardly an academic field that has not at least touched upon it. Nevertheless, the theory of violence is not developed sufficiently (cf. for example, Botcharov and Tishkov, 2001:12; Harrison, 1996:562). Despite the recognition of violence as a major social problem, if not a social phenomenon, violence is still one of the most confused, miss-theorised and under-conceptualised phenomena (Bradby, 1996; Hamerton-Kelly, 1987; Moore, 1994; Norman, 1995; Keane, 1996; McLaughlin, 1996; Harrison, 1996). This is so to the degree that Savtchuk (in Botcharov and Tishkov, 2001: 476) argues that around the phenomenon of violence we can detect an artificial zone of so called *reflexive invalidity*: violence is equated with evil in the political, legal and moral modus, hence it is rendered unthinkable; it is also blocked in dichotomies such as uncouthness/culture, barbarism/civilisation; it is either associated with totalitarian regimes or with the very basic expression of human nature; thus, it is attributed to 'the other'. However, it may also be that most studies of violence take the concept of violence as a given and thus does not recognise it as polysemic, or that usually, society is presented as affected by violence rather than being constructive of this violence with the consequence that not many studies explore the theoretical or conceptual relationships of violence that link them to wider issues of power – a relationship whose exploration is particularly fertile as we shall see later. This happens in post-modern research, too, but due to a different reason - perhaps motivated by a wish to do justice to disintegrative experience,

ethnographers of violence often purposefully avoid making ‘essentialist’ statements or positing overarching theories about violence, preferring instead to search for understanding and reflexivity (Nordstrom and Robben, 1996 :9).

It can be argued that the hope of overcoming actual violence lies behind the emancipation of sociology as a discipline from philosophy. And yet violence is a phenomenon traditionally avoided by sociology and a concept that, when employed on its own, is approached as rather unproblematic. However, the exploration of its actualities and representations highlights the way in which we do (not) understand the world, our participation in it and indeed ourselves. What is more, understanding our understanding through the magnifier of violence, in fact, brings us closer to overcoming actual violence. All knowledge is twofold, but knowledge about violence is a special case of falsifying while at the same time having the potential to dramatically alter and ‘undo’ the experience. It can be said that knowledge about violence is particularly violent towards ‘experience’.

5. Research questions.

The research question that was initially puzzling me was how, given the epistemological difficulties in knowing violence, my colleagues in ‘YANG’ are able to work on the issue and indeed to be very successful in their role of promoting non-violence. At the same time, I was also curious what questions are puzzling and troubling them, as well as what the new agendas that guide their actions are. Thus, I approached the organisation as a) a discursive space dedicated to understanding violence and b) a political tool for social and individual transformation through the lenses of c) its own identity, shaped by external local and global economic, academic, social, historical and political influences being a non-governmental

organisation and under the influences of its own mission, vision, culture, norms and atmosphere as an organisation based on learning from experience.

At the stage of the preliminary fieldwork the issue of understanding as their main tool emerged. From there the focus of my exploration shifted towards the qualities of this activity of mind and its relationship with the psychological and practical interventions that 'YANG' practitioners make:

- What does understanding mean?
- What is involved in the process of understanding violence?
- What is the relationship between *understanding* and *resisting* violence?
- How does understanding differ from defining or describing violence?
- If it appears as an inter-subjective process, how can we analyse it in these terms?
- Why is understanding actually important when considering the interaction between a victim and the one who is trying to understand?
- What space for understanding is there in a context where the provision of material goods is considered paramount?
- In the context of a division of labour between those whose job it is to understand and those who are 'doing things', can we separate understanding from the practicalities of living?

At the stage of analysis, a set of metatheoretical questions emerged:

- What is the relation between theoretical understanding and practical support given that the one is not possible without the other?
- How does the activity of understanding violence fit among other activities of mind?

- Finally, from the ways in which practitioners combine theoretical understanding and practical support, how can we (in the social sciences) develop our own sociological understanding of violence given that there is little agreement on what violence is and that we are working from a low base line in which violence is generally reduced to the discourse of violence?

CHAPTER I. MAPPING THE FIELD: THEORISING, RESEARCHING AND DESTABILISING THE CATEGORY OF VIOLENCE

1. Introduction.

This chapter maps the wider intellectual context in which the present research is situated. It begins by outlining the properties of violence as a sociological category and goes on to review four modes of understanding violence with their strengths, limitations and intrinsic contradictions: in debate, in discussion on the key features of what constitutes violence, in a philosophical framework and in empirical research. All of these are ongoing processes and this chapter does not endeavour to resolve the contradictions in these areas nor does it claim to exhaust all the possible approaches. Instead it introduces the reader to some of the key arguments that destabilise the seemingly unproblematic notion of violence as an intellectual category. I will begin by the morally charged debates surrounding the justification of violence in the context of its ultimate non-acceptance in contemporary democratic societies. Linked to these debates is the question of what actually constitutes violence, in which various authors - whose arguments I will review next - argue between a restricted and a wide definition. Thirdly, I will point out to the proximity of the concept of violence to other concepts which affects both the debates on violence and the attempts at defining the category. Finally, I will sketch the practical issues that further complicate the process of researching violence. The complexity of the arguments in these four frameworks justifies the need to keep the discussions alive and for further research into the subject.

2. Violence as a sociological category.

Although individualistic approaches predominate in the study of violence both academically and in the common sense, an approach that takes society and culture seriously, one that also 'recognises the link between intimate individual actions and social/structural determination' (Bourgois in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004:304) is crucial for understanding violence. Post-structuralists go even further to suggest that in its origins, violence has collectivistic rather than individualistic character; that in its character it is social; that it is culturally constructed and always culturally interpreted; and that we should also account for different types of sociality that result in different conceptualisations of personality (Tishkov in Botcharov and Tishkov, 2000:11).

Halleck (in Sadoff, 1978: 49) observes that the criminology literature reflects our society's attempts to deal with violence not by changing people or oppressive institutions, but by making minor changes in law and practices. He emphasises the disillusionment with the possibility of predicting and preventing violent behaviour and desperation over the usefulness of rehabilitation programmes, which have led most criminologists to advocate 'greater use of punishment as a deterrent and greater police protection and care taken on the part of the victims as a means of avoiding situations in which violence may occur'.

The focus on individual approaches is further distorted by a general feeling that such approaches would re-direct our attention from social causes of violence and that blame will be ascribed to deviant individuals rather than to an oppressive society. Public discussions and policies oscillate between labelling either mad or bad when considering both victims and perpetrators of violence. Rappeport (in

Sadoff, 1978: 37) says that by attaching labels related to illness we have confused the issue of responsibility, and society has come to those who supply the labels, namely the mental health professionals, for solutions - that is, for effective treatment. 'Violence is with us', Rappeport says (ibid:33-34),

whether we like it or not, and to date we have found no way of controlling it.

Violence is something we don't understand, something we all deny in ourselves.

Violence is something we believe is not part of normal human behaviour and, thus, we say it must be pathological behaviour. If it is a pathological behaviour, then it must be something psychiatrists can understand and treat since they deal with pathological behaviour...Society has relegated violent behaviour, in fact, all behaviour that it cannot clearly understand, to the realm of psychiatry.

Thirty years later, we have to acknowledge that not much has been changed at the level of policy making. Psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy and the counselling industry in particular, are still often guilty of the worst forms of ideological distortion by individualising and defining as deviant those experiences that are in fact widespread and increasingly common (Godsi, 2004:200). However, more and more often individualistic approaches introduce the social variable in their accounts: for example recent psychoanalytic studies, where research on violence predominates, focus not only on the debate over the Oedipus complex, but consider the relationships between the cultural patterning of childrearing, personality and social institutions and the interplay between culture and mental illness (Robben and Suárez-Orozco, 2000:3).

The most unpopular position seems to be the interpretation of leftist writers. Authors as Godsi (2004) argue that the more centralised the power has become,

the more responsibility has been devolved downwards to the level of the individual without taking into account that responsibility is a two-way process: if we expect people to behave responsibly then it is up to us as a society to behave responsibly towards them. In this sense, he says, each and every violent act committed is a sign that the wider community has failed, often appallingly so, in its responsibility to look after that particular citizen. The rising levels of violence, Godsi (2004) argues, are the inevitable cost of a system based on free market with the consequent widespread deprivation, extremes of inequality, and alienation. It is, according to him, also the realities of violent homes, child abuse and neglect that leave many victims poorly equipped to deal with life in any other than destructive ways. In a socially insecure context, Godsi further says, many do not reach a basic level of income, literacy and healthcare, which results in both higher levels of frustration and poorer equipment to deal with these frustrations.

Another important cause of violence is the existence of violence itself, which suggests that societal tolerance to violence, even the very structural violence is to be blamed for its perpetuation. 'Violence gives birth to itself', say Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:1), 'so we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence – or, as we prefer – a continuum of violence'. In extremity this can be exemplified by whole cultures developing a traumatic identity built around violence and trauma. Volkan and Itzkowitz (in Robben and Suárez-Orozco, 2000) develop the term 'chosen trauma' to describe what happens when social groups are unable to mourn past losses – they develop a collective representation of themselves as a victim of past loss or humiliation. Thus, an important aspect of the group's social identity is structured around historical humiliations and a need to right past wrongs. While the group does not consciously choose to feel victimised, it does choose to

psychologise losses, and to transform them into powerful cultural narratives which become an integral part of the social identity. The main reason for the cycles of violence is violence itself - there is a slow erosion through which connections between generations, or a loss of trust in one's own world happen in the shadow of violence. Also, an overall loss of context occurs, even in face-to-face relations as these are bent and distorted by the powerful social forces emanating from the state as well as from terrorist, insurgency, or resistance movements with the consequence that general faith in trusted categories disappears (Das and Kleinman in Das *et al*, 2000:8). Thus, violence results in a vicious circle in which victims give birth to either victims or perpetrators and the whole cultural context perpetuates this vicious circularity. The same circularity can be seen behind interpersonal violence to the degree that authors speak of inter-generational aspects of trauma (Cf. Yehuda *et al*, 1997).

3. Debating violence.

One of the key characteristics of civilised and democratic societies is the non-acceptance of violence (Keane, 2004). Nevertheless, one of the main debates throughout the centuries – including nowadays, and perhaps the most responsible one, still is that on the justification of violence. The deeper we look at the seemingly unproblematic non-acceptance of violence, the more we are stuck with the impossibility of avoiding a degree of violence given our present resources. '[S]trictly speaking', says Gandhi (1940 cited in Pontara, 1978:29), 'no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little'. The most striking example is the rule of law, on which our present world is based – a monopolisation of the use of physical force by the state as Weber has first shown (Weber, 1965). The debates on the justification of violence are important given

that, as Tishkov (in Botcharov and Tishkov, 2000: 12) stresses, the dynamics of violence is directed by its legitimization. This is true both in the political and the interpersonal spheres. Hence, any effort directed at non-acceptance of violence as this thesis is, should consider the arguments in this debate.

The debate on the justification of violence is especially prominent in political theory. Nowadays, although at first glance it seems that there is a conventional rejection of violence, if we take a deeper look at contemporary situations, we will find a degree of uncertainty. As Delanty (2001:44) observes, ‘while many intellectuals as well as members of the public may share a commitment to moral-normative principles, politics and critique have become more and more uncertain as a result of the changing cultural context in which both morality and politics are situated’. In democracies violence is only used as a last resort and this definition of a ‘last resort’ is what makes it difficult to judge when violence is actually to be used and when it is being abused.

Tyrannicide and resistance to oppression are two often cited examples of justifiable violence nowadays (cf. Crick, 2006). But how to distinguish between tyrannicide and assassination, between resistance and terrorism? Self-defence is the other instance of justifiable violence long before Adam Smith. But is the deprivation of human rights of the detainees at Guantánamo Bay, as Butler (2002) asks, a just response to the 11/9 attacks; is the right response to terrorism a war against terrorism and a separation of the world across a proclaimed axis of evil? As Delanty (2001:47) says, ‘[i]n many cases the separation of self and other is precisely what the debate is about and many of the key features of negotiable conflict cannot be applied since there are only zero-sum assumptions – that is, there can be no

winner'. Further, the present-day world configuration and the post-Holocaust international morality poses new challenges to the judgment of violence as in the case of humanitarian military interventions: on one hand, it is the responsibility of those with power and means to intervene prior, during and after atrocities whereas, contemporaneously, nothing can guarantee that this obligation is not just an exercise of dominance on the part of strong powers merely rationalised by appealing to humanitarian motives or consequences (Fine, 2006:59). Are we faced in these cases with what Foucault (1984) calls *the paradox of the hegemonic consequences of the so-called liberating projects*: they not only employ violence but also construct their own objects and create their own legitimising arguments?

Historically, violence has always been a political instrument to achieve political ends, particularly when perpetrators believe other options have been exhausted – it is embedded in the process of state formation (Tilly in Besteman, 2002), in restructuring societies (Moore and Bauman, *ibid.*) and is often utilised by citizens to pursue their own political ends as in revolutions and terrorist acts (Crenshaw, *ibid.*). There is even an overall 'cathartic' approach in political theory, which sees violence 'as racially or ethnically creative, personally liberating or socially functional' (Burton, 1977:11). It is, however, precisely one of the main lessons from 20th century – that these 'cathartic conceptions of violence', 'a divination emphasising expiation, purity and bloodlessness, reveal disturbing complicities between discourses of "liberation" and those of the "final solution"' (Goodman in Sumner, 1997: 160; see also Derrida, 1992). In fact, one of the main lessons of the 20th-century history is about the horrifying consequences of the allowed possibility of a productive violence.

The potency of violence, according to Riches (1986: 11), stems from the ways in which it is highly appropriate for *both* practical (instrumental) *and* for symbolic (expressive) purposes: as means for transforming the social environment and dramatising the importance of key social ideas. 'Violence is a universal language – assuming we mean physical violence', says Neithardt (1986: 134) who goes on to suggest that

It is crucial for this distinctive feature that its application produces effects with greater reliability, thoroughness and general applicability than other means of coercion and that when used as a last resort it is superior to all other tools of control and instruments of political power.

Violence is a unique social act – highly condemned and at the same time widely used. In reality, however, even when the arguments in its defence are plausible, far from being a subject to a rational use and a calculated application, 'political violence is never simply instrumental, it is deeply cultural as well since it absorbs and transforms symbolic constructions of reality, morality, and truth' (Besteman, 2002: 7). The most prominent examples are those of ethnic cleansing behind which no rationality can be found. Even if we accept that the ends justify the means, cross-cultural historical comparison shows that it is difficult to find a connection between the use of violence and present social and political conditions (cf. Barrington Moore in Smith, 1983). In reality, there is only evidence that violence destroys individual lives.

The present-day discussions of the use of violence in politics are not new. A range of 20th-century thinkers sought to normalise the role of violence in politics - Weber, Sorel, Benjamin, Schmitt, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and Fanon each engage in a justificatory argument. They deploy arguments for violence from

instrumentality, from necessity and from virtue – but their arguments rely very much on rhetoric (Frazer and Hutchings, 2007). A special attention should be paid to Arendt (1990), who takes a middle ground arguing that a ‘theory of war or a theory of revolution [...] can only deal with the justification of violence because this justification constitutes its political limitation; if, instead, it arrives at a glorification or justification of violence as such, it is no longer political but apolitical’ (ibid: 19). For Arendt, violence has no place in politics although there are instances in which it is justifiable. As she emphasises in an elusive style ‘[v]iolence can be justifiable, but it never will be legitimate’ (Arendt, 1970: 52).

In the interpersonal sphere, the use of violence is similarly controversial and often both the motives and the justification strategies parallel those of the use of violence in the public sphere. Following Schütz (1981), Lamnek (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003) distinguishes between ‘in-order-to’ and ‘because’ motives used as a justification by individual perpetrators of violence. ‘In-order-to’ motives vitalise actions that are taken with a view of a particular objective, a goal in the future. This includes not only obvious usages of violence as a means to an end, but also the use of violence as a form of communication, as a form of pleasure, and the occasions on which violence is used to create and stabilise identities. By contrast, ‘because’ motives give the action a normative orientation that for the perpetrator(s) has justified or will justify post factum the action – self-defence, channelling frustration, but also through wider links with group-specific orientations such as masculine and political values associated with hatred (e.g. xenophobia or homophobia).

The justification strategies are usually developed after the action has been taken and often to either neutralise or perpetuate the action: techniques of justification are rationalisations, retrospective and partially unconscious in the psychoanalytic sense cognitive approaches, which thus form links between the acts (Lamnek, 1999:214). Sykes and Matza (1968 cited in Lamnek, 2003: 1119) outline five main justification strategies: the perpetrator argues that the action was caused by forces beyond his control; denies the injustice (although some times accepts the illegality); rejects the victim(s) to the degree of blaming him/her/them; transfers responsibility to those individuals, institutions or societies, who condemn; and/ or the actor appeals to 'higher' values, which neutralised other less important values in the concrete situation. There is a wide variety of other justifications, some of them recognised legally, such as those in which the perpetrator claims inability to take responsibility (mental disease, alcohol intake, or immature age), as well as others in which the wider circumstances can be seen as a predisposition – e.g. when the violent act was a perfectly normal and everyday type of behaviour as was the case of Apartheid in South Africa (ibid: 1123). Hence, at individual levels we are equally faced with a range of justifications and unsurprisingly, the main criteria to judge individual actions are those derived from formal criteria: the legality of the action taking place.

The debates on the justification of violence are closely linked with the question whether humanity can at all exist without violence: is violence inherently human and thus unavoidable or is it a product of society hence preventable. As Marmor (in Sadoff, 1978: 9) stresses, what we believe regarding the nature of humans has powerful effects on how we think about addressing the problem of violence, the most prominent example being the 'law and order' approach which is derived from

a pessimistic vision of human nature and its capacity to resist violence. After a long century of a 'nature versus nurture' debate, nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that although the *capacity* for violence is biologically rooted, it does not mean that the *expression* of violence is inevitable and indeed powerful *affiliative* needs are as strongly rooted biologically (ibid.). The same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace - this is the conclusion of the Seville Statement on Violence, drafted by leading scientists from around the world during the UN International Year for Peace in 1986. However, the last decades show that the question of the origins of violence is much more complicated, which also complicates the question of how to address violence.

After the 1950s, the nature/nurture debate was shadowed by the need to memorise the Holocaust coexisting with the difficulties in its understanding, which culminated in the moral controversies surrounding Milgram's experiments on obedience and Arendt's study of the 'banality of evil' (cf. Novick, 2000). The debate moved away from introspective explorations towards a theory of social learning (cf Bandura, 1973; Lorenz, 1966; Aronson, 1972) and, considering the capacity of politico-bureaucratic systems to re-inscribe subjectivity with destructive tendencies (Cf. Weber, 1970; Adorno, 1987; Habermas, 1987), focused on the volatility of selfhood. The 1970s civil rights movements forced social sciences to acknowledge that the difficulties in explaining violence reflect the problem of theorising differences and, consequently, the subject (Moore, 1994). The 1980s' flux and turmoil conclusively dismissed the notion of human nature as a given and stable entity in favour of an epistemologically inscribed selfhood (cf. Heller *et al*, 1986; Taylor, 1989; Bauman, 1999; Grosz, 1996). The latency of the 1990s imploded together with the 9/11 attacks opening a new area for exploration – one

that continues to be developed nowadays. The 1990s also brought a new level of understanding violence by bringing together advances in understanding the trauma from violence and relating them to their wider environment (for example Sluzki, 1993; van der Kolk *et al*, 1996; Herman, 1998). Meanwhile, following the emergence of rape crisis centres and self-support groups for war veterans, non-governmental organisations and public contractors delivering services to people who have been involved in violence were finding their own way of understanding violence through exploring the trauma. In this research, I am trying to position them as ‘the other’ of academic exploration and to see if and what they can contribute to enhancing our understanding of the problem.

4. Defining violence.

Sometimes, what seems the clear condemnation of violence is significantly challenged in many social and political situations, so that it is highly advisable to approach violence, and its different areas and contexts, on a basis of clear distinctions (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:3). That is why it is important to keep in mind that in most cases debates on violence are not based on equivocal definitions and indeed that the definition of violence is itself a subject of a significant debate. In addition, types and forms, dimensions and structures of meaning, dynamics and contexts must be distinguished in order to do justice to the ambiguities of violence (Imbush in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:19). Violence, itself, as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:2) say, defies easy categorisation – ‘it can be everything and nothing; legitimate or illegitimate; visible or invisible; necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic’. It takes extremely varied forms and may possess many different qualities, which is reflected in a very substantial range of current definitions as much as in the existing disagreements about their authority

and as a consequence theories of violence ‘not only vary in their validity and significance but also address different subjects and involve controversial assessments of the efficacy of possible strategies for addressing the problem’ (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:3). Thus, the problem of violence for social theory is both a normative and a cognitive question – it requires a political-ethical answer as much as a consideration of its definition (Delanty, 2001).

This section reflects on the issue of defining violence. To frame the discussion, I will use the distinction pointed out by several authors between minimalist and comprehensive definitions of violence (Bufacchi, 2005). I will begin with the minimalist definition, which is also referred to as a ‘restricted’ definition (Coady, 1986), as an ‘observational’ definition (Grundy and Weinstein, 1974) or a ‘descriptive’ definition (Platt, 1992). Next, I will outline some categorisations that account for the contextual characteristics of violence thus allowing a wider definition of violence. Finally, I will present the widest possible definition. It includes institutional, structural and symbolic violence thus introducing the system of violence as a part of the social system.

To begin with, violence is most often seen in physical and intentional terms: it ‘involves the bodies of both perpetrator and victim and it may thus be defined as a bodily response with the intended infliction of bodily harm on another person’ (Walker, 1972 in Glasser, 1998: 887). Thus, psychological violence as in brain-washing techniques, emotional violence as in domestic violence and the structural violence, all of which do not involve bodily contact and the latter even does not have an individual perpetrator, fall out of the definition regardless of the destructive outcome of the action. Structural violence is included in some

definitions, which, however, keeps out a wide range of acts of emotional and psychological violence – for example, when violence is seen as an act of power ‘leading to intentional physical injury of another, regardless of whether its purpose for the agent is actually in carrying it out (purely to demonstrate power) or whether the action is intended to be translated into threats and leads to lasting subjugation (as binding power)’. (Popitz, 1992:48 cited by Imbush, in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 17).

A more descriptive and inclusive definition is proposed by Lamnek (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:113): ‘a completed action, which is personal, individual, direct, expressive or instrumental, predominantly physical, illegal and also illegitimate (or even illegitimate), and also *intentional*’ (emphasis original). This definition clearly excludes impersonal, group and collective, legal and unintentional acts. Following it, for example, the Holocaust would not be classified as a form of violence as the only criterion, which it meets is the intentionality of the action². Thus, most definitions of violence exclude certain forms of violence thus rendering them more acceptable.

Unsurprisingly the same logic of ignoring the mental, emotional and symbolic aspects of the phenomenon is applied by classical law and law-enforcement policies when defining violence. I will use here the example of one of the most progressive law-enforcement systems, the UK one. Until 2003 violent crime as defined by the Home Office in its annually published *Criminal Statistics England and Wales* is a broad category, including burglary, theft, and handling stolen goods, fraud and forgery, or

trafficking in drugs (in Godsi, 2004:169). In terms of the forms of interpersonal violence, two are the relevant categories: violence against the person (VAP) and sexual offences (SO). VAP includes murder, manslaughter, wounding and assault, infanticide, attempted murder, death by dangerous driving and other motoring offences, child abduction and child abandonment, cruelty to or neglect of children, as well as more obscure crimes such as ‘procuring illegal abortions’, endangering railway passengers (e.g. throwing things at trains) and various ways of ‘endangering life at sea’. SO includes buggery, indecent assault on a male or a female, rape, unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl (‘under 13’ or ‘under 16’), incest, abduction, gross indecency with a child, procuration, soliciting and bigamy. Behind these definitions is a philosophy of proving objectively these acts by means of observation or through the observable traces they leave on the body.

Gradually, however, thanks to the efforts mostly of feminist activists and women’s advocates, acts of violence which are difficult to objectify such as stalking are accepted as violent acts (cf. Walby and Allen, 2004), psychological violence is included in the definition of domestic violence where it is considered a crime, and the legal definition of human trafficking in most contemporary legislations criminalises the act regardless of the consent of the victim³. These developments come to show that it is not the legality of the action that defines violence, but on the contrary – the public consent on what constitutes violence ideally serves to update legal definitions of what constitutes crime. Hence, violence is not and cannot be primarily a legal concept.

² The legitimacy of an action, as we have seen, is highly problematic, because for the perpetrator the action is usually legitimate by virtue of the justification strategy that is

Imbush (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 23-24) draws a sharp line (but appeals for considering all of them) between metaphorical, direct physical, and psychological violence. Metaphorical concepts involving violence or the metaphorical usages of the word violence deal not with the real exercise of violence, but rather with the graphic description of phenomenon, state of affairs, or impression, which suggests particular power, strength or superiority. Different from these, but still not direct physical violence – aimed at hurting, injuring or killing other people, is the psychological violence. It is expressed rather than perpetrated as it is based on ‘words, gestures, pictures, symbols, or deprivation of the necessities of life, so as to force others into subjugation through intimidation and fear, or specific “rewards” (ibid.:23). Whereas physical violence most often leaves traces that can be objectively observed or are at least directly experienced, the effects of psychological violence cannot be immediately perceived nor predicted in the same way, since ‘they can be eluded by the victim through a range of defence mechanisms, by taking refuge, or by suppression’(ibid.). Physical violence results in visible harm or injuries, whereas psychological violence works ‘undetected, it is not outwardly visible’. Frequently, the full extent of it is only revealed after a certain time and is then manifested in serious traumas. Thus the effects of psychological violence are more elusive, although the consequences are by no means less serious for the victim.

Marmor (in Sadoff, 1978: 10) distinguishes between illegal, legalised, ritualised and institutionalised forms of violence and stresses that violence is widely differentiated qualitatively and quantitatively. He also reminds us that it sometimes has

usually adopted.

³ The latter two instances can be found in the Bulgarian legislation, for example.

constructive aspects, especially as ‘a means of opening channels of communication between deprived groups and the power structures as in prisons or ghettos’ (ibid). Marmor’s categorisation requires close exploration of the institutionalised violence as it opens the space for a discussion of subtle qualities of violence that are difficult to be perceived, namely those of structural and symbolic violence that for many represent the social roots of interpersonal violence. Waldmann (1995: 431) defines institutional violence as the ‘power of disposition over subjects and dependents granted to holders of positions within a hierarchy and supported by physical sanctions’. The prototype of institutional violence in modern times is the state’s claim to sovereignty and the obedience it demands from individuals in its dealings with them. In other words, institutional violence is the violence that is built into the systems. Examples are the ways in which institutions deal with conflicts by excluding or punishing certain groups – e.g. sending problematic students to specialised marginalised schools. The first to explore its dimensions is Foucault (1978) who suggests that actually the contemporary order is based on an institutionalised violence, the advance nowadays is shifting from corporal punishment to the workings of shame. Institutionalised violence comes to control irregularities such as madness and sexuality thus generally serving to suppress differences and to push those who are different to the margins of society (Foucault, 1961; 1963).

Structural violence is another important category introduced by Galtung (1969). The concept comes to denote structural arrangements in society that cause harm and injury to its members. The arrangements are structural as they are embedded in the political, economic, legal, religious or cultural structure. Galtung (1993:106) defines violence as the ‘avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs; the

impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible'. Prime examples are poverty and hunger (Gilman, 1983) as well as wider forces produced by inequalities such as racism and sexism. In this perspective, actual interpersonal violence can be seen as a cultural capital – as Bourgois (in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004: 301-307) shows, violence in inner-city culture is exercised as effective public relations. He tries to 'document the full force of structural violence by revealing the ways oppression is painfully internalised and becomes expressed as what Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992 cited *ibid*: 303) calls "the violence of everyday life" among the persistently poor'. In this perspective the focus of exploration is on studying 'both individual experience and the larger social matrix in which it is embedded in order to see how various large-scale social forces come to be translated into the personal distress and disease...By what mechanisms do social forces ranging from poverty to racism become *embodied* as individual experience?' (Farmer in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004:281, *his emphasis*). Structural violence has to be considered in the context of cultural violence - any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimise violence in its direct or structural form (Galtung, 1990).

Very closely linked to the category of structural violence is that of symbolic violence, a concept coined by Bourdieu. Although symbolic violence is often confused with the media representations of violence, what Bourdieu actually means is a pre-conscious mode of mental functioning that stems from power inequalities in society and results in mis-recognition of the other in the social matrix. In fact, symbolic violence is his interpretation of ideology as much as it is 'the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by

representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms' (Swartz, 1997:89). Symbolic violence is linked to actual interpersonal violence by means of the former being 'inscribed' to the body – thus interpersonal violence never exist simply as such but is a manifestation of symbolic violence (Grosz, 1993). This relation is best explored by feminist authors who approach violence against women not as an idiosyncratic of few deranged men but as a universal aspect of male power over and control of women (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz, 1997:234). Hence through the notions of institutional, structural and symbolic violence we actually gravitate around an exploration of *the system of violence* as a part of the social system (Elwert in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003, my emphasis).

5. Conceptualising violence.

The definitions on their own can provide a ground for discussion and research but cannot play a significant role in the debates surrounding violence. If we make a step backwards and reflect on them from a distance, we will see that what is really behind them is a debate on justice and what is right and wrong. The first to emphasise that the search for justice in modernity should be a subject of a philosophical science rather than that of a formal or positive science is Hegel (1991). 'According to the formal, non-philosophical method of the sciences', he says, 'the first thing which is sought and required, at least for the sake of external scientific form, is the *definition*. The positive science of right cannot be much concerned with this, however, since its chief aim is to state *what* is right and legal [*rechters*], i.e. what the particular legal determinations are' (Ibid.:26). He defines the philosophical method as one dealing with the concepts and their actualisation (Ibid.:25). Following this understanding, this section will outline the main approaches to violence as a concept. However, actually conceptualising violence

can and should be a separate thesis. Here I will just provide a sketch of the main approaches and their features.

I will begin by briefly discussing the fact that only recently is violence approached philosophically, hence also in social and political thought. Secondly, I will summarise the exploration of violence in analytic philosophy. Next, I will review the argument against this approach by focusing on Benjamin's argument in the famous 'Critique of violence' (1921) where he appeals against detachment in the face of violence. From here I will proceed towards the attempt of Arendt to keep a middle ground by rejecting violence as such but to instead delimit what is not violence although it may appear as violence. A similar approach is employed in psychoanalysis although not in the public but in the private domain and I will review these distinctions next. Finally, I will speak about more recent post-structuralist concerns that attempt to overcome the limitations of both analytic and critical approaches by focusing on undecidability about violence.

The conceptualisation of violence has a rather short history as traditionally Western philosophy has been focused on positive concepts. As Arendt says,

the thought's quest is a kind of desirous love, the objects of thought can only be lovable things – beauty, wisdom, justice and so on. Ugliness and evil are almost by definition excluded from the thinking concern. They may turn up as deficiencies, ugliness consisting in lack of beauty, evil, *kakia*, in lack of the good. As such they have no roots of their own, no essence that thought could get hold of. If thinking dissolves positive concepts into their original meaning, then the same process must dissolve these "negative" concepts into their original meaninglessness, that is into nothing for the thinking ego' (Arendt,2003:407).

By contrast, analytic philosophy approaches concepts in a maximally detached way. To present the work done in this field, I will summarise the review by Burgess-Jackson (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 989-1005). ‘To understand or analyse a concept is to situate it in a scheme, to see how it relates to ... other concepts’, he says, ‘it is to locate the concept in logical space’ (ibid.: 990). The way to gain access to the concepts that structure and inform our thinking is through the words as they *express, represent, or symbolise* concepts. First, there is the ontological question of what sort of thing violence is – is it an event (concrete or abstract, a particular or a universal), is it a process or a result of a process, is it a state of affairs or a type of action, is it a matter of degree? The second cluster of issues regards the perpetrator of violence – who can perpetrate violence (e.g. can animals be violent, can abstract beings such as God, angels or nature do violence, can a group do violence?). Related to this is the question of who can be a victim – animals, plants, objects? Does the violence done on persons work qua persons or qua objects? Can one do violence to oneself? The third direction of exploration concerns the meaning of violence – is violence necessarily intentional or it can be done by mistake, negligently, accidentally, unknowingly, recklessly? Does violence necessarily have a motive or a purpose? Must violence be intended to be recognised as such by the victim? The biggest issue of course is on the evaluation and normativity of violence with a focus on two main questions – is violence presumptively wrong and is violence always wrong all things considered? In addition to the justifiedness or moral permissibility of violent conduct, there is a question of prudence of engaging in it. A further question concerns responsibility for acts of violence; what if anything excuses them – accident, inadvertence, insanity, compulsion, immaturity, intoxication, duress, mistake of fact, ignorance of circumstances, hypnosis,

brainwashing? Further questions are: can there be non-physical violence and can it be both physical and non-physical; can one consent to violence or will it no longer be violence; can an omission be violence? All these questions further destabilise the psychological and sociological definitions we have discussed so far.

For analytic philosophers it is crucial that no judgment is made in the sense that a philosopher should refrain from taking a position. ‘The most he or she can do’, Burgess-Jackson (ibid: 994) says, ‘while acting as a philosopher, is to state the considerations that are *relevant* to these determinations, leaving it to moralists and others to make the case’. Precisely the opposite is the approach of historical materialists. With a ‘brief’ and ‘disconcerting’ text⁴, written in 1921 – *Critique of Violence [Zur Kritik der Gewalt]* (1978a), Benjamin is one of the first to conceptualise and therefore make thinkable a negative ‘object of thought’ - violence. This essay has to be read and understood in a close relation with another emblematic essay of his *Theses on philosophy of history* (1933/1978b). In his attempt to explore violence independently of the social conventions of what violence is and is not, he makes a striking finding – violence can be found everywhere to the degree that the whole of history can be seen as violence itself. In such a context he suggests that given that violence is omnipresent in the twentieth-century, one has to take a position which violence is right and which is wrong. The wrong violence is the violence of those in power, the just violence is the violence of the oppressed. However, his own conception of what violence is, is controversial. For much of his work he elaborates on the concept of *Destruktion* as a property of critique – is he appealing for an actual though bloodless violence as many read it or is he speaking of an implosion of a state of affairs, of ways of thinking, of course of actions, of power configurations?

Arendt (1970) takes the opposite approach to the problem of violence by focusing on clarifying the relation between violence and affiliated concepts while contemporaneously still proceeding from the understanding of a ubiquity of violence in her times. In the tradition of political thought, her main contribution to understanding violence remains the distinction between ‘power’, ‘strength’, ‘force’, ‘authority’, ‘revolution’ and ‘violence’. In most of her related work she argues that power imbalances have resulted in a philosophical fusion of violence and other important concepts related to governing from where this fusion was fed back to reality. ‘It is particularly tempting to think of power in terms of command and obedience, and hence to equate power and violence’, she says,

in a discussion of what actually is only one of power’s special cases – namely, the power of government... it looks indeed as though violence were the prerequisite of power and power nothing else but a façade, the velvet glove which either conceals the iron hand or will turn out to belong to a paper tiger. On closer inspection, though, this notion loses much of its plausibility (Arendt, 1970: 67).

‘Power’, she goes on further to say, ‘corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert’ (ibid. 77). Violence, she also says, is closer phenomenologically to strength, ‘since the implements of violence, like all other tools, are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of their development, they can substitute for it...’ (ibid. 78). Arendt clearly rejects the role of violence in politics and instead seeks to revitalise Hellenistic and Roman values behind the meanings of power and authority in such a way as to divorce them from violence. Further she goes on to argue that the same

⁴ in Derrida's words (1992)

approach can be applied to revolution although it is a relatively new phenomenon (Arendt, 1990). She does so by comparing bloody revolutions such as the French revolution with the American revolution which was based on authority rather than on force. Her approach is also useful because it shows the intimate relationship between conceptualisations and governing practices.

Similarly, Imbusch (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:21) distinguishes between violence, power, conflicts, social coercion, aggression and force. To begin with, for him 'violence as calculated force is a way of exercising power, and it is a very effective instrument of power because it enforces obedience directly and overcomes resistance. Conversely, one will obviously have to concede that not all power is of violent character' (ibid: 18). Secondly, he sees conflicts as social facts which involve at least two parties and are based on differences in the social position and/or interests of the parties involved. However, he emphasises that violence itself is not a conflict, but can be the indication of one. In this sense violence can be either a characteristic of a conflict or a form of conflict resolution, though it should be noted that by far most conflicts are resolved without resorting to violence. Thirdly, social coercion is aimed at social control of people by people and is therefore identical with a form of exercising power, but not necessarily with violence. Coercion in the strict sense is understood to mean the threat of physical assault or a particular means of enforcing compliance, so this is more a preliminary stage of violence where a perceived threat or pressure suffices to achieve particular behaviour, and actual violence is not required. Fourthly, aggression is 'a manifest action aimed at causing physical or psychological injury or harm to another, but in the broader sense of aggressiveness it can denote a latent potential or disposition to such an action or such behaviour'(Imbusch in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:18-

19). In line with Erich Fromm (1977) Imbusch distinguishes malicious aggression (in the sense of cruelty and destructiveness) from benign aggression (when it is defensive), and it seems he only considered the first definitely to represent violence. Whether an action or behaviour is considered aggression, or is perceived as such, would seem to depend not least on context-specific violence. Finally, force suggests primarily strength, energy, pressure, and compulsion, and only then power, influence and violence (ibid: 19). Hence, Imbusch concludes, the counterconcept of violence is nonviolence or freedom from violence (in the sense of freedom from physical and psychological harm), but not peace or freedom from conflict.

The concept of violence must be separated from the related concept of aggression and that of destructiveness although the former are a particular form of the latter, it is important to distinguish psychologically destructive from psychologically creative elements of aggression (Mizen, 2003). Such problems are compounded where confusion arises out of the conflation of psychological theories – that is theories about mentation or at least mental experience with theories about behaviour (ibid:287). Also Marmor (in Sadoff, 1978:7-8) distinguishes between aggression, force, conflict, destruction, and violence. According to him *violence* may be defined as ‘a specific form of force that involves the effort to destroy or injure an object perceived as an actual or potential source of frustration or anger, or as a symbol thereof’ (ibid.:7). He emphasises that by contrast, not all aggressive behaviour is violent – *aggression* can express itself through simple competitiveness, through verbal attacks or even non-verbally. Violence, however, he says, implies that the aggressive action is clearly destructive in its intent’ (ibid). He also considers important to distinguish it from *force*, which is the application of power to

‘influence, restrain, or control an object, but not necessarily with destructive intent’ (ibid:8). *Destruction* in and of itself does not necessarily connote violence as it may involve a wide range of unintentional damages. Finally, although often associated, *conflict* and violence are qualitatively different, since conflict is often neither destructive nor violent although it can be both.

Qualitatively different is the approach of post-structuralist anthropologists and thinkers, who tend to interpret violence as a form of discourse: violence exists only in a certain discourse, but also violence itself is a form of discourse (Cf. Botcharov and Tishkov, 2001). As Apter (1997:2) says, in order to organise and perpetrate violence, people first have to ‘speak it through’ - it finds an expression in texts of proclamation, the arts, and even in academic lectures; in short, violence involves people, who grant their intellect to its service and these are often intellects that go beyond the boundaries of ordinariness. On the other hand, involving a big number of people – perpetrators and victims, violence obtains its own logic of development, different arguments of its participants or external collaborators (including scientists) and very different versions of the victims of violence or of those on whose behalf the violence is being perpetrated. This in turn constitutes the discursive practice of violence. Consequently, we have to approach the phenomenon not as if it was a discerning category, which can be situated and studied outside a social and semantic context, but as a result of those values and meanings, which exist in a certain concrete society where violence takes place.

This interpretation is behind the development of deconstruction as a method of a radical critique of critique and its cancellation without a return to analytic philosophy. The assumption is that the fusion of violence and concepts is a

reflection of the actual penetration of violence in all aspects of the contemporary world and vice versa – the context has profoundly affected the texts which hold the present-day society. Thus the main reason for and the prototype of violence turns out to be the logocentric and phallocratic world, which constitutes the aporia of violence, a vicious circle in which all attempts at overcoming violence result in a perpetuation of its reproduction. If we accept, however, Derrida's deconstruction of violence (1976) as a threepronged process, in which everyday, empirical violence is itself the violent consequence, a 'reduced and constraint derivative' of a 'constitutive arche-writing or arche-violence' which is the very condition of both doing/writing/violence and its opposite thinking/speech/ peace, but also of its counter-part – the denial of violence as represented in what we call the law, right, or reason; the second, and more ambitious, line that can be pursued here, is that of reconsidering onto-epistemology as ethics itself – a post-Hegelian project to which phenomenology after Heidegger has been dedicated (cf. especially Levinas and Derrida). This would also require employing an understanding of the method that corresponds to post-structuralist accounts of critique as the fusion of deconstruction, psychoanalysis and ethics and a method that becomes *the* virtue itself through an anchorage in undecidability and orientation towards infinity as the opposite of theleological projects.

6. Researching violence.

Conceptualising violence is one mode of approaching epistemologically violence. Equally important and ideally linked to this mode is the empirical investigation of the actual occurrences of violence for the purposes of advancing our knowledge of its features, prevalence and trends. Violence is widely acknowledged to be dysfunctional in contemporary societies, which requires systematic research.

Furthermore, it is a dynamic phenomenon, which also calls for an ongoing engagement. Here, it is important to outline issues related to the features of such research, practicalities of the measurement of violence and the aspects that have to be taken into account when choosing a methodological approach. Thus, I will finish a process of mapping the key features of the four main activities of understanding that are required for the exploration of violence.

Research is important because of its function to guide policymaking, public discussion as well as the daily activities of those working in education and the administration of prevention, victim support and perpetrators' rehabilitation programmes. This calls for efficient reporting to the media and policymakers. 'Successful reporting', Dollase and Ulbrich-Herrmann (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 1235) say, 'can be achieved only through a methodologically critical judgment of scientific findings and their appropriate translation into everyday language'. Some authors predict that there will be a return of violence to Europe in the form of ethnic violence, new qualities and quantities after 9/11, conflicts over scarce ecological resources, changing nature of war, especially the replacement of inter-state war by low intensity wars within societies, which all require greater sensitivity that will allow us to identify new forms of violence, e.g. cyberviolence and evoke the need of internationalisation of violence research (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:8). Most authors agree that this research not only needs to be international given that violence is a phenomenon present in all societies, but that it should also be interdisciplinary.

The exploration of violence was seen by Sadoff (1978) to require a combination of medical, legal and psychological perspectives in order to reveal issues related to

identification, prediction, treatment and prevention of violent behaviour. Nowadays, there is a greater acknowledgement that philosophy, gender studies and sociology are also important, if not key disciplines to be involved (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003). In addition, there are whole fields that have emerged because of crashing with the limitations of traditional science and philosophy to comprehend violence. A prominent example is the Frankfurt school of critical theory that was created to help understand modern large-scale institutionalised direct and unquestionable violence such as the Holocaust. According to some authors less accepted academically methods as psychoanalysis have also emerged because of the need of an improved understanding of violence and abuse (cf. Herman, 1990). Academic and cognitive research, however, with its division into disciplines no longer holds the monopoly over exploring various issues, including violence and there is a tendency towards transdisciplinary problem-oriented research in various social and economic contexts (Gibbons *et al*, 1994).

The considerations at the level of research are more practical as compared to the theoretical issues discussed in the previous sections. For example, according to Lee and Stanko (2003:4) the main issues in researching violence are related to the very ‘measurement’ of violence both in terms of content and as a process. At the level of content, these authors identify a range of questions:

- Does a physical injury help us to define its impact?
- Is psychological abuse violence?
- How does ‘threat’ work as a form of control when it does not result in a physical or sexual injury?

They also consider important questions related to the process of measuring violence:

- How do our research participants affect the ways in which we document violence?
- Can we expect offenders and victims to speak truthfully about violence?
- Would people even answer questions about such a sensitive subject?
- Do researchers harm people further by asking them to recount traumatic incidents - whether they are victims or perpetrators?
- Do we endanger people who answer our questions, or ourselves as researchers, if we explore aspects of life we know are dangerous?
- What is the overall emotional impact on us as researchers when we delve into the frightening, the damaging or the risky?

But studies now also revolve around the social meanings of violence, the representations of violence and popular attitudes towards violence (Archer *ibid*: 26). Clearly, all these issues trespass the questions discussed so far as to what actually violence is, but are nevertheless important for the actual implementation of a research. One of the main problems of existing research is precisely ignoring the existing theory about violence thus resulting in a poor philosophical framework.

The actual methodology is also an important question, especially as far as the choice of methodological approach is concerned. Böttger and Strobl (in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 1203) postulate three aspects associated with the goals of the project that have to be taken into account when deciding on the approach to be employed. Firstly, qualitative approaches are particularly useful in situations in

which little is known about the lives and cultural backgrounds of those being studied. Secondly, they are applied particularly when the goal is to analyse complex structures of meaning or action, or results are expected to show such patterns. Finally, a qualitative approach is chosen when the empirical goal is to assess violence and its backgrounds in a way designed to understand subjective experience. Unlike in the first ethnographies, however, nowadays there is greater understanding that there is a need of balance between openness and being guided by theory (Strobl and Böttger, 1996). Contemporaneously, there is also a tendency of combining and coordinating qualitative and quantitative approaches thus opening the possibility of a wide range of innovative methodologies and research designs (e.g. Klugge and Kelle, 2001).

The history of quantitative explorations of violence and especially aggression is much longer - there are estimates that there are more than 30 000 published reports on such research (Dollase and Ulbrich-Herrmann in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 1219). There is also a significant body of their secondary research that aims to set standards and norms, to make suggestions, to elucidate the breadth of possible operationalisations and methods of analysis, to identify errors and not least to express critique. Dollase and Ulbrich-Herrmann (ibid.) distinguish six groups of specific characteristics of quantitative research on violence and aggression. First of all, aggression and violence are taboo in many societies, which results in distorted responses especially in surveys and in many unregistered cases. As a result, there is a particular risk that official statistics will give an especially distorted picture of reality. Secondly, violent events are rare events, especially if defined classically. Consequently, they are found with a low frequency in the framework of random samples. Together with the above

mentioned response bias and tendency toward simulation and dissimulation, this often results in an over- or underestimation of the real prevalence of violence and aggression. The fourth specific feature is linked with the intention of reconstructing violence and aggression, which is unavoidably distorted by the various perspectives discussed so far and the associated definitions.

The next issue that has to be mentioned is that quantitative research does not only address actual violence and aggression but also subjective antecedents and concomitants such as propensity toward violence, approval of violence, aggressive tendencies, etc. This requires that the formulation of causal relationships is based on a theoretical categorisation that does not just claim but confirms which factors determine the effects. Another problem in this area is linked with the essence of the quantitative methodologies and the associated instrumentarium which consists of predominantly aggression tests and is characterised by general inconsistency and fragmentation of the existing theories. More important is the issue of data protection when research on violence is concerned and it works both ways – in the sense of restrictions to databases for researchers as well as specific sets of requirements for breach of confidentiality imposed on the researchers. There are also significant problems associated with the data analysis and interpretation. To conclude this brief paragraph on quantitative research on violence and aggression, despite possible improvements in technique, it is virtually impossible to comply with all the methodological requirements and to meet standards of reliability, validity and generalisability and this is understandable in the light of the discussion in the previous sections. Hence, all quantitative research should be interpreted and perceived with caution keeping in mind that ‘pragmatic compromises are necessary in the dimensions of time, breadth, quality criteria, thoroughness, complexity,

effect sizes, and causal explanation' (Dollase and Ulbrich-Herrmann in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 1233).

Any overview of researching violence would be incomplete without mentioning the emerging knowledge base on violence against women, which is a concept that has emerged in the merging of feminist theoretical and activist accounts with human rights focused approaches and policies. Research and campaigns in this area target abuses that had previously been considered personal problems, such as domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse; traditionally performed harmful practices such as genital mutilation, witch-burning and foot-binding; and forms of violence of those acting as agents of the state – e.g. gender violence linked with militarism, nationalism and male violence such as rape in wars, but also rape, murder and beating in police custody (Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, 1997: 234-235). The discovered interaction between empirical frequency, relationship context and societal tolerance of assaults resulted in the thesis that violence against women is characteristic of patriarchy:

the unequal economic and social power of the sexes is linked to systematic disregard for the sexual self-determination and the physical and psychological integrity of women [without excluding] the possibility that men can also be victims of gender-based violence if they fail to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity or pose a threat to it (Hagemann-White in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 99).

Hagemann-White distinguishes several trends in gender-based violence research across axes of geographical coverage and traditions (e.g. US versus European research) and across theoretical schools. The geographical trends are linked with

the history of addressing the problem – in North America the research is linked with the work of the first shelters whereas in countries like Germany with the state policies to address the problem. Nevertheless, she points out a strong tendency of generalising North-American findings and citing them disrespectful of the differing contexts. In terms of schools, she begins her overview with the followers of the Frankfurt School, who combine critical theory with findings in the field of psychoanalysis. Secondly, she presents the Berlin school of ‘critical psychology’ that links Marxist interpretations with individual behaviour. Followers of Galtung interpret gender violence in terms of its linkage with structural violence – how do socio-political factors influence the dynamics of gender-specific violence. Other authors approach the issue of the reinterpretation of violence by battered women in terms of Elias’ process sociology to explain why many women who leave a violent man with radical plans to separate nonetheless return to him by the conflict between a ‘figurative ideal of harmonious inequality and the real power shifts between the sexes’. Biographical research emphasises the interaction between individual and social construction of biographies. One of the most influential studies, including the field I am researching is trauma studies originating in America (Herman, van der Kolk, Sulzki and others). Through the experience of trauma they link personal and political aspects of traumatisation. Theories from cognitive social psychology are also very influential, including to discover and dismantle popular myths about violence.

Thus, it can be seen that gender-based violence research is innovative and yet it keeps close connections with existing schools and general trends in exploring violence. Another area of debates surrounding the issue of researching violence against women is its linkage with politics. Although it originates in the feminist

slogan ‘the personal is political’, most research does not really have much to do with politics. Despite the feminist background of gender-based violence research, quantitative studies predominate due to their focus on causal explanations (oscillating between *either* gender *or* family as the root causes) that are expected to contribute to prevention and intervention programmes (Hagemann-White in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 107). As a consequence, most research is linked to practice rather than to purely academic practice and as a result is often leaning on under-developed theoretical frameworks. On the other hand, there are also lots of attacks on the quality of research inspired by activism (e.g. Gelles, 2007). One of the biggest challenges facing research linked with the problem of violence against women is that the requirements for academic quality should be matched with those of linkage with the lived experience as it is negotiated between the various actors.

7. Destabilising the category of violence.

Despite violence being considered a social phenomenon it is rarely considered in sociology. However, the issues surrounding violence are a legitimate subject to sociology as well. On one hand, sociology is able to host an approach of violence that is derived from a phenomenological perspective. On the other hand, violence is a concept that is both culturally constructed and symbolically codified. Traditionally, violence is approached as an ontological, objectively existing phenomenon and as an unproblematic and self-evident concept. From this viewpoint the focus of scientific and policy-making interest is not that much on violence itself (although often it claims to be), but on its causes and effects. This attempt to find an external meaning of violence, the search for the ‘real’ pathology behind violence as a symptom, the quest for its function and instrumentality are seen by some authors as examples of a deterministic approach, a semiotics of

violence that 'sees violence as referring to underlying, extrinsic factors and searches for that reference, thereby ignoring that very violence itself' (Schinkel, 2004:17). A necessary addition to this account is the formalism of violence, which addresses precisely the aesthetics of violence by allowing the possibility that violence can be autotelic - self-referential and an end in itself - hence its intrinsic features are to be revealed (ibid.). Whereas the former approach is illustrated by explanations of domestic violence as a by-product of the interwoven socio-cultural, interactional and personal workings, for example, the latter could highlight the inexplicability of the widespread fascination with violence in culture and unmotivated outbursts of sporadic violence as in hooliganism. The sociology of violence, as Staudigl (2007:236) says, as much as it can be said to exist at all, is rather a 'sociology of its reasons' (von Trotha. 1997), a 'scientific hunt for causation' (Whitehead, 2004: 55) that unavoidably faces us with constitutive ambiguities and paradoxical consequences (Nedelmann, 1997).

A fresh alternative is provided by recent authors, such as Staudigl (2007) whose approach is grounded in phenomenology. He proceeds from the assumption that phenomenology - as the sphere of meaning - escapes, in a fundamental sense, the realm of causes and effects. If the traditional approach is engaged with *explaining* violence, these recently emerging phenomenological accounts are focused on thick *descriptions* of violence. This went hand in hand with new fields of research into violence in the social sciences, which were now more interested in the 'what' and 'how' questions and in the dynamics of violence generally, than in the 'why' questions as to the causes, grounds, and contexts of the emergence of violence (Nedelmann, 1997 cited ibid). The focus shifts towards examining the processes through which violence is actualised suggesting that it is both produced and

consumed, that the continuous creation of new contexts and the sudden removal of access to established contexts frame the manner in which violence and subjectivity tend to become mutually implicated in the contemporary world (Das, *et al*, 2000).

The approaches outlined above do not account for the cultural construction and the symbolic codification of violence. And yet, we should not forget that violence is not always an empirical, objective reality but a matter of cultural construction in the context of publicly shaped discourses and is generally defined by reference to an issue (Delanty, 2001:43). To begin with, the very concept of violence is ‘essentially contested’ (de Haan, 2008) – it is ‘either under-, or over-defined, or both’ (Bauman, 1995:139). Many authors see the definition of violence as an ‘elastic’ one (Neidhardt, 1997). Even the commonsense usage is extremely diffused ranging from criminal acts through psychological harm to various forms of social and political oppression (Kaase and Neidhardt, 1990). However, too wide a definition leads to an ‘inflation trap’ – ‘expanding the discourse of violence in everyday affairs, creating the impression that there are virtually no remaining areas where violence is insignificant or absent, since it is lurking everywhere’ (Heitmeyer and Hagan, *ibid*: 8). On the other hand, too narrow a definition can leave out of the analysis actions and practices which are experienced as violence and which have pernicious consequences (Lamnek in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:1113). This is especially true when focusing solely on physical violence. Such a focus neglects the effects of the fear of a yet uncommitted assault (Bradby in Bradby, 1996). Furthermore, although physical violence may be easier to identify, name and quantify than psychic or symbolic violence, a firm line between ‘hard’ violence (physical) and ‘soft’ violence (symbolic or psychological) is artificial, arbitrary and

even dangerous as the more elusive workings of psychic or symbolic violence may be equally, if not more, devastating in the long run (Robben and Suárez-Orozco, 2000:5).

This contestedness of the concept of violence, however, should be not only accepted, but also exploited to enhance our understanding of both the phenomenon and the workings through which violence is socially constructed (de Haan, 2008). Coady (in Steger and Lind, 1999) helps us to understand the heterogeneity of definitions by suggesting that these mutually exclusive definitions reflect in fact political rather than scientific positions - leftist authors would cover a wider range of social injustice while rendering revolutionary violence justifiable whereas liberal arguments will focus on physical bodily harm excluding structural forms of violence. Secondly, the definition of acts as violent will itself vary between societies and societal sections (Heelas, 1982; Riches, 1986). What is more, the definitions will vary even in the same societies and social sections, but in different historical periods – the whole civilisation process, indeed, as Elias (1939 [1974]) shows, is a process of redefining and condemning what violence is. Through the notion of ‘habitus’, Bourdieu (1984) shows how this re-definition will depend on which social group’s values will be leading at each particular period – normally physical violence is considered dis-tasteful by higher classes whereas physical strength is idealised in lower classes. Consequently, as science can be seen as a representation of the values of those in power, traditionally the phenomenon is seen as one of the characteristics of ‘primitive’ or non-civilised societies or a form of deviant human behaviour. Thus, as Riches (1986) warns there are two basic dangers when approaching violence: to neglect the point that in one culture violence would mean one thing and in other – another, and that the analysis could

be damagingly influenced either by the 'folk' theories about violence which obtain in the analyst's lay culture or by the informants' theories and rationalisations.

Secondly, various studies approach the phenomenon in different ways, which shows that the epistemological stance greatly influences its interpretation. Freudian psychoanalysis, Durkheimian sociology and the anthropology of Moss are all based on the assumption that violence is an objective fact in the social existence of the human, which the society has to control (Tishkov in Botcharov and Tishkov, 2001: 9-11). Tishkov shows that these three suffer from the problem of essentialism, which is reflected in the lack of differentiation between violence and aggression, for example. Similar confusion lies at the basis of ethological approaches including evolutionary, genetic, social-biological and neuro-chemical theories of violence that see it in terms of aggression that is inherent in the human beings as animals (*ibid.*). Social constructivists go to the other extreme of claiming that violence exists only in and because of society. Post-structuralist authors such as Foucault, Derrida and more recently Butler complement these trends by arguing that violence exists only in a certain discourse to the extent that it is itself a form of discourse. Similarly, Toffler (1992) includes violence in a historically formed power triad of violence, knowledge and wealth arguing that the three constitute a single interactive system used to make people perform in a certain way. Thus, the omnipresence of violence hence its normalisation and its pathologisation are competing interpretations.

Thirdly, 'violence' is very much a word of those who witness, or who are victims of certain acts, rather of those who perform them - when a witness or victim invokes the notion of violence, they make a judgment not just that the action concerned causes physical hurt but also that it is illegitimate (Riches, 1986:3). Normally,

people define as violence forms of behaviour that exclude their own actions (Baumeister, 1997). Respectively, perpetrators of violence learn both to view their actions as legitimate and to justify their violent acts to themselves and others (Lamnek in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:1114). Bystanders, including researchers, are influenced by social attributes, moral values and political positions which results in a firm line being drawn between a perpetrator and victim (Lefranc, 2002:1). Thus, the position of the actor within the system of violence will significantly influence what will be seen as violence and what positions will be assigned to the participant in the triangle 'victim – perpetrator – bystander'. This is so to such a degree that some observers argue that whether violence can be known at all, depends on the position. On one hand, many - among them victims of massive trauma – have questioned the validity of *any* outsider's perspectives; these observers have argued that only 'first-hand' experience can lead to a real understanding (Robben and Suárez-Orozco, 2000:3). By contrast, authors as Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996 cited *ibid.*:7) has argued that traumatic events are by definition incomprehensible because partial forgetting is a defining characteristic of trauma. This inability of the traumatised to recall fully the traumatic event, and the failure to integrate the 'uncanny' experiences into consciousness may be logically extended into literature and science. However, it also represents 'the refusal to force the inexplicable into interpersonal schemata and, instead, to bear witness, to listen, and to allow testimony to unfold itself with all its contradictions'.

Cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence, *both* its expressions and repressions (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004:3). The fluidity outlined above and the morally charged connotations allow abuses of the label. This is so mainly because certainly 'violence' is most often used as a 'label' to

convey implicit disapproval (Mizen, 2003: 286). Consequently, it is also often used as an aspect of censorship to condemn forms of behaviour and practices that perform rituals borrowed from violence which are not violent themselves – e.g. the practice of sadomasochism (Valiér in Sumner, 1997), and forms of resistance such as the sit-in strike (Arblaster, 1975). Often, such an extreme focus on condemning interpersonal violence is used to distract attention from wider issues of injustice or to justify policies based on limitations of personal freedom (see also Chomsky's discussion in Chomsky, 2002). At the other extreme, we can see the radical extension of the definition of violence not as a direct attempt to delimit what violence is, but as 'part of a continuous struggle to extend the range of events which are seen as being in principle within the scope of human control, and for which, therefore, mankind must accept responsibility' (Arblaster, 1975: 240). In this sense, regardless of the correctness of the statement, any labelling of practices as violent nevertheless 'remain moral or ethical judgments of practice which are mainly legitimised through reference to the manifestations they condemn, the criteria and procedures of ethical judgment used, the explanations they suppose of the apparent violence, and the context in which they are made' (Sumner, 1997:3). Approaching the phenomenon of violence, therefore, should proceed from 'disentangling the sign from its referents, the signification from the logic and context of its practice, and the signifying agency from the case' (ibid: 4), from a cultural deconstruction. In short, there is a need for greater ethical sensitivity in thinking about violence.

On the other hand, if we are to achieve change, we should engage in 'questioning who decides "what counts" as victimisation and who defines its meaning and seriousness' (Kelly and Radford, 1998: 71). Changing the social script of violence

begins with changing the context in which it is discussed, hence re-negotiating the definition hence re-framing and re-directing the issue and its dynamics depends on the ways in which the power balance changes in society. An example is the way in which the issue of gender-based violence has been re-defined and re-framed dynamically over the last four decades with the increased involvement of women, including battered women, in social, economic and political life (Muehlenhard and Kimes, 1999). The dynamics in the definition of violence, therefore, is also a reflection of a political struggle over the authority of who defines reality (Kelly and Radford, 1998: 75).

Last, but not least, is the question that concerns research – the issue of considering researchers with their own motives to choose as subject matter violence as much as the problem of how research is utilised, used, abused and misused in policy and practice. The choice made by authors, and the initial approach to the subject it determines, as Lefranc (2002:453) emphasises, ‘are never manifestations of perfect objectivity, of a purely “scientific” interest’. To summarise her argument, the analysis will be influenced by personal preferences and even pathological individual tendencies leading to a fascination with violence as much as by political positions, moral values and epistemological stances. Regardless of how ‘objective’ they try to be, researchers dealing with violence cannot avoid being angered nor being influenced by the particular socio-historical context: ‘even those researchers who succeed in freeing themselves from a victim-centred version of events may do so only to find themselves in an impasse in which scientific elucidation of the causes and consequences of violence has to entail a process of categorisation and thus, inevitably, a verdict of right and wrong’ (ibid: 462). This, she says, is especially evident in determining the right distance from the victim and/or the perpetrator,

and in distinguishing between a social distance and a scientific distance. As far as the (ab)uses of research are concerned, it is important to highlight – in addition to the fact that findings will always vary depending on the epistemological stance – that advocacy, ‘public health’, ‘law-and-order’ and scientific contexts have differing goals, which consequently leads to distorting even more ‘objective’ findings depending on the context in which they are used (Gelles, 2007).

8. Conclusions.

The literature on violence is wide and reveals that the process of understanding violence is a non-linear, ongoing, difficult and complicated process guided in modernity by the principle of non-acceptance of violence. This principle is often challenged in various individual, social and political situations by a lack of alternative resources. The process of developing these resources requires dealing with the epistemological difficulties of defining, conceptualising and researching the problem. The definitions of violence vary from restricted definitions of violence based on the intentional use of physical force that aims to injure to wider phenomena of avoidable impairment. Its conceptualisation reveals proximity and often fusion with the concepts of force, power, authority, destruction, conflict, aggression and others to the degree that some authors speak of its actual ubiquity and penetration in all aspects of life through the reigning discourses. The process of researching violence is itself shadowed by these theoretical complications together with a range of practical, ethical, methodological and political issues that have not been resolved yet. The category of violence reveals itself to be a vehicle for discussion and exploration. Hence understanding violence is crucial to any attempt to actually contain violence in society and deserves our sociological attention.

This chapter located the issue of violence in the domain of sociology by virtue of the need of a phenomenological approach, of a consideration of its cultural constructiveness and symbolic codification, and of countervailing the predominating individualistic approaches. The revealed controversy over the subject of violence does not imply, however, that the definition of violence is important only as a source of revealing power configurations and cultural constructions. What violence is and what it is not remains an important question morally, emotionally, practically and academically. Nor does it imply that we should stop investigating the causes and consequences of the lived experience of violence. Rather, the exposition above suggests that there is a need of a sociological approach to violence – one that accounts for the ontology and phenomenology of violence as much as for its epistemology and symbolic codification, all of which will be shaped and directed by the epistemological stance, positionality and subjectivity of the dynamic system researcher (author)/audience (reader). As Michaud (1978) points out, there is without a doubt such a thing as violence in itself, but it does not exist *as* violence until it is classified as such – a process of classification that is complex and controversial. It is precisely because the problem of violence is a particularly unclear one that it needs to be addressed with greater sensitivity and reflexivity (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003:4). The next chapter presents the approach I have chosen in order to gain access to the experience of understanding violence as it is developed by non-governmental organisations that deliver services to survivors of violence.

CHAPTER II. A CHAPTER ON METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction: activating the hyphen.

As Kate Fox (2004:15) says, the currently fashionable practice is ‘to devote at least a chapter of your book or Ph.D. thesis to a tortured, self-flagellating disquisition on the ethical and methodological difficulties of participant observation’. The plus of this fashion is that I can assume that most of my readers are already familiar with the specifics of qualitative research: non-compliance with conventional criteria such as objectivity/neutrality, generalisability and reliability on one hand; and on the other - awareness of the ways in which the research findings will be shaped by ontological, epistemological, methodological choices as well as the researcher’s background, positionality and relationship with the researched subjects. So, there is no need to devote some forty pages to discussing why the methodology I have employed *is* problematic. Luckily, the same fashion allows me to summarise with ease why participatory forms of research *are* useful: they acknowledge the importance of subjectivity for the making of meaning out of certain attitudes, behaviours, opinions, rules and phenomena while, at the same time, providing a space to channel voices that are otherwise silenced.

Instead, this chapter presents the process of ‘activating the hyphen’ in doing a participant action research the way it happened with this research - the hyphen in participant-observer, insider-outsider and in academic-practitioner (Humphrey, 2007), in self-other (Fine, 1994), and even in Easterner-Westerner, if we employ an analogous reading of the new nomad as riding the hyphen in Doubravka Ugreshich’s essays (2006). Through all these explorations, the hyphen has become

an important metaphor to understand the personal-methodological-political-ethical ramblings of the participant researchers and reflective writers that come after the ‘fifth moment’ of the qualitative research – the period after 1990s in the development of the qualitative research as a philosophy, which is defined and shaped by a double crisis caused by the interwoven problems raised by issues of representation and legitimation of ethnographic texts (Denzin&Lincoln, 1998).

Instead of the expected ‘tales of the field’ (Van Maanen, 1988), the early 21st-century ethnographies have become self-other explorations by auto-decentred subjects. It has become clear that self and other, insider and outsider are just frames of different positions – sameness in some aspects coexist with otherness in other aspects of the identities of the researcher and the researched and they change their constellation when the researcher positions herself as a writer and speaks to potential readers. This requires the researchers to account for the way in which the research both shapes and is shaped by them (Sumara and Carson, 1997). The recent loss of confidence in the anthropological project and a concomitant concern with reflexivity has meant that fieldwork has also become increasingly ‘problematised’ and self-conscious, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Hence, the chapter also suggests that this ‘dynamic, non-linear and emergent process’ provides the needed tool to transcend boundaries while researching social phenomena that themselves transcend the conventional disciplinary and geographic boundaries and escape our ordinary understanding.

Action research is *not* about testing preconceived hypotheses or about generalising research ‘findings’. As Fisher and Phelps (2006:154) put it, ‘it is about depicting the context, change processes, resultant learning and theorising of individuals or

groups in a process of mutual change and inquiry'. Hence, this chapter presents a rather dynamic, non-linear and emergent process. I will begin by sketching briefly the key components of my reflexivity, which also comprise the subjective element of the research. Next, I will outline the process of rapport development and the related ethical issues since the quality of the data gathered will depend on them. Thirdly, I will be guiding you towards the participant action research I implemented by describing the preliminary stage that helped me to define the actual fieldwork. Then I will present the 'YANG' programme aiming at the development of service providers in three other countries that provided the framework in which the actual research was completed. Finally, I would like to clarify some aspects of the decisions I had to take regarding the analysis of the findings and the writing of the thesis. In doing so, I will be presenting the research with a focus on reflexivity, subjectivity and participation. This was a process of using the hyphen - from insider research to participant observation and from here to participant action research, which allowed me to formulate the necessary conditions for designing a space, in which understanding of violence can emerge.

2. Philosophical framework.

The perspective through which I have approached the project corresponds closely to ideas and principles developed in phenomenology. Phenomenology has never developed into a system but remains a practice which 'emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer' (Moran, 2000:4). It is characterised by an endeavour to describe rather than explain things, by a presuppositionless starting point and by a suspension of the natural attitude. The researcher focuses on

depicting the world of appearances, keeps her mind open and is ready to be surprised by her findings.

Phenomenology is grounded in the basic assumption of the possibility of a direct, non-mediated knowledge of things in themselves (that is the lived experience) through the faculty of intuition which for Husserl was the principle of all principles:

[...] every originary presentive intuition is the legitimising source of cognition, that everything originally offered to us in “intuition” is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, only within the limits in which it is presented there (Husserl, 1983:44)

In phenomenological accounts, it is through intuition – seeing, feeling, experiencing and even imagining the object of investigation – that we can get to the essence of things or to what Bertrand Russell called ‘qualia’. In this sense, every intuition is both subjective and objective since in phenomenology the subjectivity/objectivity dualism is viewed as a scientific construction that interferes with and twists our perceptions. Hence, the phenomenological attention is focused on the plurality of truth and the ‘howness’ of experience – the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all.

Since Husserl first formulated phenomenology as an independent and holistic approach, it has been subjected to many critiques, the more internal of which have led to the genesis of a variety of other phenomenological perspectives. A dynamic field oriented towards infinity has been outlined and filled with meanings by authors such as Heidegger, Sartre, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, Arendt, Levinas, Derrida, Butler, Kristeva, Irigaray and others. With this project I have taken an

empirical path in the wide area of qualitative research. It is characterised by its taking place in the natural world rather than the world of ideas, by its usage of multiple interwoven methods and by its interpretative nature (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 3).

3. Reflexivity and subjectivity behind the project.

3.1. Polyvocality.

I have been keeping an eye on my different positions during the research process throughout the whole project. I have also been considering the oscillation between my different roles one of the key characteristics of the employed methodology. Nevertheless, the notion of the hyphen came to my attention only after starting to search for the 'I' behind the text which was emerging from the fieldwork in the last year of the project. 'Who are those *we* you are speaking about?', asked my supervisor when discussing my first account as a participant. 'YANG', I immediately replied, thinking that originally I started this text to present de-institutionalisation as part of 'YANG' approach at a conference. 'Really?!'. I had a closer look at the paragraphs, in which I was using the 'we' and realised that I am trying to connect with a certain audience when using it.

Sometimes, I was making interpretations, which we have reached in the discussions of the literature with my supervisors, other times I meant a specific approach that has revealed itself in my work with 'YANG', but most often I meant my own conclusions drawn during both my work with the organisation and the research project. In some cases the paragraphs have been building on notes from my research diary, in others – on thoughts that came to me while writing project

proposals as a member of 'YANG' team, others were elaborations on the literature I was using. Interestingly enough, in the context of my reply, 'YANG' could also be taken to represent the problem-solving masculine part of the soul in Chinese mythology. Thus, soon I realised that by using 'we', I am appealing to those, who - like me - seek to understand violence and its forms as both social and individual phenomenon. 'How do you use *I* then?', asked again my supervisor, 'who is this *I* who seeks to understand?'. So, this chapter also endeavours to make my reader a companion in a journey, in which I have been becoming a person – an insider and an outsider, an academic and a practitioner, who seeks to understand violence and in doing so finds, re-discovers (and waits for) other people, who are having the same goal.

Although multiple voices are present through my own voice as the researcher/author of this text, polyvocality is a much more complicated technique. It refers to an approach to truth in which instead of discovering an objective truth, the goal is to make audible multiple voices. Such a goal is difficult to achieve in a classically presented text in which the author's voice is most prominent. It is not possible to reproduce the content and context of each interview, rather the voice of the researcher not only shapes the interview because of her raising the questions that frame the produced narrative, but also the researcher/author decides on which data is to be included in the final text and in which sequence. Not least, the voices of the researched are inevitably subjected to editing to make sense of original transcripts – with the introduction of punctuation and in the process of translation into English. Nevertheless, I have tried to create 'the conditions that will allow the reader, through the writer, to converse with (and observe) those who have been studied.' (Denzin, 1998: 324).

I have focused in the third chapter on presenting with minimal commentary the interviews and the observations of the researched field, leaving my interpretation for the next chapter. Since in practice it is not possible to completely separate the voices of the researched and the researcher, both chapters actually contain traces of the various perspectives of the research participants, though with a different emphasis. Since both perspectives reflect my judgments as the researcher and author of the text, I have labelled them respectively ‘A view from within’ and ‘An outsider’s view’ to reflect the differing positions from which I have been speaking.

In arranging the data in the third chapter, I have tried to group the data into a sequence that can produce a meaningful narrative that reflects the ways in which I saw the researched field – the research subjects, their understandings, their work and their organisation. In this process I have used principles borrowed from grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which emphasises the inevitable interdependence of data and theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The methodology starts with a process of theoretical sampling followed by coding, which continues until theoretical saturation is reached. At its core, it is a process of constant comparison of concepts and categories emerging from the analysed texts (usually interviews) as well as the researcher’s memos. In this way, in a hermeneutic process of re-reading the data available to me, core concepts and categories emerged to form the sections of the chapter – for example, ‘trauma’, ‘holding environment’, etc. On a next-order reading their properties emerged – e.g. “Trauma as a gate towards thinking about violence”. Ideally this process is complemented by a Computer Aided Data Analysis, but I have done it manually because of practical constraints. Consequently, the presented analysis has some limitations. Its categories and subcategories could have been further elaborated in

terms of their properties and dimensions if time and space⁵ constraints had not prevented me from using more developed techniques.

3.2. Reflecting on a process.

Action research is more of a ‘living practice’ than a formal research process (Carson, 1997). Hence, to present better the ‘hyphen(s)’ in this journey from insider research to participant observation and from there to participant action research, I have to constantly make steps beyond the actual research as well as to times before and after the end of my PhD research. In this process of coming back, in the position of an outsider academic, to the familiar context of the organisations with which I have been working for almost five years, I had to explore and to deal with a lot of personal and professional dilemmas. This process was curiously mixed with another journey - towards becoming again an insider and a practitioner, who is at the same time researching the field of participation with all the new dilemmas, risks and advantages. Consequently, although I had to draw firm boundaries and to finish the PhD as close as possible to its administrative deadline, it is difficult to say where exactly the whole process, which I have triggered while following the streams in the field, will finish.

At yet another level, this thesis in fact presents a process, in which I was undertaking multiple cycles of co-designing, co-inquiring and co-authoring a research within the research while occupying a multiple position. Figure 1 presents the image with which I began my research – as a cyclical process. Whilst in the preliminary stage this happened through the application of a dialogical approach

⁵ I have chosen to “squeeze” the presentation of a qualitative research into a more conventional presentation, which has its negative consequences along with the plus of being more readable and accessible for the purposes of examination.

and by allowing my mind to remain open to the field and to be surprised by observations, conversations and analysis, during the actual research process I was occupying a more equal position as a member of the project team, of the organisation and a project coordinator. As a project coordinator I was not only convening a research-based training module, but made myself available as a mentor of the self-preparation component of the programme. In addition, to the degree to which this was possible given the workload in 'YANG', I was also working to disseminate the findings, materials and philosophy of the project among other members of the organisation or partners. In all these roles, I was trying to position myself as a 'translator' or, where this was not possible, to facilitate the translation of the professional vocabulary used by 'YANG' and within the specialised literature to a more humane language, that is closer to everyday usage.

It is important to emphasise the transdisciplinary nature of the research. Behind it is not only my multidisciplinary education, but also the requirements of the problem being studied. Although knowledge of violence is traditionally accumulated in criminology, psychology, and psychiatry, this thesis suggests that understanding violence should not be limited to certain disciplines only. Dissolving boundaries between disciplines results in their higher integration and a more comprehensive approach. In fact, it can be said that new tools for analysis of complex problems emerge precisely out of the redrawing of boundaries between disciplines. As Jefferson (2006) stresses, there are also a lot of constraints in negotiating research between disciplines, but these are not impossible obstacles. Among them she lists institutional and cognitive constraints, difficulties with language and jargon, a conflict of methodologies and the question of epistemology – what knowledges are interesting, valuable and possible. She suggests tackling

interdisciplinary problems (and I have been intuitively following these steps) by maintaining a core epistemic objective, translating concepts and jargons into a common language, and an appropriate methodology comprised of an iterative approach towards research questions and methodological choices. Nevertheless, there is always some pessimism left as to how successful such an attempt of bringing together different epistemological approaches/modes of reasoning and different ideological perspectives can be. Here, the role of the research supervisors was crucial in helping to keep the thesis coherent and focused.

I will be presenting the analysis as it was emerging at the different stages reflecting the ways in which the analysis of each stage was actually motivating, legitimising, shaping and directing the next one. The other red thread running throughout the whole text will be the logic of my research and the numerous compromises and decisions I had to take to balance between the academic, power, ethical, organisational, personal and practical demands of the whole project. All these highlights are intended to prepare the reader for the presentation of the research findings. Since contemporary social research assigns primary importance to the researcher's background and promotes her reflexivity as a key methodological tool (cf Mason, 1996; Denzin&Lincoln, 1998), the reader has to excuse the slightly confessional style of my exposition – in doing so, my intention is to open a space for alternative readings of my findings, readings that will be informed about the subjective elements of my interpretations and where they come from.

3.3. Power issues.

As in any relationship, the project was not free of power imbalances. At the preliminary stage, I was the person asking questions and generally providing a

framework for the research. I was addressing the arising imbalance by approaching the researched subjects as equal experts and by constantly making sure that enough space is left for them to ask questions, to share the control over the directions that each individual interview was taking and by allowing the focus of the research to emerge in the interaction between us. In the actual fieldwork this process became even more complicated as 'YANG' itself was positioned as the expert. Hence, not only me, but 'we' as the team of trainers, had to constantly 'give up the expert position' while at the same time providing a structure and framework in which a greater understanding can happen and the voices of all can become salient.

This involved devices such as discussion – in person or via e-mail and its on-going analysis, regular needs assessment at the beginning and feedback at the end of each phase, and a focus on learning rather than on teaching. As a module convenor, I was constantly making sure that each of my colleagues had enough freedom to make his or her own input and is relatively free to decide whether wants to participate at all. The voices of the participants in the training programme were channelled through presentations of topics identified in a mutual discussion. Since they did not have any previous theoretical preparation on these topics, a basis for analysing their experiences was provided by theoretical materials that were selected by me and accepted by the team of facilitators. Overall, my general attitude was to approach the present configuration of both my multiple roles and the correspondent positioning of the other research participants in terms of equal expertise and reciprocity.

Nevertheless, being the person writing this text, I am positioning myself as the one who represents the whole research process. As Derrida (1976: 130) has noticed

the power of writing in the hands of a small number, caste, or class, is always contemporaneous with hierarchization, let us say with political difference; it is at the same time distinction into groups, classes, and levels of economic-politico-technical power, and delegation of authority, power deferred and abandoned to an organ of capitalisation.

Thus, despite the advantage that I also belong to the group I am researching, I am automatically positioned hierarchically to this group. In addition, we, together as a group, are in a hierarchical position to those we want to represent, namely the survivors of violence, who are for one or another reason unable to voice their interests themselves. Not surprisingly, the viewpoint of those perpetrating commonly acknowledged forms of violence will be not really represented. Thus, despite my efforts at presenting a balanced and objective account, this thesis will inevitably remain framed, shaped and directed by my own values and background, as much as by my gender and class, and not least by my positionality in the social space and the research field.

3.4. Understanding as a research tool.

Behind this project is my practice with and on behalf of people suffering violence, a multi-disciplinary education, and an intensive inter-cultural experience. For nearly five years, I worked psychotherapeutically with many people who had a problem with violence, with many professionals and paraprofessionals who face the issue in their everyday practice and get involved in several policy-making, psychosocial and research projects both nationally and internationally. This experience, combined with my studies of Social and Political Thought in the UK, provided me with a reflexivity that changes my perspective on life: theoretically - by merging critical, epistemological and psychodynamic approaches and, empirically – in exploring

violence and differences at individual, organisational, and social levels. The theoretical section had to deal with the resulting curious constellation; hence it was the most difficult and is inevitably contradictory. My intention is not to resolve the contradictions neither to confuse the reader, but to make you a companion in my explorations and hopefully a witness of my own meaning making while researching a social phenomenon such as violence that at first appears to be meaningless.

Exploring these developments in knowing violence, my academic experience reformulated my merely sociological aspirations into more philosophical ones. My interest shifted towards the fusion of violence and concepts, the consequent onto-epistemological problems, their ethical implications and the methodological potential to cope with them, finding an exploratory framework in social epistemology (cf. Bullock&Trombley, 1999). Social epistemology deals with the problem of knowledge that arises out of the realisation that scientific inquiries are socially and culturally constructed. Without engaging in the debates whether science's actual conduct is worthy of its exalted status, I am endeavouring to keep an eye on the political and social consequences that follow from any academic, scientific or any other knowledge that enters the public realm, especially as far as violence is concerned. Contemporary social research here is understood as a non-linear hermeneutic social and research process comprising a range of interconnected activities that feed each other, including *ontology*, *epistemology* and *methodology*, behind which is the researcher's background, personality and her relationship with the researched (May, 2001; Mason, 1996; Denzin&Lincoln, 1998:27). Employing such an approach, the present research was originally planned to contribute to a higher understanding at all three levels, although in different stages and to various degrees. Thus, from a social-epistemological viewpoint, it was

important to see the project not simply in the perspective of its intentions, implementations and findings, but also in the light of the surrounding practical challenges, ethical considerations and political/policy implications.

The last theoretical pillar behind the project is the psychodynamic understanding of the human realm. It is based on the recognition not only that the ego exists regardless of whether it is socially constructed or is inherent in human nature, but also that the ego could, by dividing itself into parts, take a part of itself as its own object – thus, a possibility of a solely subjective world populated by objects in dynamic relations with each other has been opened. The psychodynamic approach then is an endeavour to understand precisely the dynamics of these inner objects in an attempt at restoring their equilibrium as a basis of healthy and non-violent human relations (Garland, 1998). To implement my research, I have borrowed from this approach the ways in which therapists understand by listening and hearing on the basis of the patient's freedom to speak his or her thoughts and the therapist's open-minded listening.

As Edward et al (1996) explain, the therapists' technique reveals that the primary tool for understanding the unconscious communications can be the unconscious of the person who seeks to understand in a combination with empathy and other vehicles of reasoning such as cognition. This account privileges listening with a 'third ear' - one that alerts us to what people do not say, but only feel and think, and one that can also be turned inward, allowing us to hear 'those voices from within the self that are ordinarily obscured by conscious thought processes'(Reik, 1948 cited *ibid*: 31). It is assumed that what occurs to the knower under the stimulus of the perceived and observed associations, gestures, and behaviours tends

to resonate with what is occurring unconsciously within the observed (Arlow 1979, *ibid*).

The second component of this mode of perceiving is empathy defined as ‘a mode of perceiving by vicariously experiencing (in a limited way) the psychological state of another person’ (Moore and Fine 1990:67, cited *ibid*:32). Literally it means ‘feeling into’ another person that is achieved through transient identification of the observer with the observed on the basis of their verbal expressions, including such poetic devices as symbolism, allusion, and metaphor, as well as their non-verbal actions and their effective expression that produce resonating internal parallel states in the observer. The observer’s self-perceptions or introspections can therefore serve as a source of information (Arlow 1979 cited *ibid*).

In the last phase of this process the empathiser preserves in the process his or her separateness from the other. The sense of separateness is needed so the observer may appreciate that what he or she has felt has not only been *with* the interviewee but *about* the interviewee - a process described by Sanville (1996) as an oscillation between empathy and alterity (cited *ibid*: 33). As psychoanalysts draw a distinction between empathy and countertransference, for the cues of perception to lead to empathy such functions as memory, thought, comprehension, and conceptualisation must be in place. Empathy as a tool of understanding, therefore, must be used in conjunction with other more objective ways of gathering information about the patient’s feelings and behaviours. Arlow (1979 cited *ibid*: 42) has suggested certain criteria which he believes help to transform what would seem to be random associations or disconnected thoughts into supportable hypotheses. He advises that we consider the context in which ideas emerge and that we heed

such phenomena as contiguity, repetition, and metaphor, which can alert us to the dynamic relevance of what is being said and may help validate or invalidate insights that are obtained through the empathic exchange.

Unconscious mental processing is an integral and often unrecognised part of creative work, including research (Meek, 2003). It involves an ordinary dialectical process of an oscillation between our tendency to 'condense' disparate information, combine ideas and thoughts and the opposing tendency to take things apart (Bollas, 1995 cited *ibid*:para 28). However, Meek (2003) also emphasised that the unconscious – archetypal, forgotten, repressed or denied experiences - equally manifests itself in a feeling of getting stuck, wasting time, repetitive pointless efforts, etc. We can access the unconscious materials behind these, she suggests, by making repeated passes through the same material, continuing to look at the data causing difficulties, and gaining distance. Thus, obstacles in understanding can be used as a source of knowledge and information. Most of these blockages can be seen as countertransference reactions to unconscious and preconscious latent contents of interviews, shared experiences and observed behaviours in which difficult and even painful emotions of the researched have been projected and experienced as own by the researcher by means of projective identification.

For example, it took me quite a lot to realise that behind my blockages there often are feelings of being flooded by intensive experiences caused by too many stimuli or on the contrary – by a feeling of meaninglessness of the whole effort. I soon came to realise that a considerable proportion of these emotions reflect the experiences of the researched, who are regularly confronted with overwhelming material and interactions and who frequently experience a loss of meaning. This directed my

efforts at finding out if and how they deal constructively with them. Sometimes, I was quick enough to recognise such emotions during the interview or at the time of participating, so I could feed back immediately to them. Other times, when the emotion was raised by a more subtle and general frustration, it would take me hours and even days to understand what was going on and what to do with the knowledge about this aspect of the practice.

Another area in which countertransference experiences of researchers, even those doing secondary research, is evident is in understanding better the response to traumatic accounts, which however, often include own disturbances – e.g. of sleep, emotional changes (sadness, anger, frustration, helplessness) and a need of greater social support (Alexander et al., 1989). Although countertransference reactions reflect also ‘the limitations that our own neuroses, our own blind spots, and our own character issues impose on our ability to understand, and respond to, communications from another person[s]’, they are an inevitable aspect of the communication and as a pathway to understanding latent material in the other person they are an indispensable tool for analysis (Jacobs, 1999: 576). By analogy with psychoanalytic understanding, thus, I have accepted that the researcher is a ‘feeling person’ and this is not only not a part to be kept aside, but indeed it is a part that has to be mobilised to enhance understanding (Hinshelwood, 1999).

Thus, equipped with a critical approach combined with a social epistemological framework and leaning on psychodynamic principles of understanding the other, I designed research that starts with preliminary fieldwork intended to provide a space where the research hypothesis will gradually emerge to serve as a basis of an actual fieldwork – an active intervention in the process of understanding violence. In

designing the research, I had to account not only for the content – the ‘whatness’ of what is going on in the field, but also to keep an eye on the ‘howness’ of the whole research process. Not least the context of the research in terms of both that of the researched subjects and my own situation as a researcher had to be constantly taken into consideration.

3.5. Reflexivity as a research tool.

The empirical research component of the project is a small-scale case study of understanding violence, in which the researcher employs a new role in a familiar setting (Brewer, 2000) – i.e. an overt pure observant participation, triangulated by interviews-as-conversations with the researched subjects and by feedback forms filled in by the researched subjects, and by a discourse analysis of their practice. It privileges qualitative rather than quantitative data, aiming at complementing, illustrating and triangulating the theoretical findings by producing rich empirical data. The best metaphor to illustrate its process is a spiral – developing circles of oscillation between theorising, experiencing, analysing, reflecting, conceptualising and practicing all in a dialogue with the research subjects, the project supervisors and whenever possible by getting feedback from other experts.

In this process, the main research tool was my own reflexivity. As a whole the concept of reflexivity is synonymous to active dissociation or alienation that brings to being a critical stance (Davis and Postlewait, 2003:153). The roots of the word are in the Latin *reflectere* which means ‘to bend back upon itself’ (Humphrey, 2007:13). However, as Humphrey (2007) reminds us, ‘reflexivity’ has become a mobile metaphor, appropriated by diverse actors and applied to quite different spheres of activity (cf. Schön, 1987; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The core

meaning that remains is that the social theorist must provide an account of social reality that can explain how the theorist could come to have such an account (Fuller, 1995). Hence, an essential aspect of the concept is the researcher's/writer's own investment in the research together with the own biases she brings (Gergen and Gergen, 2000), but it also implies that orientations of researchers will be shaped by their social-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:16). Not least, as any relationship, including the researcher/researched one, involves a negotiation of power, reflexivity enables a process of self-awareness that can make power dynamics visible (Finlay, 2002). In fact, rather than the classical observation, description and analysis paradigm, reflexivity is claimed to be *the* new sociological instrument together with subjectivity and participation (Denzin, 2003:129). In this context it means that I am stepping aside at any stage of researching or writing to have a look at what I am doing and what is going on both in the field, in the gathered data and in the produced text.

In practical terms, as Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid: 17-21) postulate, reflexivity allows us to use the researcher as the research instrument *par excellence* while at the same time not avoiding the prime purpose of producing knowledge about real social phenomena. This becomes possible, they say, in a context in which 'the image of the researcher is brought into parallel with that of the people studied, as actively making sense of the world, yet without undermining the commitment of research to realism' (ibid.). To do so, they say, we should not abandon altogether the whole research project because of its being a construction. Instead data should not be taken at face value, but treated as a field of inferences in which hypothetical patterns can be identified and their validity tested; different research strategies can

be explored and their effects compared with a view to drawing theoretical conclusions; interpretations need to be made explicit and full advantage should be taken of any opportunity to test their limits and to assess alternatives.

Hence, the meanings generated through the sets of interviews and in the discussions represent a second order understanding of the knowledge produced in a very specific context. Consequently, almost as important as the findings are is the process level of conducting them and especially their context effects, which are also sources of valuable information (Burawoy, 1998). The interview, Burawoy says, 'extracts [the interviewee] from her own space and time and subjects her to the space and time of the interviewer' (ibid: 14). Thus, intervention is not only an unavoidable part of social research but 'a virtue to be exploited' and the interviews are an excellent tool for doing this. Respondent effects are the opposite – they are related to the multiple meanings attached to the interviewer's 'stimulus' and are again an issue that can be addressed reflexively by unpacking situational experiences at all these levels and directions by moving with the participants through their space and time (ibid.). Furthermore, how the experiences are channelled and the knowledges shaped by the structure and how these experiences in turn affect this structuration is an extremely important aspect that needs to be analysed as it constitutes the field effects. Finally, I was guided by the emphasis placed by reflexive science on the priority of the social situation over the individual. From here, generalisability is considered achievable not through representative sampling of individuals, but through their capacity to contribute towards the reconstruction of an existing theory (Burawoy, 1998:15).

In the light of the last point, it is important to explain why I have chosen my sample. Traditionally, first-hand testimonials are considered most valuable sources

of information. This research, however, proceeded from the assumption that direct experiences of violence result in an attack on the capacity for mentalisation, activate unhealthy psychological defences and as a result blur and distort the perception of reality - not only in the affected areas but by inducing a more general cognitive, emotional, relational and behavioural pattern referred to in the specialised literature as 'the trauma as a normative response to violence'. Hence, what is interesting for me, is not simply what knowledges the practitioners have access to, but how they get this access or, in other words, how healing occurs at a structural level by opening a space for thinking.

The research question that was puzzling me was how, given the epistemological difficulties in knowing violence, my colleagues are able to work on the issue and indeed to be very successful in their role of promoting non-violence. At the same time, I was also curious what questions are puzzling and troubling them, as well as what the new agendas that guide their actions are. Thus, I approached the organisation as a) a discursive space dedicated to understanding violence and b) a political tool for social and individual transformation through the lenses of c) its own identity, shaped by external local and global economic, academic, social, historical and political influences being a non-governmental organisation and under the influences of its own mission, vision, culture, norms and atmosphere as an organization based on learning from experience.

Even though its philosophy is mostly framed by clinical-psychological (professionally) and neo-liberal (politically) discourses, the practice of the organisation is firmly anchored in humanistic principles of learning from experience – their own and that of their clients and partners for the purposes of understanding the phenomenon around which they have built their organizational

identity. *Learning from experience* is a concept and practice derived from Lewin's model of informal learning that lies at the basis of our contemporary understanding of action research as a research method directed toward the solving of social problems (Lewin, 1948; 1951). By transferring and expanding the approach to the wider social and political context, 'YANG' plays an important role in understanding violence not only in the country but also abroad thus emerging as a significant contributor to processes of enhancing democracy especially in Europe through their training work and the involvement with an international association. Although the decisions themselves are taken at a managerial level like in a traditional business-like organisational structure, the knowledge behind the strategy and policy is grounded in the direct work with target groups – primarily victims of violence and their relatives, but also practitioners who face the issue in their everyday practice and the general public. From this starting point, the preliminary fieldwork proceeded from the consideration that unlike research centres and academic environments, the organisation provides an intellectual context in which the focus is on producing societal change rather than merely knowledge about violence, which presupposes a process of an on-going social action research. In Weber's terms (1962), therefore, the processes of knowing involved in the intellectual endeavours of the organisation would correspond to 'direct observational learning' (*aktuelles Verstehen*) and 'the higher order explanatory understanding' (*erlärendes Verstehen*).

4. Research rapport and ethical issues.

Developing a research rapport requires that in a very short period of time researchers must introduce themselves, manage impressions, and establish a trusting relationship with participants and other members of the community under

investigation (Pitts and Miller-Day, 2007). ‘Winning entry’ into the field site is only the first step in a process where establishing trusting relationships, and balancing closeness and distance in that relationship are salient (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Rossman and Rallis, 1998 cited *ibid*: 178). Fieldworkers should be unobtrusive, honest, unassuming, self-revealing, and reflective listeners (Bogdewic, 1991 cited *ibid*.). Beyond these basics, however, I did not experience particular difficulties and did not make additional efforts since my relationship with the researched had already been developed. As far as the actual fieldwork is concerned, the participants in the programme perceived my research as only one aspect of my relationship with them. It was introduced to them in a written form and their permission was obtained together with a special section on their requirements towards their involvement as researched subjects as well as the ways in which their participation will be presented.

In terms of Pitts’ and Miller-Day’s (2007) analysis of turning points in the research-researched relationship, since the very beginning of the research I was sharing with ‘YANG’ team members ‘high levels of open self disclosure and a focus on the personal, rather than professional relationship’, which corresponds to their definition of partnership (*ibid*: 187). On their scale, the relationship with the participants in the developmental programme for service providers from the three other countries can be evaluated as a close interpersonal connection that involves an interaction that goes beyond the engagement in the research project with a certain level of friendly reciprocity with mutual respect, liking, and offering assistance. On both occasions my insider’s identity was giving me unproblematic access to sites, conversations, behaviours and actions that would have been perhaps otherwise disturbed by the observation of an outsider.

The development of the research rapport, however, was not granted as such and strikingly for me it strictly did pass through the five stages presented in Pitts' and Miller-Day's model of relationships in fieldwork (see Fig. 2). In this sense, the design of the preliminary fieldwork was partly intended to pass through several stages, but these stages were emerging paralleling the shifts in the emerging research relationship. Initially, during the first stage of the preliminary fieldwork, the researched participants were open and willing to cooperate but still felt rather uncertain about this new aspect of our relationship. Secondly, we both moved towards trying to find out who we are to each other given our new roles. In this stage, my interviewees were more open to ask questions, including questions which answers aimed at revealing who we are with regard to the research. Thus, we were positioning ourselves as individuals who are seeking to understand violence and the different issues arising in this process. During the third stage, we shifted towards acknowledging our expertise in the area and this way our confidence was growing and we were more readily addressing concrete issues and problems. The stage of an interpersonal connection revealed itself in the agreement to do some work that would be beneficial for both the organisation and for my research, when we agreed on my participation as a semi-internal evaluator of the service providers in three other countries. The true partnership, however, only emerged with me joining the organisation as a coordinator of the project, which provided the framework for the actual research. At this stage, we were openly discussing our needs and requirements and negotiated the conditions under which both the research and the project will be conducted.

Although crucial, research rapport is only one aspect of the complex relationship with the researched subjects. The high degree of intimacy and the associated trust and openness also exposes the research subjects to a higher degree of vulnerability, which consequently increases the responsibility of the researcher and challenges her ability to combine successfully ethical and academic obligations. My behaviour as a researcher was guided by a 'do no harm' approach and by respect for the human dignity of the research participants, including ensuring that their physical, social and psychological well-being is not affected and protecting their interests, sensitivities and privacy. Following Bulmer (1984), the leading principle is the full and informed consent of the research subjects regarding the research aims and objectives as much as regarding the techniques employed for its implementation, the publication and the dissemination of the gathered data, the access of third parties to this data, including – as far as possible – informing about potential uses, risks and benefits. However, formalized consent procedures do not provide an answer to the problem of ensuring potential study participants make truly informed choices and indeed results in 'empty ethics' (Wiles *et al*, 2006). To address this problem, I made their contributions anonymous.

In accordance with the good practices of the work with survivors of violence adopted by the researched community, behind my work was the protection of the anonymity and confidentiality of their clients, including survivors of violence, their relatives and those using their training and consultancy programmes, i.e. those who have approached the organisation in confidence. A part and a consequence of the above is obtaining a written consent by the research participants, including providing the right to withdraw their consent at any stage of the project as well as

the right of 'YANG' as an institution for an withdrawal based on a reasonable argumentation at any stage.

The specifics of the qualitative research raise complex problems related to the practical, legal and ethical issues related to the copy rights, data protection and ownership that remain outside the current legal regulation (cf. Parry&Mauthner, 2004). This set of issues was compromised in favour of the ethical considerations.

5. The participant as a reflexive observer: preliminary fieldwork.

In Yin's terms, the preliminary fieldwork is a case study: 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1984:23). 'Case study' here is also understood as a multi-methodological approach and a design feature, 'a *frame* determining the boundaries of information gathering' and an '*attempt to explain wholistically the dynamics of a certain historical period of a particular social unit*' (Stoecker, 1991:97-98, emphasis original). The methods employed are observant participation, archive analysis and interviews-as-conversations, in fact 'collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research' which corresponds to Hammersley and Atkinson's wide definition of ethnography (1995:2). All these methods triangulate and complement each other. The archive analysis and the interviews triangulate the first - the analytical detachment, and the second - the emotional involvement that are required by the method of observant participation. On the other hand, they provide the discursive, or the narrative basis of the analysis, while the observant participation highlights and complements these data by providing experiential and contextual knowledge. The ethnography is

implemented in three short stages in the field separated by longer periods of analytical withdrawal dedicated to thinking through the data and their linkage with relevant theorisation. Each period in the field is more structured than the previous, but this structure emerges within the process of data gathering, analysis and interpretation through the interaction between the field and the research.

By observant participation I mean observation in which the observer acquires a new position as a researcher, in a familiar setting (Brewer, 2000:61)⁶. In this case, I am using my own previous experience being a member of a similar organization as a tool of enhancing my understanding of what Burawoy (1998:15) calls ‘situational comprehension’ through the knowledge about nondiscursive interaction or ‘the unexplicated, unacknowledged, or tacit knowledge [available through] participation or “doing” things with and to those who are being studied (Garfinkel, 1967)’. It is a variation of the participant research, which is focused on the interactive and communicational aspects being as well an ‘active attempt at analysis’, in which the researcher remains open to be surprised by her findings at any stage of the research process. It is chosen, since considering the unavoidability of using my previous experience, the professionalism and ethics required acknowledging and accounting for one of the main sources of the reasoning of the researcher, whose biography is always behind the choice of a research strategy together with the philosophical and methodological framework of the research (May, 2001; Mason, 1996; Denzin&Lincoln, 1998:27).

Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the procedures through which the organisation discusses violence at the inter-individual, intra-institutional and societal levels. The non-

shadowed areas represent the documents that can be viewed as ‘snapshots’, a documentation of this communication through records made by the members on concrete occasions. Although the reports available on projects are themselves an interesting source of data, the database of these records is the focus of the archive analysis with a view towards exploring the process of communicating about violence and identifying the main issues to be discussed.

The interviews-as-conversations were implemented in three stages following the research process itself. At the first stage they were initiated by me as the researcher as much as by the researched subjects themselves, but mostly emerged spontaneously. The aim is to ensure validity and reliability of data related to the subjective experience of social processes by the involved agents while at the same time allowing equal opportunity to both the researcher and the researched to participate in the process of discovering the meaning of the observed practices. At the second stage, non-structured interviews were initiated by me in order to unpack issues that have emerged in the first round of interviews or of data analysis. The third stage consisted of semi-structured interviews whose structure was organised around the data collected at the previous two stages. All this aimed at capturing the individual’s point of view, examining the constraints of everyday life and securing rich descriptions, which according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998:10-11), are among the main criteria in evaluating a qualitative research. The quality of the data and their richness were reinforced by the fact that we were sharing similar experiences (see Leicester, 1999 and Oakley, 1981), where I was in the position of

⁶ Brewer suggests using ‘observant participation’ to emphasise the difference with ‘participant observation’, which would normally imply the participation of a researcher in a new role.

‘epidemiological privilege’, as Stanley and Wise (1993: 227–8) put it, due to having a prior access to the interviewees’ subjective experiences of their work.

The whole preliminary fieldwork was implemented in three stages, followed by a stage that constituted a transition towards the actual fieldwork as a member of the team of the organisation – a small research within the research assessing the needs of training that can be delivered by ‘YANG’ to service providers in three other countries. The first stage took place in August–September 2005 and comprised a 3-week non-intervening observation of team meetings and everyday routine at the organisation, 8 interviews-as-conversations, archive analysis of 81 in-coming letters and 52 out-going letters from the official correspondence of the organisation; 40 documents-minutes from working meetings with institutions and journalists in the period January – September 2005; as well as new projects, reports and publications. The main goal of this stage was to negotiate the access, to establish a research relationship, to re-socialise to the context, to gain acceptance in the researcher’s role and to familiarise myself with the field from the viewpoint of the research objectives. To accomplish successfully all this, I took a role that was active with a view of framing a research relationship and a passive role as an interviewer. My second visit to the field happened in December 2005 and January 2006. This stage covered 2 weeks of non-intervening observation, some more archive analysis, but was more focused on 10 non-structured interviews informed by the additional reading in October and November and the observations, conversations and the archive analysis in the previous stage. On this basis and with a reference to some additional reading, I developed the schedule for 12 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at the third stage in July 2006.

As an observer, I approached the organisation with the assumption that the people, who are routinely engaged in understanding violence would tend to perceive many of their practices, their language and reflexivity as mere common sense, so the direct observation was chosen as a method that 'reveals the taken-for-granted everyday world' of the researched subjects (Brewer, 2000:60). The observant participation was implemented in several stages in order to follow up trajectories over time, but also because involvement and detachment is at the heart of the method (Ibid:62; 101) and – not least - because 'smash and grab ethnographies', where observers breeze into the field and are quickly out again, are worthless' (Ibid:61). A single in-depth case study is privileged, since often pursuit of comparison may adulterate understanding (Cf. Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). The primal concern was with the wide relevance of the gathered data in a way allowing findings to provide a basis for a 'naturalistic generalisation' and 'transferability' regarding an overall understanding of understanding violence. In other words, it aimed at interrogating a case in the light of a theory to 'discover' significance (Burawoy, 1991; 1998; 1999; Walton, 1992).

Despite my insistence on following a procedure in which the parameters of the research were clearly defined and set up especially in terms of research goals, methodology and ethical and political framework, the real research relationship came from the way my colleagues welcomed me in the researcher's role. I was not only given access to all the available information, but everyone was genuinely curious about what I was doing. Thus, at the first stage, instead of actively making appointments and setting interview schedules that would render the process more formal, I just made myself available for my colleagues to talk to if they were finding my research interesting and if they felt like talking about this. Thus, we were

allowing important conversations to emerge spontaneously, and if they were interested, we agreed an appointment where we could continue the conversation without my colleague being pressed by other tasks and time or space restrictions.

This design corresponds to Schegloff's approach to conversation analysis, who defines the first stage of the analytic process as 'an inquirer's passive and receptive self-exposure to data that "tell" the observer what to be attentive to rather than an active and intentional search' (in Weber, 2003: paragraph 11). This serves the goal of identifying events that are meaningful for the interviewee as 'the events of conversation have a sense and import to participants which are at least partially displayed in each successive contribution' (Schegloff, 1997:163 cited *ibid.* paragraph 8). When entering the field, I had the feeling that I know what my colleagues are interested in, but I also felt myself a bit distanced after all the reading I had done given all the debates I discovered during the literature review stage. At the same time, I also did not want to impose my own agenda on them – rather, especially at the beginning, the endeavour was to provide a framework of the new mode of mutual work instead of directing the discussions and my observations and analyses. For instance, although the first issue that strikes in the 'YANG' interpretation of violence is the lack of critical sensitivity towards issues of gender, class, ethnicity, disability, religious and sexuality imbalances, I did not want to push them in any direction and instead I was searching for the reasons behind this. It was not that the issues were not considered when obvious – on the contrary, their model of individual approach towards each client presupposes accounting for such factors when designing individual recovery and reintegration action plans. Rather, the impression was that focusing on violence as an interpersonal phenomenon was drawing the line they have put on their own boundaries of how far they would and

can go in producing a societal change. Even in the area of violence, the organisation has limited its involvement by emphasising overcoming the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the survivors of violence by recognising their special social needs caused by peculiarities in the areas of affect, personality structure and interpersonal relatedness behind behavioural patterns.

The main principle in conducting interviews was reciprocity of disclosure whereby researcher and participant share aspects of their stories with each other, which contribute to the depth and quality of the data (Daly, 1992). Keeping my mind open and sharing with them the power over deciding what is to be discussed, I found out that the people were troubled by recent developments in their work that included trends each individual member has found in her everyday work. On one hand, these were sensitive issues related to the relationships with the clients, the partners of the organisation and the changing situation in the country. There was also the problem of what to do in a demanding context that requires from them to exhaust themselves in constant struggles to change attitudes and existing practices not only for the sake of their clients, but also to defend and promote their position as a non-governmental organisation whose expertise is in dealing with interpersonal violence rather than as a residual service provider that has to solve all the problems left behind by the state's social, educational and health system.

Meanwhile, a lot has changed in the environment, in which 'YANG' was working. The advances at joining the European Union have resulted in higher demands to the organisation while the working conditions were worsened. Due to the growing expertise and recognition combined with less and less funding possibilities with the withdrawal of EU donors, the organisation was engaging in working on more and

more difficult cases, such as the work with children and ‘difficult’ clients. Not least, it has become one of the pioneers in the country to attempt the development of partnership with the business sector – another highly expensive project in terms of energy and long-term devotion. The light at the end of the tunnel was the prospect of obtaining a house – new, larger premises where all the projects and the work with clients could be moved. The new house was perceived as the embodiment of the deserved success the people from the organisation have won after years of saving and winning support from donors.

I was gradually introducing a structure to the interviews to focus and channel our conversations with a view towards my research goals. Although the classical dynamic semi-structured interview lasts fifty minutes, I introduced a framework of two full hours for each interview. On one hand, this is the optimal time, according to Winnicott (1971), to be sufficient for a meaning to emerge from the ‘chaos’ – as he puts it, as two-hour interview allows enough space for the interviewee to ‘play’ creatively between the phantasmatic world and the reality. On the other hand, two hours is the duration of the crisis counselling interview as this way issues from both the emotional and the social reality can be explored. The focus in these interviews became the professional experiences of my interviewees, which were not worked through – new trends, observations, feelings, thoughts, which each individual team member was considering not important enough to include in the team discussions and which nevertheless were somehow troubling my colleagues because of the intensive emotions behind them or because they seemed to them to have been forming the basis of their engagement with clients and partners. Given that I have been a member of the team and since I was there to listen, they were using the space provided by the interviews to analyse their observations and to ventilate

emotions in a constructive way. At the same time, as their attitude was very cooperative, the information they were sharing with me was selected with a view towards informing the process of understanding violence. Large sections of these interviews are not included in the data presented in the findings chapter due to a lack of space and because of the need to narrow down the focus of this thesis.

I realised that one of the main reasons for the interview process to move this way is the fact that the counsellors have been frequently interviewed on issues related to the activities of the organisation. Rarely, however, they are asked about the issues important to them. Usually the questions address either the experiences of the survivors or those related to the context of their lobbying and preventive work. Even when the occasion is the evaluation of the organisation, the focus is still on the organisations instead of on the values and experiences of the team members. My investigation was different because of focusing on what troubles and inspires them: the relationships with the clients, the institutions and within the organisation. The focus of their concerns revealed that for understanding violence, the most important components are the organisational structure, the procedures of communication within the organisation as well as with external actors and professional practices, especially in terms of roles. Using the Helpline as the gate to the organisation and the Emergency Unit as the link with social reality, 'YANG' was trying to open a space inside the organisation that can be dedicated solely to thinking, analysing and understanding the process level of communication of and about violence.

In designing my intervention, I aimed at balancing between my own agenda as a researcher and the need to avoid imposing it on the researched subjects, which would risk distorting their own experiences. I did, however, make a conscious

effort at producing a dialogue between theoretical knowledge and practical experience. That is why the questions were derived from the previous stages of the fieldwork that included two series of non-structured interviews-as-conversations and archive analysis, in which my role as a researcher was more passive and rather aimed at structuring the available information instead of directing it. In order to link this information with existing knowledge in the field, the choice of areas to be highlighted was informed by the theoretical debates existing in the field as much as by what the participants in my research considered important. At the discursive level, the questions were focused on the content and the process of defining and understanding violence on one hand, and on the interactive elements in negotiating between different everyday conceptions about violence in the special space they design for their clients and partners somewhere between the private and the public realm – on the other. I was especially interested in how the researched experience the epistemological contradictions of violence and their consequences, but also what cognitive, emotional and practical techniques they employ in order to address them, considering that they work at all three levels: in the personal sphere, within institutional contexts and at the highest social and political level .

Overall, the questions aimed at revealing personal experiences and tacit knowledge by appealing to the reflexivity of the researched subjects and on producing a dialogical meta-analysis by providing an anchoring point in theory. While the previous sets of interviews were experienced by the interviewees as a possibility to share opinions or to ventilate emotions, these sets of interviews were appreciated as a possibility to reflect on values (feedback from ‘Laura King’), to broaden the perspective by introducing the wider context of their work (feedback from ‘Kate April’) and as an overall reflection on the practice from a viewpoint anchored in

the philosophical realm (feedback from 'Jane Taylor'). Therefore, in evaluating the interviews, we should consider that they not only generated rich qualitative information, but also opened a neutral space where the practitioners can take a step back from their everyday practice and concerns and explore their experiences within the wider context of interactions regarding violence through a process in which tacit knowledge is transformed into a theoretical set of formulations, which would facilitate the transferability and conscious use of this knowledge. The interviews, however, cannot and should not be considered on their own, that is without accounting that they are only one stage, one of the interwoven activities that constitute the process of the present research.

6. The actual fieldwork: A research within the research.

Following these three stages of the preliminary fieldwork, each stage of which was accompanied by a dialogue with additional reading, I was better equipped with a deeper understanding of my subject and of 'YANG' practice and its meaning. Hence, I proceeded towards joining the organisation with a project that would both serve their goals of disseminating a client-centred approach towards violence and my purpose of implementing a participatory action research on understanding violence. This actual fieldwork was preceded by another preparatory stage, more of a transition towards a participatory action research. This stage was an assessment of the needs of training among service providers working with survivors of trafficking in three other countries and the actual fieldwork turned out to be a project aiming at addressing these needs. Redefining 'training' in terms of understanding, I accepted the offer of 'YANG' to coordinate such a project that was aiming at transferring their expertise in a way that would allow its adaptation to the local and individual circumstances of the participants.

Furthermore, the project they suggested was providing me with the case study I needed in order to flesh out my findings so far. Thus, I moved from researching violence in general and as such, towards one of its contemporary forms – human trafficking. Secondly, I had the possibility to expand my sample with additional 25 similar organisations from the region and to involve their representatives in a discussion that can enable them to improve their practice by enhancing their understanding. By being enabled to form concrete teams of trainers for each particular seminar (hence topic), I received a more legitimate context to discuss regularly my insights and findings with practitioners from ‘YANG’ which resulted in increasing their involvement in my project while at the same time I reciprocally increased my involvement in their work. As all other members of the team of the organisation, I was also actively participating in other activities and projects, which also expanded my participation in their working context, which in turn was helping me to understand better the subject I was researching.

There are a range of approaches to action research, from the more technical focus on organisational or educational change (where the researcher is ‘expert’) to emancipatory and participatory processes that aim to engender social change, and where all participants are equal as co-researchers (Fisher and Phelps, 2006:146). This project can be placed somewhere in the continuum between these. It was based on identifying areas where ‘YANG’ experience as viewed through my eyes was capable of advancing the understanding and addressing the survivors’ needs. Contemporaneously, I was positioning myself as the researcher, who is also an expert in victims’ recovery and reintegration. However, the project was co-designed and the research co-conducted together with other experts and thus represents

what Russell and Kelly (2002) call ‘interconnected and mutually influential series of dialogic processes’. Such an approach expands the personal self-examination encouraged by individual approaches towards the use of reflexivity through a broader process of reflection that captures the interpersonal nature of the event (Barry *et al.*, 1999). The initial assessment was conceptualised and carried out together with an independent expert – Ms ‘Dyane Elias’, an organisational consultant from a local resource NGO, and was triangulated by Ms ‘Ana Brown’, a psychoanalyst, counsellor and coordinator of an international programme in the country, implemented by ‘YANG’. The interpretation and the presentation of its findings was validated and triangulated in a complex process, where ‘YANG’ was represented by me, ‘Ana Brown’ and ‘Isaline Huton’, who is a psychoanalyst and a director of ‘YANG’, acting as training seminars manager in this project. The assessed practitioners also were given an opportunity to feedback at the stage of co-writing the final report via an electronic feedback form. The report was discussed and finalised following a workshop where the country steering groups at the project also contributed to drawing conclusions.

The CSGs were also responsible for selecting the participants in the project. The participants were selected among those who stated an interest in participating. The selected practitioners were chosen due to their continued experience (at least three years) in working directly with survivors of violence, especially trafficking that would provide them with an empirical basis on which to learn from experience and to reflect on the real dimensions of the explored issues. In order to be able to impact current practices, they also had to possess a stable position of expertise and decision-making within their organisation and the status and capacity of their organisation itself had to enable them to disseminate knowledge and practices

among other groups. Not least, these were people that were highly motivated to disseminate ideas, knowledge and skills, with clear ideas of how they are going to utilise the acquired knowledge and experience as well as people really willing to contribute for the construction of a successful programme, including through reading, writing case studies and building a reflexive portfolio.

The overall goal of the project was producing change – both in the participants in the project and in their organisational and social contexts. This change was directed towards overcoming reigning medical, common sense, political and sometimes even criminalised discourses and to equip the participants-beneficiaries from the project with a more humane approach towards their clients and partners. Although the whole project had a clear goal, its objectives were emerging and were addressed gradually in the form of four seminars. Regularly, both the objectives and the achievements were formulated and assessed by the team of facilitators and triangulated by an independent consultant. This was done on the basis of a relaxed discussion with the seminar participants, who were sharing their needs and expectations. From these discussions, indicators were formulated to design an evaluation questionnaire at the end of each seminar. The individual seminars were designed and conducted by teams formed depending on the particular goals of each event.

Thus, I assumed a role of a coordinator of this complicated process of co-designing, co-planning, co-conducting and co-evaluating this project, which all of us agreed to view as a developmental programme for the key service providers in the three other countries. As such, I was also responsible for summarising and structuring all this as well as for channelling all these voices into a comprehensive

programme. Not least, the developmental programme was relying on a theoretical component, which included papers selected by me with the support of the other facilitators on the basis of the participants' expectations and needs.

The project focuses on clinical aspects of the reintegration work with survivors of trafficking. Its ultimate goal is to promote among service providers from the region a common language, shared principles and methods, and uniform standards and procedures. It does so by promoting the installation of new practices, by systematising and consolidating knowledge and experience for the purposes of transferability in both the direct work and in the communication with other actors, and by using and replicating the existing best practices while addressing existing capacity and training needs. This is made possible by delivering a training module that takes the form of four regular clinical reading seminars, combined with facilitated discussions and observation of practices at the 'YANG' psychotherapeutic practice.

The project opens a space for key service providers from these three countries to upgrade and to exchange best psychosocial practices as well as to provide them with the necessary equipment to transfer this knowledge and these skills to other local actors. Thus, the programme contributes to strengthening national counter trafficking strategies and mechanisms by improving the institutional and technical capacities of the actors, by reinforcing the delivery of assistance services and by strengthening international co-operation on responses to trafficking. The project was initiated to address the needs of the changing environment in the region, which are now facing the challenge of enforcing effectively their recently introduced anti-trafficking legislations and national action plans. In this process of

transferring the responsibility from external actors to the national welfare system, there is a need of strengthening the capacity of the already established and functioning local networks of service providers through a process ensuring that their experience will be preserved, adapted to the new environment and upgraded in a way resulting in an increased efficiency of the overall reintegration support to survivors of trafficking.

On the basis of the training needs assessment implemented in a dialogue with the project partners and the research participants themselves, this training module was designed with a view towards exploring burning issues in the work with clients and the following four crucial topics to be addressed in four seminars were agreed:

- a) Understanding trauma;
- b) Crisis intervention and work with 'difficult' clients;
- c) Standards and procedures around which i) work with survivors of trafficking and ii) professional support and care for the practitioners is organised;
- d) Development of skills for training and supervising service providers.

Each seminar was designed as a five-day workshop consisting of 15 to 20 1-1.5-hour sessions. Most of the sessions were designed as discussions either of cases or of theoretical presentations of selected papers. There were also two sessions of observing team discussions of assessments or of in-take interviews. The project is implemented with a team of facilitators from the 'YANG' Training centre.

As a researcher, I was interested in discovering what lies behind their stated principles and how they are implemented in practice. Moreover, I wanted to know

what content they produce – what knowledges are discovered when creating such an environment and how they relate to the reality of attempting to understand violence. Thus, I joined a team which was specially designed to meet the requirements of the objectives of this project. It consisted of Ms 'Isaline Huton', and Ms 'Ana Brown' (already presented), Mr 'John Smith' (external) and me. Mr 'John Smith' is a clinical social worker, who has been working for the last nine years in the field of community psychiatry and has an intensive experience in supervising professionals, working directly with survivors of violence.

The concrete goals of the programme were derived from both my findings about what constitutes violence and how understanding violence is constructed by 'YANG' and from the findings of the needs assessment among service providers in three other countries. Although the findings were focused on the work in the area of trafficking, these are based on principles of working with survivors of all types of violence and easily can be adapted to working with survivors of domestic violence or of violent conflicts, for example. The first and most important of them was increasing the capacity to understand psychological trauma and to recognise victims of trafficking among migrants by identifying the symptoms of psychological trauma. This required an advanced understanding of clients, especially of what the participants in the programme named 'difficult clients', the development of a specific reflexivity that would allow 'case formulation' and outlining an action plan, and acquiring skills for team discussion as a vehicle for an individual approach to and fresh judgement of the specific situation of each new client. The second crucial issue was of understanding the setting and procedures to work with clients. It has three aspects: a) case management, including multidisciplinary work and work with the personal and social surrounding as a

device for ensuring quality service; b) approaches, attitudes, structures and procedures for burn-out prevention and c) the practice of clinical supervision as a practice of non-directive mentoring, which aims at quality control, care for the professional delivering services and ensuring the practitioner's on-going professional development. The third goal of the programme was to define and develop skills for disseminating knowledge and skills as well as for support to other practitioners who face the issue in their everyday practice. The red thread running through the programme was the goal of enhancing theoretically the participants' practice, development of skills for reflective analysis, and especially of a reflexivity that allows learning from experience and enables the transfer of knowledge and skills from one situation to another, and the utilisation of knowledge in practice.

7. Analysing the data.

As it was already mentioned, the data analysis was based on principles of Grounding the emerging theory in the data itself (Glosser and Strauss, 1978). As the research methods in each circle were different, so were the strategies of analysing the findings. During the preliminary fieldwork the analysis was a solitary experience, in which I was engaged in tape-recording, transcribing and coding interviews. I invested considerable amount of energy in archive analysis and analysis of my observation notes, which did not lead me to useful findings but were helpful in familiarising me with the field and the context. If open-minded listening is the first step of analysis, the second one is accurately transcribing as it not only converts spoken language into text, but also helps to know and understand better the conversation with its silences, ruptures, confusions as well as to really experience it emotionally (Dickson-Swift *et al*, 2007: 337).

During the actual fieldwork, the design of the whole programme and each particular seminar were derived from analysis of observations, questionnaires, interviews and discussions, which was done in a team context. On one hand thus this was a more complex and complicated process, but on the other its findings are more reliable. There was no specific model behind the actual techniques of analysis, but the process involved all the various components of research analysis as described for example by Miles and Huberman (1994:9, 245-262): a) identification of similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences followed by b) noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility, clustering, making metaphors, counting, making contrasts/comparisons, partitioning variables, subsuming particulars into the general, factoring, noting relations between variables, finding intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence and making conceptual/theoretical coherence.

As the research is designed as cycles, the analysis of the one stage was providing the framework of the second stage and so on, in which process some of the original findings proved to be irrelevant to both my research and the practices, whereas new patterns were emerging to inform the next stage and so on. For example, in assessing the needs of training among service providers that can be satisfied by a training delivered by 'YANG', I focused on my finding from the preliminary fieldwork that the work of service providers is framed by organisational background and structure, conceptual framework and philosophy, availability of service components, working procedures, conceptualisation of case management, quality of referral systems, procedures and database and the quality of the experiences of working with clients. These areas were assessed on the basis of a

review of documents provided by the researched organisations, a 65-item questionnaire, 23 interviews-as-conversations, and field visits in their working context. The identified needs of further skills and understanding were categorised in four groups: establishing and investment in maintaining a long-term relationship with the most vulnerable clients; invention, development and installation of models for on-going professional support; dissemination of good practices and transferability of knowledge and skills; and organisational development taking into account local cultural, social, economical and political specifics. The research exercise finished with a final workshop that aimed at triangulating the findings by the researched subjects and other experts in the area. It also resulted in a plan designed to address the identified needs, so the research findings were in fact reformulated into needs of understanding trauma, understanding skills for work with difficult clients and clients in a crisis, procedures around which the service provision and the care for professionals is organised and skills for further dissemination of experience. All these areas were further broken down into qualitative statements at the beginning of each seminar that was implemented.

8. Writing up: The research as a storytelling and a collaborative endeavour.

As all negotiation and re-negotiation of meanings is mediated by the interpretation of narratives (Bruner, 1990), narratives are what constitute us as conscious and social human beings (Cf. Andrews *et al*, 2000). Furthermore, narratives ‘interpret and give narrative meaning to breaches in and deviations from “normal” states of the human condition’ (Bruner, 1990:67). They also implement major functions for society: remembering, passing cultural heritage, conveying morals and morality, etc (Coffey&Atkinson, 1996:56). Even research, regardless of the epistemological framework behind it, is indeed a narrative, a story (House, 1994). This research is

not an exception and indeed I have purposefully made a special effort at telling a story rather than reporting findings. In presenting my thesis, I have been following the guidelines of Fisher and Phelps (2006). Participant action research, they say, raises numerous questions regarding its presentation, especially in relation to conventions on writing PhD theses - 'the straight-edged, linear blocks of orthodoxy restrict and impair the authenticity and integrity of a research process that is dynamic, non-linear and emergent' (Fisher&Phelps, 2006:148). They defend the use of the first person account, suggest structuring reflexivity through reflexive sections and through iterative use of multiple voices, promote the use of metaphors and a presentation of theory throughout the whole text, but most importantly provide hints on representing the unfolding research story within the writing process.

Although traditionally researchers shy away from using the term 'story' given its connotations of unreliability or lack of truthfulness, Fisher and Phelps (ibid: 153) argue that personal narrative, and the notion of research as story repositions the reader as an active and vicarious co-participant in the research (Ellis&Bochner, 2000 cited ibid). Hence, in order to build my story, following their advice, I was documenting the cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting iteratively 'since each cycle of the research is only understandable in terms of the systematic and self-critical learning gained through previous cycles' (ibid.). I also kept a chronological format, and – given that 'action research represents a journey down many roads, some of which inevitably prove to be dead ends', I was especially interested in thinking about the weaknesses, mistakes and errors, thinking also that all of them should have happened for a reason that may serve the goals of my research. For example, choosing to analyse all written and visual materials at the

organisation soon proved to be a dead end in terms of feasibility given my deadlines and the volume of material involved. Instead, I used this source of data to map the field and to know it better rather than to derive meaningful research findings from it. However, this also helped me realise how big part of the work of non-governmental organisations is bureaucratised. This bureaucratisation nevertheless is in a way useful - this part of the work helps practitioners to structure periodically their observations and opinion and to communicate them with an ease to other actors. Not least, I came to realise that for my purposes, the data derived from interviews-as-conversations is more valuable than archive analysis and observation since 'if ever there was an object of inquiry furnished internally with its own constitutive sense, with 'its own term,' with a defensible sense of its own reality, it is talk-in-interaction, and most centrally ordinary conversation' (Schegloff, 1997:171).

In addition, I remained truly committed to a partnership approach, so the emphases of the written story presented here were shared with the research participants when they were emerging from the analysis and the participants' feedback on them was collected. Knowledge is constructed by the researcher not only during the process of its production, but also by selecting which parts of the findings are to be included and which are to be omitted from the presentation. In presenting a collective product, I am not presenting a summary of all perspectives and inevitably the focus is on the way in which I am perceiving the research process and its products. However, by focusing on collecting feedback and altering the research findings accordingly, my version is getting closer to the perspective of all participants. Not least, in this process, I was also aiming at legitimising the findings and their interpretation in order to achieve what Laurel Richardson (1994)

calls 'a crystalline validity' – given that all truth is a product of diffraction of all participants' perspectives, like in a crystal, this research is attempting at bringing them together and producing at the end a version, in which all research participants can see rays of their version. In this process, however, I am still approaching the final thesis as one of infinitely many possible accounts of the processes and experiences that occurred during the research, as a new construction of (a past) reality, rather than some kind of reflection of the past and as a meaning making process that is embedded within power relations that occur during the research process (Riley, Schouten & Cahill, 2003).

This text also celebrates plurality and contradiction by being pervaded throughout by multiple voices. This is not only due to the polyvocality caused by the multiple roles I was occupying during the research process, but also because the version I am presenting here is a dialogical product. This also includes the presentation of literature in the chapter dealing with the research findings. Although in conventional research the literature is expected to be presented only in the first chapter, qualitative research allows more flexibility and even requires a dialogue with theory at each and every one of the research cycles (Fisher&Phelps, 2006). What is specific in the literature used in the actual research, is that the relevant literature was identified in a dialogical process within the team of facilitators, but the emphases presented here reflect the reading of the participants in the programme – what they considered important for their practices, what their critiques to the selected literature were, how they linked it with their own practice. Hence, although I was keeping a focus on the emergence of a new, blended voice, I am trying to acknowledge throughout the distinct voices of the other participants as well.

However, behind the construction of this text are also the voices of my supervisors – especially the theoretical parts, which were emerging in a dialogue with them and the aspects related to the presentation of the whole thesis. This aspect of the research process helped me to maintain connectedness not simply with the research and the researched subjects, but also with the potential audience, and with the general context in which the research was happening. Sensitive research faces many difficulties, especially related to entering the lives of others, developing rapport, challenges related to self-disclosure, maintaining reciprocity, analysing the data, feeling privileged or on the contrary – becoming desensitised or feeling vulnerable, guilty and exhausted (Dickson-Swift *et al*, 2007). The patience of my supervisors helped me not only to pass successfully through all these stages, but to use the accompanying emotions in a constructive way.

A final circle of issues I tried to address in writing up the thesis are those related to the sensitive nature of the research. This is especially true when researching a sensitive issue such as violence and the limitation of its understanding. According to Lee (1993:4) sensitive topics include areas, which are ‘private, stressful’ or potentially expose ‘stigmatizing’ information. In order to protect the most vulnerable groups, namely, the survivors of violence themselves, this research employs a less intrusive technique and focuses more on the practice of counsellors and social workers and the way they represent their clients rather than on observing and recording their real interaction. Any research is at risk of misinterpretation, but research on violence in addition has stigmatising consequences and the key danger in the present case is that the research findings, being based on a small-scale survey in easily identifiable organisations and in easily identifiable countries, may be used

to draw general negative conclusions concerning the organisations and/or the countries rather than to be read in terms of understanding violence as such.

This was addressed at the stage of writing up the thesis by avoiding the formulation of judgmental statements and by focusing on understanding rather than on evaluation. Furthermore, 'the sensitive character of a piece of research seemingly inheres less in the specific topic and more in the relationship between that topic and the social context... within which the research is conducted.' (Lee, 1993:5). Women's organisations and professional practices are traditionally marginalized and devalued due to still predominantly patriarchal attitudes. This, combined with the activation of pathological psycho-dynamic resistances in the face of violence and the democratic tension between non-governmental organizations, business and state institutions, makes the context in which these organisations are working very difficult.

9. Conclusions.

'Theory, writing, and ethnography', says Denzin (1998:406), 'are inseparable material practices. Together they create the conditions that locate the social inside the text'. From this viewpoint, a metaphor that would present this research well is of a picture emerging out of a puzzle (see Fig. 8). Qualitative research is far from being a coherent and linear process and this research is not an exception. As a researcher, equipped with a specific subjectivity shaped by critical thinking, social-epistemological stance and a psychodynamic approach, through reflexivity, participation and dialogue, I was climbing up and down many stairs, exploring different paths and roads, meeting other people and analysing in solitude. At the end of this journey, I was able to build a picture, to show a snapshot of the

emerging good practices that aim at opening a space for thinking and understanding as a means of containing violence.

This became possible through a research process in which I got access to the rehabilitation services for survivors of violence by ethnographic means, which are designed as one aspect of the policies that address the problem of violence. The preliminary fieldwork, which comprised three stages of observation, archive analysis and interviews allowed me to understand better and to formulate tacit knowledge available to the practitioners who work for prevention, awareness raising, policy-making and victim support. This stage showed that understanding violence is realistically possible by understanding one side of it, namely the experiences of the survivors. The actual fieldwork provided me an opportunity to participate in a mutual process of outlining the conditions under which the survivors' recovery and re-integration can be made possible by understanding them and the practitioners who meet the problem in their everyday practice. This would not have been possible without understanding the context in terms of my own biography, the organisational history, the wider social, political and historical situation and the present condition, which is characterised by flux and blurriness of boundaries. Precisely in the latter I see the possibility for a partnership between academia and the NGOs, in which a transdisciplinary and de-institutionalised approach towards violence can emerge.

I started the research with the question whether there is a possible approach to combat violence without in turn basing it on violence? However, a further set of complicated questions arose after the preliminary fieldwork: if such an approach can be found in understanding - as the preliminary data suggest, what does

understanding mean? Furthermore, what is involved in the process of understanding violence? In particular, what is the relationship between *understanding* and *resisting* violence? And also, how does understanding differ from defining or describing violence? If it appears as an inter-subjective process, how can we analyse it in these terms? In the context I was studying, the other important question was why understanding is actually important when considering the interaction between a victim and the one who is trying to understand. Not least, what space for understanding is there in a context where the provision of material goods is considered paramount? In the context of a division of labour between those whose job is to understand and those who are 'doing things', can we separate understanding from the practicalities of living?

Analysing the data allowed me also to formulate meta-theoretical questions that would allow me to feed back the research findings into theory. The *first order question* is one of addressing the relation between theoretical understanding and practical support given that the one is not possible without the other. In other words, how does the activity of understanding violence fit among other activities of mind: e.g. what is the relationship between understanding and thinking, what are the links of understanding with blame and forgiveness, how does understanding relate to judgement? An interesting observation that needed further exploration was that understanding lies in the middle between empathy and knowledge, that it is the mediation between subjectivity (empathy) and objectivity (knowledge). From here the question about the ways in which understanding, action and intervention are interwoven arose. In the light of this the tension between uniformity of standards and understanding was of paramount importance. The *second order question* is: from the ways in which practitioners combine theoretical understanding and

practical support, how can we (in the social sciences) develop our own sociological understanding of violence given that there is little agreement on what violence is and we are working from a low base line in which violence is generally reduced to the discourse of violence?

CHAPTER III. A VIEW FROM WITHIN: A TRAUMA CENTRED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE

1.Introduction.

The debates related to violence are complemented decisively by the concept of trauma. ‘Trauma’ (τραυμα) in Greek means ‘wound’ and as such the word is closely linked with suffering on one hand, and with disintegration – on the other. Although over the last two millennia the concept of trauma exists in the public imagination, a genuine focus on it exists only recently. It is closely linked with the emergence of psychoanalysis and the trauma studies developed from feminist accounts of psychoanalysis. The concept has been brought to the country and other parts of Europe by US- and UK-based clinicians that facilitated the emergence of Rehabilitation Centres for Survivors of Gender-based Violence in the mid-1990s. One of them is the organisation I am exploring.

The empirical part of the present research generated rich qualitative data from fieldwork among practitioners providing support to survivors of violence. In this chapter I will present the findings from the implemented extended case study of service providers and the link they make between understanding and support in their everyday practice. A key concept that bridges understanding and support is that of trauma. Firstly, I will review how the concept of trauma allows a dynamic definition of violence for the purposes of helping the sufferers to cope with the consequences of violence. Secondly, I will summarise the notion of understanding, which is of primary importance for the practitioners I am researching and will try to find its place among other activities of mind that are important in the context of the epistemological approach to violence in the public space. In their accounts and

practice I have discovered the concept of a holding environment, which is closely linked with that of understanding. This is the third finding I will present here. Fourthly, I will try to trace how understanding and building a holding environment are made possible by building a framework of procedures for working with clients and partners. I will illustrate by practical examples how understanding for the purposes of providing a holding environment through the procedures outlined earlier is fleshed out to link different levels of communication: from the private experience of the counselling room through networking and knowledge dissemination to developing policies and legal initiatives to promote more effectively the rights of the sufferers of violence.

In doing so I will use the data gathered in interviews during the preliminary stage of my fieldwork as well as from questionnaires filled in by service providers from three other countries as a part of a developmental programme designed by 'YANG' with my participation. As the questionnaires were part of a needs assessment, they were made anonymous despite them ultimately not containing any confidential information. Consequently, I will not be able to cite the individuals as the source of the information when using knowledge from questionnaires, but will nevertheless use some of the insights generously provided by the participants in the programme who have agreed in writing to the use of their contributions. The data from interviews provided by 'YANG' counsellors are used referring to their names and positions after obtaining their informed consent. Another source of information for this chapter are articles and books used by 'YANG' to inform their practice as well as hand-outs developed by them in order to transfer knowledge and skills to other practitioners. Finally, I will use feedback questionnaires from trainings to conclude why these issues have significant implications in practice. These feedback

questionnaires were primarily designed to develop concrete indicators as to whether the training seminars were meeting the needs of the practitioners involved, so they were also anonymous. These indicators are a very useful source of information because in fact they are statements made by the participants about what they consider valuable insight to be gained and as such highlight important aspects of the work with survivors of violence.

2. A Trauma Centred Approach to Understanding Violence.

2.1. Towards a dynamic definition of violence.

From the viewpoint of understanding violence, the simplest, most inclusive definition suggests that violence may be seen as any physical or emotional destructive act that occurs between people (Sadoff, 1978: 2). This is also confirmed by my informants. As one of them puts it: ‘What is under question here is violent aggressive inter-relations, destructive, among people. This is the definition of violence. [...] [Relationships] in which people are *hurting* each other’ (Interview 8-III, page 1, her emphasis). This view seems to be shared by the participants in the trainings implemented by ‘YANG’:

When we wanted to talk with the children [with whom training on the prevention of violence is implemented] about what violence is, it was difficult to distinguish between violence and aggression. In fact, we chose something related to the harm/damage – a form of inflicting harm ...and a trauma, but mostly harm we wanted to include. The same was when we were talking with adults, [...] again we reached only the point of agreement on harm (Interview 7-III, pages 2-3).

This definition based on harm reveals that the focus of attention for ‘YANG’ practitioners is on destructiveness and the experience of what lies behind ‘being hurt’. Hence, in line with them, I will be arguing in favour of a definition that is dynamic, but is built around the notion of harm - whether threatening the physical or the mental integrity. However, it should be mentioned that throughout writing this chapter, I kept in mind the remark of ‘Teresa Darko’, one of my informants who playfully suggested that the important thing about exploring violence as a part of its understanding is ‘not to be too confident in the answers found’ (Interview 3-III, page 4).

Proceeding from such a definition, the practitioners at ‘YANG’ employ a stance of non-acceptance of violence and do not consider violence justifiable although they acknowledge it as sometimes unavoidable:

I think that [violence] is a very immature form of communication. Sometimes, yes, it might be unavoidable because the person or the situation does not have the capacity, the resource, no other way of functioning or solving the problem. But I don’t think that it can be justified. One should not close one’s eyes to these things happening and to seeking other solutions, the same way as in the family (Interview 8-III, page 3).

However, they are rather pessimistic about the possibilities to develop these alternative resources and capacities. As the same interviewee further reflects on violence, she also says that ‘simply there is a problem in eradicating violence and

perhaps this will never happen or at least not in this century. Although perhaps the forms will be different and we are different people, because every generation is different [...] [Each generation has] an absolutely different understanding about the world. Because the relationships are

different, the information is different...Everything is different (Interview 8-III, page 5).

Nevertheless, understanding violence is something that they consider important because of the capacity of understanding to bring a productive change:

It seems that [understanding violence] is very important, because I've just realised that from all problems – heavy social [problems] on which I wouldn't be working, violence is the only thing that happens between a person and a person, unlike the other things...which happen in a different way...[it happens] in the relationship, so I think it should be known. [...] If we focus our attention only on the interaction between two people, on what is immediate between them, then the things seem much more changeable ...on the communication between them, then the things seem much more changeable (Interview 7-III, page 14).

Violence on its own is meaningless and cannot be understood in a comprehensive sense. However, it can be seen as a form of communication between people, through the meanings transferred by them in their interaction. Consequently, in most cases with which 'YANG' works, violence is not a rupture of the inner narrative of the victim, it is not meaningless although the meanings are usually negative. This is explained by my informant 'Isaline Huton' as follows:

I think that [a rupture in the inner narrative] can happen when a single event occurs that really interrupts for a certain period what you call the inner narrative and the life of a person. And this person undergoes a kind of a crisis – like in unfortunate events, I mean catastrophes, rape (not of the 'banal' type⁷ but simply a random event). But this is very rare. No, I

⁷ In 'YANG' experience and understanding rape most often occurs between acquaintances in an everyday context and this is what I guess the interviewee means by a 'banal type' of rape.

think that violence is a part of one's narrative, it has certain functions – one can be unhappy, can be not effective, but violence is a symptom, which plays an important role [in one's personal narrative] (Interview 8-III, page 4).

As a result, the way forward in working on the issues is to work towards expanding the personal capacities and the inner and outer resources of the person, structure or community that is being affected by violence rather than concentrating on violence as such. As the same informant emphasises:

'I don't know what it means "to understand violence". Because to be honest this is not my job and I have never tried to understand violence. What I endeavour to understand is to understand the person, because I think that there are as many people as destinies. Because they might enter the same category of domestic violence but in no case does it mean that these are the same problems. You can say "maternity" but every mother is very different from any other mother. And you cannot reduce them to a common denominator...' (Interview 8-III, page 2).

Unlike sociological research that usually focuses on the structural aspects of violence, 'YANG' practitioners explore violence at the level of human relations and how at this level it can be influenced by a structure, which is not simply a public body, but an institution that targets a level of interaction, which belongs to the rather private realm of the human relations⁸. As one of the informants responded to this issue:

'Yes. I speak about violence among people. In the relationships. Regardless of whether it is domestic violence, sexual violence or trafficking. I speak about [violence] between people. Even if we think about things at which I am especially angry (the institution of school, for

example), I mean the person within this institution, but of course the institution on its own is very tolerant to this and even more – often appeals precisely to these components in the phantasy world of the individual that are linked to and result in perpetrating violence. But if the question is whether there is violence, which is not subjective...which is not attached to two or more subjects, if we proceed from the hypothesis that violence is defined with the experience of the victims, there cannot be violence which is not subjective. If we, however, turn towards the practice of institutions such as school, hospital and prison, then we also speak about the relations institution-person, institution-group of people, and then we enter the level of structural violence, which can be still considered through the lenses of the human relations.’ (Interview 4-III, page 5)

In this framework, violence reveals itself as a form of communication, of interacting and relating and as such is a phenomenon that belongs to the sphere of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Violence, as one interviewee emphasises, has many layers and can be described through many frameworks (Interview 3-III, page 1). One way of seeing it is in the light of a clinical interpretation – as an ‘immature’ (Interview 8-III, page 2) or ‘unhealthy’ (Interview 10-III, page 4) form of communication, an interpersonal strategy that is employed because of lacking other resources: ‘To a high degree the whole diapason with people with whom I communicate here as clients⁹, makes me believe that violence is a mutual process (two-sided process), in which the people are getting involved perhaps because they don’t know how to behave in a different way’ (Notes 5-II, page 10). ‘The person,

⁸ This exploration is theoretically framed by a contemporary stream in psychoanalysis, which is very influential in the country.

who perpetrates violence perpetrates it because he or she doesn't have other resources. He or she might either not have other resources to communicate, or the resource to contain his or her aggressive impulses. [...] I think he or she perpetrates it because of helplessness' (Interview 4-III, page 4). 'For me, it seems, the more I deal with this, the more I am thinking that violence is a sign of weakness, a deep inward insecurity - weakness. The strong person doesn't beat. When you have other resources, why would you need to use violence? This is in a personal aspect, I don't know about the global scale, I think it is much more complicated' (Interview 5-III, page 10). In summary, violence can be seen 'as a means of transferring powerlessness... and [thus] getting rid of it' (Interview 3-III, page 1). In this sense, for the 'YANG' practitioners, understanding violence is only possible by means of filtering it through the inner world – a process facilitated by the concept of trauma.

Working mostly with the inner world and the symbolic meanings attached, implicitly the practitioners at 'YANG' take an empiricist and phenomenological stand, in which violence is identified through the preverbal experience of 'being a victim': '[G]enerally speaking', says 'Deborah Neil', another interviewee,

'the easiest way of recognising [violence] turns out to be the way people describe it – a pre-verbal experience that something bad has happened to them, that something is not as it should be. And the moment in which you name it as an abuse and violence, they say "yeah, truth!"' (Interview 4-III¹⁰, page 1).

⁹ 'YANG' works predominantly with people involved in domestic violence, with victims of sexual violence and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

¹⁰ This interviewee has also experience in working with abuse at the work place.

Thus, violence can be seen as a subjectively existing event or a repeated exposure to a series of such events – often escalating – that are identified through the resonance and impact on the people affected.

However, such a starting point in the experience is not unproblematic. It is true, ‘Teresa Darko’ recognises, that if we begin through the client’s experience in theory everything can be thought to be violence (Note 4-II). It seems that this is not really an epistemological problem though, as she further clarifies that for the functions of the organisation violence is mainly an occasion for the people who want to change their lives to start thinking about the best ways of doing this (ibid.) – a point also emphasised by ‘Laura King’ (Note 6-II-3). ‘Kate April’, another counsellor at ‘YANG’ further elaborates on this issue:

There are some people who are like this [with whom you can define violence through their subjective perception of an act]. But there are also people, growing in their individual family worlds, who have learned to tolerate certain forms of violence and for them this is neither abuse nor violence. There are others, who have not been taught to tolerate frustration *at all*, including the introduction of clear boundaries, and, to them, everything is violence. Recently, one of the problems that concerns me, and which I see as a growing problem in the society (not only ours) is that it is very difficult to introduce a structure to the children. Hence the children live without a structure and the introduction of an elementary structure later on [in their lives] makes them extremely aggressive and they experience this as if being forced, which becomes the cause of their aggressiveness. These are children who grew up with very chaotic boundaries, who - if they didn’t develop any serious mental illness due to their fluctuate boundaries - develop aggressiveness, which is linked with

school – there are many such cases. Initially, I have been encountering them mainly through my personal life and now I encounter them professionally (Interview 5-III, page 2).

Another factor that should be considered is that often, victims of violence do not identify themselves as such because of stereotypes and the stigma:

You can't reach [higher class victims of violence] because they don't recognise themselves as victims of violence. The victims of violence are the poor ones, which are 'slapped' by their husbands. They are *not* poor and they are not 'slapped'... I am telling you all these [...] in order to stress that in this social group there is a *huge* amount of violence. One part of their selves is aware of this and they suffer – because [one of my private practice clients who falls in this category] had serious depressive symptoms. But they don't name it, they don't call themselves in any way 'victims of violence'. (Interview 5-III, page 8).

It should be emphasised that despite of this focus on the inner experiences, the first assessment interview, even the first contact at the reception or the Help-line includes an assessment of the violence with a view towards judging what kind of intervention is needed:

When I work with clients, I think about physical harm/injury first, this is the leading factor. That is why I explore what the perpetrator does, what his violent behaviour is, when [and] in what ways it happens. This allows me to judge how often it might happen and, depending on how impulsive it is to evaluate whether it is related to a risk for life. So, first, this is the physical injury. Then the psychological element follows - what are the experiences of the woman as a result (Interview 7-III, page 2).

The question of whether this is a case of violence or a request for psychosocial help made for other reasons, arises mainly at the Help-line in order to make the most appropriate referral and at the reception, where it should be assessed whether the caller can be a client of the free-of-charge programmes at the Centre, explains ‘Catherine Damien’ (Notes 6-III). She is not only one of the counsellors but is also responsible for most of the gates to ‘YANG’ programmes – she is one of the Help-line coordinators, a receptionist and coordinator of the correspondence programme. Precisely in order to avoid the negative consequences of employing an abstraction, she further explains, each individual case is considered on its own. For example, ‘Damien’ says, if we speak about violence perpetrated by neighbours – it is violence, but it does not meet the criteria to be accepted in the free care programmes. But the client can stay on the Help-line – ‘sometimes people just need to talk before solving their problem’. If an action and a change is considered, this person can be accepted in the paid programmes of ‘YANG’. However, the personal experience is not the only criterion, stresses ‘Catherine’. For example, a woman comes because of being influenced from outside, from beyond her control – she is psychotic. What one can do is to validate that she is suffering instead of accepting that she is a victim of violence; and because she suffers, the counsellor is concerned and wants to refer her to a specialist – that is a very difficult and sensitive situation. In this sense, assessing whether the case concerns violence is by no means straightforward and simple process.

On the other hand, in most of the cases, the counsellors do not really need to define whether something is an act of violence or not because they work with the inner reality of their clients:

I don't know [what the criteria for defining violence can be]. It is obvious that the idea of what violence is, is changing a lot – in the different times, in the different communities the threshold of tolerance is very different. One way that can help us to understand what violence is, is the [discussion] around what violence is. For me, [another] very useful is the criterion of the person's experience – if someone feels forced for me, clearly, it speaks about violence. [On the other hand, the threshold of victims of violence sometimes] is higher but they are highly identified with violence and can recognise it everywhere so they sometimes say that something is violence even when it is not. Don't ask me whether it is or not because I've just said that the only criterion is the experience of the victim...[T]he very work is such that I don't need to objectify in the psychotherapeutic work whether this has really happened or not, it is not needed [...] when we speak about a situation outside the intimacy of the couple and the relationship between client and counsellor, then we can speak about reconstructing an objective reality in which it makes sense to say 'this is violence, this is not – may be you are too paranoid regarding [let's say] your boss'. When the issue is about such a degree of intimacy, which we observe in the therapy and in the counselling, I think that there is not much sense [...] to check whether it is violence or not (Interview 4-III, page 3-4).

This position, however, also depends on the situation of the client and on the mode in which the counsellor works: 'In the [psychotherapeutic] work with clients the categories are simply different', explains 'Isaline Huton' :

As if in a way the idea is not to have categories. And to work with the problems, ideas, perceptions, emotions of the people. [But] This is in *my* work, in my work [which is more psychoanalytically oriented]. May be

there are cases in which people have the need of support, *clear* support. And I think this is done in this organisation [*pause*] by many of the colleagues, with many of the cases, especially in the Emergency Unit (Interview 8-III, page 3, her emphasis).

Outside of the category of violence, the experience of having been subjected to violence is one of violation of the boundaries and intrusion in the personal space whether physical or psychological. It may or may not be labelled as violence, but there is the feeling of something ‘bad’ and ‘wrong’ going on:

So, yes, that is why I started to speak about this pre-verbal experience that there is something very wrong, which is going on. And in the direct work with people they say this, that in one way or another they had the experience that what is going on is wrong somehow. So, they simply lack the terms of reference used by the NGO sector or by the social services in order to name it this way. But if you are speaking to them, their body and their mind give these signals, which are used to recognise it (Interview 4-III, page 3).

So if experienced in working with victims of violence, for those in practice it is not difficult to recognise violence. For example, for ‘Kate April’, identifying violence is an ‘easy exercise’, but understanding it is the challenge:

Since I work in the helping professions, I work directly with people – immediately, [understanding violence] is to understand those who are *victims*, as well as to understand those who are perpetrators. This is for me to understand violence. Apart from this, identifying violence is a very simple exercise if you have worked for years [in this field]– to recognise the abuse of the boundaries and the will of the other person, if this is a kind of definition of violence. But this can easily be seen. It’s more

difficult to understand it, to understand why the victim – why does it behave in this [submissive] way without [*unintelligible*] and to understand the perpetrators for whom you've got the same drive when you listen to what they are saying (Interview 5-III, page 2).

This starting point in the experience corresponds to other perspectives similarly directed towards the phenomenology of violence. As Staudigl (2007: 235-236) elaborates on this view,

'[a]t its most obvious level, violence can be analysed as a destruction of our physical and bodily existence, as well as of its symbolic representations in language and other institutions.[...] Phenomenologically viewed, it is not only destructive of pre-given sense, but also affects our being-in-the-world, i.e., our basic capacities for making sense [...] Violence undoubtedly threatens, attacks, and possibly destroys communicative action and its symbolic interactive infrastructure. Because such action presupposes an embodied subject who is able to communicate and symbolise, it is, however, not the ultimate dimension in which to study the very phenomenon of violence. This task, to the contrary, involves clarifying not only how violence is destructive of pre-given sense structures [...] but, correlatively, of the very foundational ways we are able to make sense of the world'.

However detailed this description may be and however close it seems to be both to what I feel my informants are conveying in the interviews with me and in their awareness-raising strategy, but also to my own observations in working directly with survivors of violence, it seems very important not to fix one's attention to a particular definition. What violence is and what it is not is an issue plagued by

contradictions, which are rarely resolved by my respondents. Indeed, discovering, exploring and constantly re-negotiating the meanings hidden behind these contradictions constitutes the basis of the practice of the involved practitioners. Here is how the first informant articulated this when we were further discussing what violence is:

But I don't want you to generalise, it should be said that now it is this way, later it will be another way. And also – these are not synonyms at all [aggression, destruction, violence, etc]. The whole process of therapy is a kind of pursuit in a whole new world of unconsciousness – which is a real challenge. And that is why [violence] cannot be defined with certainty – this is the piece from the puzzle, which is always missing. Because the pictures are endless [*laughing*] But! One way or another the process of building the picture one session after another brings a kind of relief [for the client] because the things are thought through and meanings are discovered (Interview 8-III, page 2).

This refusal to 'freeze' the experience in a fixed definition provides an opportunity to keep one's mind open and to 'discover' new forms of violence from what people have discovered (or are discovering) for themselves. The practitioners in 'YANG' have a theoretical basis behind their practice, but the main way of learning about violence is from the experiences of the clients: '[S]omehow', says another interviewee,

'you begin to see them more clearly - these forms of violence which might be [more difficult to distinguish]... Once you have seen, experienced, recognised something as a form of violence, later on you ...[just] know it as a form of violence; in general you are enriching [your knowledge] with yet another form of violence which you store in your mind. Then you are

looking whether it is present in [the situation of] your next 4-5 clients. How to put it? Somehow it happens through the experience. (Interview 11-III, , page 5)

Unsurprisingly, 'Neil' concludes a similar line of thought sighing: 'So, I don't know what violence is, in the sense that many things are violence. Many things *turn out* to be violence [...] once you have opened your eyes, you see it a lot.' (Interview 4-III, page 1, her emphasis). Violence is a rather subjective term in the sense that its categorisation as such in this context will depend on the experiences of the sufferer. Hence, we have take into account that practitioners in 'YANG' explore violence solely for the purposes of assessing the trauma and designing an approach to develop personal mechanisms to cope with its consequences. The understanding they develop for trauma from violence is informed by the psychoanalytic conception of trauma, in which trauma corresponds to all failures of the environment to meet the needs of the developing ego and to respond adequately to all real and imagined losses. Consequently, 'YANG' team is prepared to work not only with people who have experienced forms of violence commonly recognised as such, but also with neurotic patients that is with traumas caused in the course of the life span because of developmental obstacles and failures of the carers to meet the needs of the patient at a significant stage of his or her development¹¹.

Working with such a wide definition of trauma, however, is not based on an uncritical reliance on the experience of the clients. This prevents the practitioners in 'YANG' from 'seeing violence everywhere'. The client's experience has to correspond to the empathetic response within the counsellor who listens, which is often triangulated and verified by the mental response of other people - team

members and/or her clinical supervisor when the situation of the client is presented to them. '[Violence] can be considered in terms of different situations – and this is a good way of entering the thought about violence' (Interview 3-III, page 1). What is traumatic in one situation, can be just frustration in another. For example, constant disapproval from parents can be traumatic because of the importance of their figures. On the other hand, in everyday interaction with less significant people, their constant disapproval can be just a reason to avoid interaction with them or depending on their authority – a reason to consider altering the behaviour or the assumptions. In addition, the disapproval of the parents can be presented in a way that leads to further improvement rather than to stagnation and blockage of further development. It is also possible that a person responds to violence with a denial or intellectualisations and does not see violence as such but as a manifestation of the perpetrator's psychological problems or as a deserved punishment for the victims' own mis-behaviour. This is often the case in situations of violence within the couple or when a child is maltreated by a carer. These considerations require from the counsellor a careful assessment of the situation that is being presented by asking open questions to avoid imposing her own interpretation. The hand-outs for training of beginning counsellors developed by 'YANG' advise that concrete questions such as 'who', 'how', 'when', 'where' combined with an active listening about the emotional responses of the client and his/her free associations help the counsellor assess the situation and the possible risks.

¹¹ However, such patients are not considered to be victims of violence and do not enter the care programmes that are funded on violence-related projects.

For 'YANG' practitioners, another way of staying in reality while relying on the experience is acknowledging the limitations of their way of approaching violence:

'The main source of knowledge is the victim. But this is only half of it.

Another source of knowledge is the perpetrators themselves. And their spirituality and their inner world. However, we work with [the victim's] part. But the violence has two sides.' (Interview 10-III, page 3)

Perpetrators of violence extremely rarely seek help, including psychological. Hence their experiences and motives are rather inaccessible. This is also true generally in the public space. As was discussed earlier, the term violence is charged with commonly accepted moral negative connotations that make one's own judgement of his or her actions as such more difficult. Consequently, perpetrating violence has little chances of being understood phenomenologically. Hence, the present thesis also discusses just the part of violence that affects the survivors.

Another interpretation of this trend of focusing more on victims than on perpetrators when exploring violence is offered by 'Deborah Neil', according to whom the picture is not that simple and it can be said that in a sense every perpetrator has also been a victim and that victims often can be perpetrators at the same time as a result of their trauma:

I think that moving away from the dichotomous wording victim-perpetrator, is a good thing, because in my view this way we re-victimise the people who have suffered violence. The aggression is much more acceptable than the pain. I think that pain is something that scares people a lot. And they make lots of efforts to keep it away. [Whilst] Everyone has been aggressive in his or her life [*pause*] and has the phantasy that he or she can control it – it is not so frightening. Not to mention that there is in our culture a lot of 'heroisation' of aggression. So that is why in my

view the perpetrator is omitted from the thinking and the discourse
[about violence] (Interview 4-III, page 8).

Usually, it is an important part of assessing the risk during the in-take interview to establish who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. In the framework of crisis intervention it is easier and actually necessary to clarify who is the victim:

With a view towards the threat, the risk to life', responds 'Laura King',
'yes [I have a clear vision who is the victim and who is the perpetrator].
What happens in a family, who and in what ways perpetrates violence,
what functions it serves and what roles are involved in this family – all
these are second order issues [that can be explored after the crisis is over]
(Interview 7-III, page 2).

Since the focus of the empirical work is on experiencing violence, most of this thesis is about trauma. To summarise the discussion above, the understanding employed in this thesis is derived from the way in which practitioners approach the definition of violence. This serves to orient the further exploration within the available literature. The proposed definition is a dynamic one that depends on the context of human relations on one hand and on the 'pre-verbal' experience of what it is like to be a victim of violence – an experience that is triangulated through a correspondence to the empathetic response in the witnesses, be they physical eye witnesses or people who have learned about this experience. At the heart of identifying violence seem to lie the notions of destruction and harm regardless of whether the harm is physical or mental, in other words we encounter violence where *trauma* is present. For example, the child destroying a toy out of pure frustration would perpetrate just an act of aggressive destruction, whereas the husband destroying the favourite set of plates of his wife to scare her and to show

that the next step will be hurting her or his loved people would be seen as an act of violence.

Such a dynamic definition of violence covers a wide range of experiences without contemporaneously avoiding any definition. To be back to the comment of the first interviewee:

[I don't think we can also reject any generalisation] because at the end of the day people need to categorise and conceptualise in order to clarify things. Especially in terms of moral values – what is good and what is bad, what should and what shouldn't be done. I consider this important and being a public organisation, we are aware of these values and we operate with them - because we operate at different levels: the one is as a public organisation, the other one is that of every counsellor in her counselling room trying to understand the person and to help him/her. So one way or another, the moral categories are important and we are aware of this, we are not confused regarding violence. We have very clear perceptions of what violence is, and that it shouldn't be practiced (Interview 8-III, page 2).

This complicated stance is achieved by using as a starting point of exploration the trauma of the people who have recognised themselves as victims of violence or who have been recognised by members of their surrounding to be victims of violence and have been referred to the organisation. The next section summarises the ways in which trauma is used to highlight the dynamics of violence as well as how coping with the traumatic roots and consequences is used in developing a stronger self, safer behaviour and more efficient relationships.

2.2. Trauma as a gate towards thinking about violence.

The concept of trauma allows making a link between various forms of violence ‘from domestic abuse to political terror’, as Herman (1998) puts it. This applies to the inner workings of the consequences of violence to the societal responses towards its occurrence. This is so to the degree that trauma studies experts see even in the perpetration and perpetuation of violence the workings of trauma. This is done by defining trauma in terms of a set of maladaptive defensive mechanisms that - in some people – work self-destructively, in others – by destructiveness directed towards others and often as a combination of both. At the social level, learning about violence also can be seen in terms of evoking dysfunctional defences that originally serve to protect the ego from an over-whelming anxiety but effectively result in splitting, denial, devaluation, minimisation and ultimately stigmatisation and marginalisation of the sufferers. Trauma also allows a flexible categorisation of violence for the purposes of assessing its consequences and designing a strategy to address it. In this section I will review three categorisations used by ‘YANG’ practitioners and will be endeavouring to illustrate how trauma can be used as a gate and a starting point of thinking about violence.

Working with the inner world of the victims, ‘YANG’ practitioners approach violence from their perspective, mainly in terms of consequences. The first categorisation that will be summarised is the one presented in one of ‘YANG’ publications that defines violence in terms of ‘actions towards a person, or a group of people despite their will and stated disagreement’ (‘YANG’, 2006: 3). As the publication explains, from this viewpoint the following forms of violence can be distinguished:

- Use of coercion – threats causing confusion and suffering.

- Threats of physical violence – the victim is afraid of possible future violence.
- Emotional violence – the victim feels inferior, humiliated and mentally unstable [...]
- Isolation – the victim's life is under control – what he/she does, who he/she meets, etc.
- Devaluation, rejection, accusation – the victim is blamed for causing the violence (victimisation).
- Sexual coercion – the victim is forced into sexual actions against his/her will.
- Economic violence – the victim does not have access to and information regarding his/her finances and is economically dependent on the perpetrator. (ibid.)

Accounting for the victims' perspective also requires considering the differences of what constitutes violence when the victim is a child. Thus, with children violence covers a much wider set of both action and inaction:

1. ***Emotional violence:*** a detrimental effect on the emotional and behavioural development of the child, caused by prolonged bad emotional treatment or rejection.
2. ***Physical violence:*** physical injury of a child or inability to prevent the physical violence over the child.
3. ***Neglect:*** prolonged neglect of a child or inability to protect a child from dangers, including hunger and cold, or inability to provide a child with basic care, which can

result in significant injury to the child's development or health.

4. ***Sexual violence***: Sexual abuse of a child. In most cases the perpetrator is someone who has power over the child (ibid.).

Other sources of categorisations based on trauma that are used by 'YANG' are provided by Sluzki (1993) and Garland (1998). The diagrams of both allow us to make a snapshot of the factors causing trauma and at the same time to meaningfully categorise various forms of violence, including those not caused by humans such as natural violence. Sluzki (1993) suggests that we can distinguish four types of violence across two axes: duration and perceived danger for life (see Fig. 9). The first category is violence that is a single act with a low threat for life, for example labelling someone once with an offensive word. The second category is that of a single act with a high level of danger, e.g. attempted murder. The third category covers repeated acts of violence that are highly dangerous – prolonged repeated physical attacks as in many cases of human trafficking and concentration camps. The final category is that of repeated attacks with low danger for life – an example here can be witnessing domestic violence at home or living in a totalitarian regime. Although the author emphasises that the degree of harm done will depend on the person who experiences violence, in most of the cases the most traumatic hence harmful events are those at the high spectrum be they high perpetuation or high threat for life. For example, although on its own rape does not necessarily have to endanger life, the experience of the victim is very close to being killed because of the violation of the bodily boundaries. Hence in Sluzki's categorisation rape belongs to the second type of violence.

The third categorisation that I would like to present is proposed by Garland (1998), who suggests that the degree of traumatisation is closely linked with the human factor. Her categorisation considers the involvement of the individual and the nature of the event (Fig. 10). In the centre of the diagram are all events caused by neglect and carelessness, which in a sense form the core of trauma, that it is the difficulties causing blockage in deriving meaning from the experience.

These three categorisations illustrate how the concept of trauma and its dimensions can be used as an axe for cutting across and exploring phenomenologically different forms of violence. They also allow for including in the whole picture additional dimensions that affect and direct the consequences of violence. This, according to the *AAF Life Skills Manual*, includes: the age of the victim; his or her relationship with the perpetrator; whether the victim has told anyone and if so, what the response of that person was; whether there is accompanying violence and if yes – how severe it is; how long the violence experience lasted; whether the violence includes deliberate humiliation; in what way violence is “normal” for the extended family and the local culture; whether the victim *knows* that someone loves him/her; whether the victim has good relationships – with siblings, friends, teachers, etc; whether the victim has relationships in which “negative” emotions are acceptable and can be manifested and managed freely and constructively, etc. Thus, violence turns out to be a more complex phenomenon that should be considered also in terms of the factors affecting the severity of its consequences for the individual who has been subjected to violence. In the next section I will try to present an overview of the context of such an approach towards violence, its implications and how it works in practice.

2.3. Trauma from violence as a psychoanalytically informed concept.¹²

For ‘YANG’ practitioners, understanding trauma should begin in understanding the inner world as a space that really exists, that not only counts, but that is of primary importance. As ‘John Smith’, one of the trainers at ‘YANG’ and a supervisor of the Emergency Unit says, we should begin by discussing ‘the role of unconsciousness and its meaning for the resistances towards the work [focused on the inner world], the personality structures and the transference, which is a concept that is especially important for the practice’ (Presentation 1-1-V). In this context, a key concept that has to be taken into account is that of the defensive mechanisms. The defensive mechanisms, explains ‘Ana Brown’ in the second introductory presentation to the same seminar, describe the active defence of the Ego from danger and the related unpleasant or depressive affects. This includes avoidance or control over powerful threatening feelings and disorganising emotional experiences on one hand, and on the other preservation of self-respect. According to her, the defence works unconsciously: one does not consciously account for the defences, which he or she employs. The defences are unavoidable, healthy means of experiencing the world and adapting to it. However, there can be also forms of defence, which do not support adaptation and deny reality or twist its perception. Hence, concludes ‘Ana Brown’, the psychological assessment is a way of understanding the defensive tendencies.

The psychological assessment is needed because of the close link between psychopathology and personal sufferance: ‘This is the reality’, says ‘Brown’ earlier

¹² As the practitioners at ‘YANG’ work in a psychoanalytically informed framework, much of what they say comes actually from the theoretical work of psychoanalytic authors and represent elaboration on theory, which origins cannot be directly referred to in this text. As it will be seen later, part of their mission is to disseminate in a common-sense language the principles and techniques of psychodynamic and psychoanalytically informed psychology.

in her first interview with me – ‘it can’t be said which one comes first, the clinical disorder or the violence, but the reality is that they co-exist and it is a fact that when you work with survivors of violence you find that they have got various forms of pathology’. The approach of ‘YANG’ practitioners, however, is to look at what lies behind the pathology as precisely the inability to look beyond the obvious is considered by them the roots of violence - precisely the unwillingness to look behind the symptom and behind the pathological behaviour often results in violence. As she further says:

‘Violence is an individual, but also a cultural problem – it is related on one hand to a low emotional (but not intellectual) capacity, and on the other hand it is linked with the ways in which the people in our society (but perhaps also in others) approach interpersonal problems; it is a consequence of the lack of tolerance...’

Tolerance is defined by her, it seems to me, as allowing enough time to think and understand the other person – his/her inner world, her/his motives, the symbolic meanings of his or her behaviour: ‘[Furthermore], she says, ‘violence itself often is a consequence of an action [for solving an interpersonal problem] which has not been preceded by thinking – a problem of the communication within the people themselves and with the others’. Such a process of understanding requires an emotional contact with the other person. As the other author who is frequently cited by ‘YANG’ says: ‘Treatment, at its best, is about connectedness, about emotional contact, about making sense of what is apparently meaningless, and of re-discovering one’s good objects...’ (Garland, 1998: 28). Emotional contact is about empathy – about understanding what people feel even when they themselves cannot easily articulate their emotions, often because these emotions are too

painful and unbearable to stay in contact with, or because the personal history has resulted in rejecting altogether the existence of an emotional aspect of the world.

Only after more than hundred years of writers' and researchers' struggle to recognise trauma as a phenomenon that belongs to the inner world, but is caused by external events, can we say that everyone falling into a difficult position can suffer trauma. Furthermore, trauma depends on the resonance of these events in the inner world of the person as well as on the meanings he or she attaches to them. In order to understand trauma psychodynamically, one needs to acknowledge the existence of an inner reality, to analyse the consequences of trauma for the personality and its functioning as much as to analyse the impact of personality on the formation of a trauma. The next section will look at the practical implications of this approach on the basis of the reflections of practitioners who work with survivors of violence without being aware of the conceptual background of trauma.

2.4. Trauma from the viewpoint of the practitioners.

In this section I will continue with an overview of what does trauma mean in practical terms the ways in which professionals who work with traumatised people have described it. The psychoanalytic values, ideas and interpretations are re-negotiated with the clients – be they victims of violence or other practitioners working on the issue - in the practice and thus a significant change occurs at the content level (Note 4-II). For example, a group of practitioners, who were being trained by 'YANG' during the second stage of preliminary fieldwork, do not accept uncritically everything said by 'YANG' experts and indeed the aim of 'YANG' practitioners is not to preach a certain viewpoint, theory or ideology, but to create

conditions in which the clients can learn from their own experiences and reach their own conclusions (ibid.). Most of the researched within the implementation phase of this research practitioners refer to the definitions of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder provided by the International Classification of Diseases (10th revision). Others are more detailed and describe various factors that focus on the presence of a traumatic event:

‘The presence of events causing trauma or continuous traumatisation, which leads to frustration (emotionally heavy way of experiencing one’s failure accompanied with a feeling of no way out, a crash and a lack of success in achieving one’s goal). [Trauma itself also includes] sadness; feelings of loss, danger, humiliation; feelings of inferiority; unexpectedness of what has happened; rupture of the normal life pace; uncertainty regarding the future; prolonged sufferance’ (Questionnaire I.2., p. 2, *my translation*)

To these signs of trauma can be added feelings of fear, guilt, mistrust, shock, suspicion, feelings of being lost (Questionnaire III.2, p. 2, *my translation*). Another organisation defines trauma simply as an ‘experienced strong psychological and physical stress that has changed [the sufferer’s] perception of life’ (Questionnaire I.5, p. 2, *my translation*). Others point out the quality of trauma to build on previous traumas: ‘The feelings of vulnerability and emotional pain that are experienced by [victims], combined, often with a background of childhood abuse and mistreatment, play a significant role in the occurrence and severity of the acute reactions’ (Questionnaire I.7., p.2). Not least, these practitioners account for the capacity of trauma to affect bystanders, in this case the practitioners who listen about violence: ‘in our work, we also account for the fact that the personnel directly working with [survivors of violence] is exposed to secondary

traumatisation'. (Questionnaire III.1., p. 2, *my translation*). Thus, trauma should be understood not simply as a sum of symptoms, but as a complex phenomenon that builds on previous history and that can affect secondarily people who were not directly involved in the act of violence.

Understanding trauma by linking practical tacit knowledge and existing literature generated in trauma studies is useful in several respects. Here I will summarise what practitioners expect to gain from understanding trauma as reflected in their sharing their expectations in a discussion at the beginning of the seminar on understanding trauma. This discussion was summarised and on its basis a questionnaire was developed to measure the success of the seminar (FSS 1). Hence, the statements presented here have also been subjectively evaluated as to the extent to which they correspond to the real experience of 'understanding trauma'.

To begin with, it turns out that such an approach is productive regardless of different levels of experience, expertise, and the different cultures. It also allows avoiding formulating concrete algorithms, while at the same time leaving a space to the practitioners to understand better their work with clients. A key achievement is the possibility to understand better and with greater respect the experience of the survivors, but also to structure practitioners' own practical experience, and to understand the consequences of the work with traumatised people for themselves. A trauma focused approach also allows a better understanding of the mechanisms through which the survivors can be re-traumatised, including by the practitioners themselves as people working with them. All this improved knowledge is important with a view towards applying it in long-term systematic work and in understanding

how to address not only the trauma, but the underlying problems¹³. This is done by improving the understanding of the relevant concepts and terminology, including acquiring more psychological knowledge, which is adequate to the needs of their work. This is important because knowledge of how does the human mind work, empowers the practitioners to be more effective not only when working with clients but also when working with other professionals who face the problem (and who are often themselves traumatised). A key aspect and consequence is improving their professional language, because this will allow them to operationalise, communicate and develop further the tacit knowledge they acquired in practice. This is especially important given the need of exchanging experiences with other practitioners, including being able to make their own inputs in the development of a knowledge base. One area they consider very important is motivating people who need help, but do not acknowledge this, hence do not want to use psycho-social services. These resistances are on one hand linked with the widespread individual resistances to explore the inner world, but also to the negative image of such help in the public imagination where it is associated with illness and failure to cope. Another crucial area, according to the researched subjects is to understand better the different types of traumas: trauma from domestic violence, for example, differs from that of sexual violence, despite the fact that phenomenologically they have a lot in common.

¹³ Without knowing of this concept, the practitioners refer to what is known in psychoanalytic studies as 'cumulative trauma': the capacity of traumatic in the

3. The holding environment as a space for thinking and understanding.

3.1. The role of the environment.

‘For a long time’, says one of my informants, ‘we [clinical psychologists working on the issue of violence] were forced to

legitimise ourselves through the direct work, by virtue of being able to say “we are saying this, because we are the only people who have heard the victims”. I think it is good if we withdraw from this position and openly state that we are saying what we say because we [...] *offer* or *provide* an opportunity for thinking and understanding. Because it is clear that those who suffer are not only those directly involved, but also somehow the community...’

(Interview 4-III, page 7).

This section endeavours to characterise this space and to explore why it is legitimate and needed. In doing so I will use information from observations at ‘YANG’, interviews, ‘YANG’ written materials, and discussions and presentations made by participants and trainers in ‘YANG’ trainings. Thus, I will proceed from a focus on violence towards coping with its consequences through communication in order to break its vicious circularity. In doing so I will use the concept of a holding environment developed by the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. This is a concept I discovered in my fieldwork as informing ‘YANG’ approach – one that they consider valuable to be transferred to other practitioners.

Traumatic events, according to the American Psychiatric Association (1994), are those events, which transcend the usual human experiences. ‘When a person is a victim of violence’, explains another similar organisation – ‘Animus Association’ in its *Life Skills Manual*, ‘he or she is “psychologically bombarded” with the severity of

psychoanalytic sense events to build on each other and to increase the vulnerability to more dramatic life events.

reality and human vulnerability and the inevitability of death. Most people are completely unprepared for such experiences' (AAF, 2006: 5). This experience raises emotions that are difficult to contain by the person him or herself. The reaction is an attempt of getting control over them by asking oneself disturbing questions. The answers to these questions are searched in the surrounding and the wider environment. Some times it is an indirect questioning of oneself, the relations and the meanings of life, but very often people from the immediate surrounding are actually asked to help in finding the answers. As these answers related to overwhelming questions are difficult to be found for everyone, often the surrounding fails to contain these emotions and to provide answers that would help the sufferer to keep going. 'A common answer from the victim's environment regarding this type of thinking', the AAF manual describes this phenomenon,

is to start asking similar questions and thus delay the recovery. This type of thinking can also lead to the disturbing answer: "It was your fault"... A similar, very common mistake, which can delay or prevent the recovery of the victim, is to say, for example, "Forget about it" or "Pretend it never happened"...Another possible reaction on the part of the surrounding environment of victims of violence is to "overreact", to show too much care about the victim and thus victimise him/her even more¹⁴ (ibid.).

In the long term, the effects of trauma appear as maladaptive defences that can deeply disturb the functioning of the survivors and often affect their relationships in a negative way. This is so to the extent that those who are supposed to provide professional support and protection also often fail to do so:

¹⁴ 'Ana Brown' pointed out to me that this is in fact the definition of what will be further seen in the text as 're-victimisation'.

Very often the behaviour and experiences of survivors [of violence] are misunderstood, which deprives them of the possibility to receive the help and support they need. For example, their aggressive behaviour is usually an expression of their feelings of insecurity, regression, strong anxiety, fears and even panic. Very often the specialists are not prepared to contain such tension and they interpret this aggression as destructiveness, challenges and ingratitude, which leads to breaking their relationship with this category of clients. This is one of the reasons why victims [of violence] cannot always take full advantage of the programs and services they are offered ('YANG', project proposal).

The difficulties of containing trauma by both the sufferer and his or her surrounding and generally the environment are thus obvious. The goal of the 'YANG' practitioners working in support of survivors of violence is to provide an alternative personal and professional environment, in which the painful emotions, confusing thoughts, maladaptive behaviours, destructive relationships and unbearable experiences can be thought through. This does not mean that the practitioners at 'YANG' are immune against confusion regarding the questions with which the beneficiaries of their services are struggling or against negative reactions towards their pain, complicated behaviour and dysfunctional relatedness. On the contrary, they consider their occurrence a paramount source of information about what should constitute the focus of their work:

What survivors of violence need is to have their feelings acknowledged and to be given a chance to talk about their feelings when they want. This would return their sense of control over the situation and would mean an acknowledgment of their right to make a choice. ('YANG', 2006: 5)

The environment plays an important role and often is not prepared to respond to learning about violence and even less prepared to meet the survivors' needs. The effective response for the practitioners at 'YANG' requires a special quality of the provided space – one of stability, safety, acceptance and sensitivity. The next section will review its origins in the concept of the holding environment.

3.2. The concept of a holding environment.

In the needs assessment research we implemented among service providers in three other countries, we found that their main concern is providing sustainable solutions to their clients. A simple screening technique of reporting one successful and one frustrating case by the interviewees revealed that the main obstacle here is not the availability of service components – instead, we found that the organisations in all three countries have developed efficient reintegration schemes focused on job seeking assistance, mini-grants and study support that work well with clients suffering simple Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Rather, the main source of frustration behind this concern is the number of clients, who are dropping from the re-integration system to return back to the situation of trafficking, to enter otherwise new abusive relationships or to become or remain abusive themselves - the 'difficult' clients.

When the label of 'difficult' clients was analysed during a five-day seminar, it became clear that the difficult clients are actually difficult to be contained because they are themselves overwhelmed by an affect that is overwhelming for the practitioner him or herself. This is illustrated in the following conclusion that was reached:

The difficult clients are difficult because of the emotions they raise in us. The way to work with these difficult clients is to understand them and to think about what lies behind their behaviour, stated problem and request. Thus, we constructively establish an additional distance which protects us as professionals who are constantly exposed to intensive emotions. The use of these emotions for the purposes of thinking and understanding is only possible by adopting an ordered and disciplined approach through clear procedures for work with clients and a system of care for the professionals – by building a holding environment¹⁵ (Notes 1-4-V, page 5).

According to 'John Smith's interpretation of Winnicott's concept, the holding environment originates in a psychological and physical space in which the child feels safe without knowing that the protection is available. All the efforts of the mother are focused on the new-born; but in the optimal situation a time comes when the mother does not behave this way anymore and creates for the child an environment, in which he or she can move and learn from his or her own experience. In this way the child gradually gets to know that an outer world exists and that there are other people who are not always positively related to him or her. It is very important for the development of a healthy I of the infant that the mother is around each time when the child needs her. Even more important, however, is that she disappears when the child does not feel a need for her.

'John Smith' cites Donald Winnicott (1971) who describes the holding environment as a very wide system – the body of the mother, the hand of the

¹⁵ Here I am citing myself in my capacity of one of the trainers in the developmental programme we designed for other service providers. I have made this conclusion on the basis of the discussions of theory, the experience of the participants in the seminar and that of the trainers, as well as the concrete cases that were discussed.

mother, the parental couple, the home, the family, the relatives, the school, the district being managed by the police, the country with its laws, etc. He believed that each of these structures, at each of the stages of development, can intervene to strengthen one's personality and to compensate for the failures of the previous. Winnicott died in 1971, 'Smith' mentions, in a period of struggles for civil rights of women and ethnic minorities, at the beginning of the era of de-institutionalization of psychiatric care, when there were no networks of local care services available, no variety of professionals (Presentation 1-2-V, slide 39). It seems to me that nowadays, there are many more possibilities to expand his findings about the quality of the holding relationship to the wider social and political surrounding of suffering people.

Nowadays, the practitioners who work with traumatised people consider the best holding environment as directed towards connectedness, towards emotional contact, towards the search for meaning in the seemingly meaningless, and towards the search for new good objects. I will try to present the essence of this type of holding as I discovered it in 'YANG' and would suggest that this provides a model for an approach that is worth transferring to other practitioners working directly with survivors of violence, including researchers, teachers, doctors, policepersons, and migration officers.

3.3. The role of transference and counter transference.

Emotional contact is about empathy – about understanding what people feel even when they themselves cannot easily articulate their emotions, often because these emotions are too painful and unbearable to stay in contact with, or because the personal history has resulted in rejecting altogether the existence of an emotional

aspect of the world. In the next few pages I will review what the women who came out of violence feel – what constitutes their trauma, but also what constitutes the emotional background on which the trauma builds and how these affect their relatedness as revealed in the interaction with ‘YANG’ practitioners.

According to ‘YANG’ training and sensitisation materials (Notes 1-4-V, pages 2-3) the reactions to violence include extreme emotions, changes in identity and self-perception, in behaviour, in initiative and planning. They also expand to effects on the quality of the victim's relationships. This includes guilt and shame that lead to depression and an overall affect distortion, anger and feeling of humiliation, feeling of an omnipresence of the perpetrator, fear (including phobias), disorientation and difficulties in adaptation and adjustment, loss of faith in God, the other, the world; withdrawal and self-isolation; apathy, helplessness and passivity. The list further covers suicidal thoughts and attempts, tendency towards traumatising attachments and/or extreme relationships; identification with the aggressor; risk of consequent involvement in extreme forms of violence such as human trafficking; increased vulnerability to a consequent re-victimisation, including by the institutions. These effects of the violence they have suffered often build on and re-enforce the effects of being abandoned or victimised earlier by their families and/or by society.

All these consequences communicate the unbearable emotions I described above through the phenomenon of transference. As ‘John Smith’ explains, behind the transference is the experience of emotions, revitalisations, relationships, phantasies and defences regarding a person in the present, which are not adequate towards this person, because they are in fact a repetition, displaced reactions formed in a relation to a significant figure in an earlier age. ‘The patient’, he cites Freud, ‘sees

[in the analyst] a return, a re-embodiment of an important figure from his/her own childhood or past and transfers on [the analyst] feelings and reactions, which undoubtedly have been caused by the prototype' (Presentation 1-2-V, slide 5). But this happens to everyone who tries to establish contact with a traumatised person. As 'John Smith' puts it:

The clients do not know that they transfer. Rather, instead of remembering and recollecting, they tend to repeat – repetition is always a resistance to the function of memory. Even worse, they repeat this behaviour again and again, finding in us new objects for their feelings and we are just another participant in this process. Often they repeat their past in a way that reflects back to them in a negative way – for example, by raising negative emotions and attitudes against themselves - the same way, in which they raise them in us. (ibid, slide 6)

Everyone reacts to these transferred emotions with a counter-transference. I have discussed earlier in the methodological chapter this phenomenon of an emotional response to the experiences projected by the other side. Here, it is important to emphasise that according to Winnicott, some counter-transference reactions can be an objective response to qualities of the client. In these cases, the negative feelings experienced by the practitioner are justified and needed, because they belong to the inner world of the client, who has an extremely negative past relational experience. 'John Smith' describes the development of the counter-transference in the practitioners the following way:

It is difficult or impossible to achieve with them what we think is important or needed. They are late for appointments or even do not come at all. They need to be searched for and convinced to receive help and use services. Or on the contrary, termination of the contact is not possible. They often put us

in an impossible situation because of their behaviour and demands. They show indifference or open animosity. But we cannot just ignore them. **And also... It is difficult to love them.** It is difficult to bear them, let alone to love them. We experience powerful feelings towards these people, and very often these feelings are not positive in their nature. We feel anger, irritation, sorrow, dissatisfaction, fear. We are also ashamed of these feelings and feel guilty because of them. As a result, the feelings of anger and dissatisfaction are even stronger. Well, how to work with them? (ibid., slides 2-3, *his emphasis*)

To 'YANG' practitioners, the way forward is to open a space for thinking and understanding not only for their clients, but also for all those who interact with victims of violence. The direction of this thinking and understanding is not prescribed; they do not aim at directing the clients – whether victims themselves or other practitioners. As another informant describes the process: 'in the training of other practitioners the situation is very similar to that of personal therapy - because it is not me who builds the bridge, it is not me who constructs or re-constitutes the narrative. I am in both cases the one who creates the space for this to happen' (interview 3-III, page 3).

4. Building a containing framework.

4.1. Safety, security and stability.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, 'YANG' practitioners endeavour to build a space for thinking and understanding. This space is focused on the search for meaning in the seemingly meaningless and the search for new 'good objects' capable of containing unbearable emotions from a difficult past. This is crucial

because the modus of becoming a victim is of prime importance for prevention and rehabilitation. 'In the sense that this is about the genesis of becoming a victim', says further my informant 'Ana Brown'. 'And this is important for both the prevention and the rehabilitation', she emphasised,

because this understanding deprives us of the illusion of our omnipotence, in the sense that we have to overcome the illusions that "OK, we are going to develop now some preventive materials and everyone will understand what is the word about and will learn how to avoid violent situations" or the assumption that when you are offering certain services – everything will be OK and the person will be fine. This is a very difficult topic, because usually when you speak to donors they ask for numbers – how many have recovered, how many have changed their way of thinking, things which for me are absurd [because you can't measure them in numbers]. When we are speaking about "assets" we actually speak for a degree of improvement, a degree of thinking through, a degree of changed behaviour (Note 7-II, page 2).

Thus, trauma as an effect of violence is seen as a relationist concept, a qualitative change, a process and a part of a complex system – so the way out of it should be. As the same informant later on summarises:

Trauma works at an unconscious level but gets an expression in the behaviour and the relationships. It does not happen by accident – it is always linked with previous traumas. Understanding trauma this way is even more important given that the specific defences associated with traumatic experiences are used by everyone, not just the survivors themselves. This includes the immediate surrounding as much as the institutions and their representatives. An emphasis should be put on the knowledge about and the use of transference and counter-transference – why are we too aggressive, too passive, or too tolerant towards certain clients – to show that it is very

important to learn about the client from these experiences. The main conclusion is that we have to be more curious towards our clients and towards ourselves; in other words to think more and to open a space for thinking and understanding in our organisations rather than to act out the unbearable emotions projected into us. Such an environment rests on three pillars: safety, security and stability to be created for the client (Notes 1-4-V, pages 11-12)

Safety, security and stability are created at 'YANG' on several levels. The most basic one is that of the perception of space. Even the office environment is domesticated with furniture that creates a cosy aesthetic atmosphere and there is plenty of space (see Fig. 11). The space is organised in such a way as to meet the requirements of the practice and the necessity based on the observations of the needs and routine of both the clients and the team (Note 1-II). The essence of safety, security and stability, however, are created by the practitioners working there. The emphasis is on partnership, non-judgemental attitude, acceptance and respect of the personal boundaries of the visitors in the centre. Each client is accepted in a counselling room where he or she meets with a counsellor, psychotherapist, case manager or a social worker¹⁶. If there are couples or close people accompanying the victim, teams of as many counsellors as the clients are formed. Thus, each client has a counsellor to follow his or her version of the situation. The client and the counsellor sit on couches face-to-face that are situated at approximately one metre from each other (this is considered to be the optimal personal distance for effective communication that does not intrude in the personal

¹⁶ The position of the counsellor as a psychotherapist, social worker, or case manager would depend on the mode of work required by the needs of the client. Hereafter, I will speak use 'counsellor' to refer to the practitioner providing a service to the client, but her position may vary.

space). The couches are not directly facing each other in order to allow the client to look in other directions (not only at the counsellor) as well as to avoid the feeling of being stared at by the counsellor. Between the client and the counsellor there are no obstacles – tables, desks, etc. and the two couches are absolutely the same in order to emphasise the open and equal relationship offered by the counsellor (see Fig. 12). The time frame is also firm both for each session and in the longer term. Each session lasts 50 minutes that are skilfully set by the counsellor and separated into a short opening, a dynamic interview and a short closing phase. The focus of the attention is on the content of what is being presented as much as on the process level of how it is presented, on the emotions and the meanings behind this presentation. The sessions are set up regularly, usually weekly but sometimes more often and efforts are made to implement them at regular intervals, even at the same hour for each session. The goal is to create a symbolic structure in which emotions and affects can be contained by the counsellor, who allows verbalisation (through open questions), ventilation (through encouragement of expression of the emotions) and working through (through rare but deep naming of emotions, paraphrasing and interpretations). However, their effectiveness depends more on the context in which the counsellor is situated: the organisation, the format and the procedures, which are developed to allow enough space for the thinking and understanding of the counsellor herself¹⁷.

¹⁷ The counselors at 'YANG' at present are only female. In the past there has been a male therapist. Whilst at the Help-line being a female is requirement of employment this state of affairs is not purposeful. Given that most of those seeking help have been hurt by violent men, the gender dimension is important and requires special conditions that are unlikely to be present when the connection is by phone, but if the counselor is skillful enough, 'YANG' experience shows that the gender of the counselor is a factor that have to be considered but does not disqualify men from working.

4.2. Organisation of the work: basic standards and procedures.

The capacity of each counsellor to provide safety, security and stability and to contain and work through the emotions adequately would depend on the context in which he or she works – the whole set of respected principles and followed procedures. As one of the seminars in the developmental programme was dedicated to this topic, in this section I will summarise the comments of the participants why this aspect of the work is important and in the following section I will overview their perception of an organisation working with survivors of violence.

Considering the organisation of the work helps to put in order, to structure and to elaborate on past experience, previous practices and learned theory. This combination helps the practitioners discover ways of adequately altering and improving their techniques. As ‘Ana Brown’ says in the first interview with me, the theoretical knowledge developed in academia and that generated in ‘YANG’ practice are both considered useful and employed in developing these practices, but ‘the orientation of ‘YANG’ is towards the reality, the every-day experience, the life itself’ (Note 7-II, page 1). The most important aspects of the organisation of work with survivors of violence are considered by all participants in the training to be the ‘gate’ of the service and the prevention of the professional burn-out syndrome (FSS 3-V). What is also seen as important is to understand the work in the structure, organisation and format of a team work on a case. In this context, it is also crucial to understand the whole structure and dynamics of an organisation (ibid.). The teamwork and the group supervision/intervision is helpful in planning the work on each concrete case (ibid.). However, the teamwork also raises the question of what their boundaries are – where does their obligation finish and

where do the obligations of other practitioners start? (ibid.) Hence, it turns out that the ‘gate’ of a service, the team approach and the consideration of the burn-out syndrome play a key role in organising a service working with survivors of violence that will provide a framework to contain and hold the clients. ‘YANG’ practitioners further clarify the key components by emphasising an understanding of the organisation as a dynamic system, the standards and procedures of work and the prevention of burn-out syndrome.

4.3. The life of the organisation.

In the view of ‘YANG’ practitioners, as expressed by ‘John Smith’ in his introductory presentation to the third observed seminar, the organisation is an open system, which exists in a certain environment (Presentation 1-3-V). This means that ‘it can be described as an [emotional] system of inter-related parts, whose interactions create the specific image and means of functioning of the whole. Each of these parts can, in turn, be described as a sub-system that is built by a multiplicity of elements’ (ibid, slide 3). Hence, the focus of practitioners’ attention is on the emotions of the people belonging to an organisation and the ways, in which these people cope with these emotions. However, they also acknowledge that an organisation cannot be understood and the meaning of an organisation cannot be grasped without accounting for its surrounding – the human communities, in which it is situated. ‘The organisations’, ‘Smith’ further says,

are responsible for the maintenance of the social fabric (the shared and inter-dependant life) in complex societies. [This is so, because] organisations create, manage and distribute the goods of society [products, services or other results]. **The organisation is needed when the task is**

impossible to be carried out by one person alone (ibid, slides 7-8, *his emphasis*).

An organisation is characterised by a working task that unites its members, by a flexible structure and selectively permeable boundaries. Roles, rules and norms are considered by ‘YANG’ practitioners, according to ‘Smith’, the main expressions of the boundaries:

The role is the sum of functions, which a person has to implement in order to participate in carrying out the common working task. The roles can be described as formalised positions in the organisational structure that include a set of rules and prescriptions. The rules define the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in a given role and, as such, regulate the relations in the organisation. Usually, the rules are prescribed in the guidelines, the internal regulations and the professional ethical standards. The norms regulate the relationships in the organisation; although they are not as clearly described as the rules, they nevertheless define certain patterns of behaviour. The people working in the organisations adopt norms by experience – by means of secondary socialisation in the organisation. They gradually internalise the rules and the norms and when violation occurs, it causes anger, shame and guilt. (ibid, slides 16-17).

Perhaps most importantly, the organisation is seen as functioning in two modes which ideally should be in a synchrony – a working mode and an emotional mode: ‘The relationships and the emotional aspects of the organisation’s life play a crucial role in accomplishing the working task of the organisation and in the functioning within the set roles (needed for the working task)’, ‘Smith’ says further (ibid, slide

18). The organisation as an emotional system is considered by 'YANG' practitioners in terms of the emotional connectedness of the individual with his or her role, with the department in which he or she works and with the organisation as a whole as well as in terms of the emotional groupings that inevitably occurs. All this would be fleshed out by the meaning that each individual attaches to his or her working environment and by the meaning created by the members of the organisation as a whole. However, this is not a one way input in the organisation – the mental representation of the organisation is in turn internalised by each of its members. Thus, the organisation and the individuals in it exist in a dynamic interaction by means of which the organisation flexibly changes and the individuals are re-socialised in the views, rules, rituals and norms of the organisation.

A key aspect of the organisation as an emotional system is seen to be to contain emotions, especially anxiety, and especially those emotions that are raised by the nature of work itself: 'Sometimes the anxiety is so high that people refuse to accept a certain role or to give it up when the time comes – people do not carry out their role, some of its aspects or carry them out against the expectations and the rules', 'Smith' explains (ibid, slide 32). Thus, it may be difficult to stay in the role of counsellor who has to contain emotions but to try and function as a rescuer by doing things that the person herself can do and thus to miss the chance of empowering the client by expanding her emotional capacities. However, the 'YANG' expert also emphasises that the retreat from implementing one's role raises painful feelings within the organisation as well that prevent it from implementing effectively its own functions: 'Despite the reasons for this retreat, it can trigger a sequence of experiences of anxiety in the whole organisation (following the domino principle). This feeling is transmitted via primitive channels

of communication within the whole organisation through the boundaries of the sub-systems' (ibid, slide 32). Furthermore, it becomes clear that the anxiety does not always manifest itself as such, but also that a significant body of the organisational resources is invested in developing mechanisms to manage anxiety.

The failure of the organisation to contain the powerful emotions transferred to counsellors by their clients as well as the overall anxiety raised by working in the organisation results in the development of a 'burn-out' syndrome in the practitioners. 'John Smith' describes the syndrome as follows:

The burn-out syndrome is a condition of tiredness and frustration caused by a dedication to a cause, way of living or relationships that did not lead to the expected outcome. [This is] a syndrome in which the practitioners feel themselves emotionally exhausted and tired, emotionally alienated from their clients and tend to devalue their own achievements. [It is an expression of] a failure of the defensive mechanisms which the practitioners use for the purposes of adaptation and mastering the intense stress of their work (Presentation 2-3-V, slides 4-5).

In the same presentation, 'Smith' also introduces the synonym 'compassion fatigue': 'acute feeling of helplessness and confusion, which are not directly caused by trauma, but by the traumatic and tragic experiences of other people' (ibid, slide 9). Another related concept, he explains, is the 'vicarious traumatisation': 'transformation of the professionals' inner experiences as a result of empathetic involvement with the traumatic experiences of the clients, that is expressed in depression, cynicism, sorrow, loss of ability to experience compassion and to empathise, and a loss of vitality' (ibid, slide 12). As the expression of this condition includes also 'the experience of compulsive symptoms, distortions in the perception of the world, and physiological reactions similar to that occurring in the

victims themselves' (ibid, slide 13), another way of describing it is as a 'secondary traumatisation'.

The work of 'YANG' can be characterised as 'emotional labour', not only with victims of violence but also with other practitioners as they work with the inner world and experiences related to violence of these practitioners. This also has a significant emotional price. For example, 'Kate April' (Note 5-II) explains that there is no longer a need to lobby for legislation, but that facilitation of the practical implementation of these laws is still needed. In this conversation she explained that this often requires helping other practitioners to cope with the consequences of the lack of practical experience and knowledge in implementing these laws, combined with out-dated institutional practices which results in higher burn-out levels among the practitioners with whom they work as trainers. 'Kate' is also one of the mothers in 'YANG', so in addition to constantly doing emotional work professionally she has also to negotiate arrangements with her family for helping with taking care of her children that also requires a lot of emotional effort – a situation very familiar to the other women in the organisation, too.

This type of work has two sides – it is gratifying as much as exhausting. As the director of crisis work explains:

[This] is a job in which you see both the most horrible and the most beautiful parts of human nature... There is a huge satisfaction when the work is done properly, but there is also a huge exhaustion. The exhaustion comes from the need to bring together several roles and the problems related to this: to take care of the clients, of the team, of the students and to repair the tiles and blocked toilets (now when we are

moving this is not a problem, because it is like a new home, so everything should be ‘touched’, to be in its right place). Hence, because of the emotional exhaustion, there is a huge turn-over. It depends, you might decide to leave the first day, but you may stay years even as an unpaid volunteer (like many students, who came because of their practice and stayed, there was even one policeman with a degree in psychology). However, even if people leave the centre there is something that keeps them connected with the team for a long time. The work on crisis cases creates a special bond. (Note 1-II, page 3)

The main difficulty when working with institutions, however, is that the different professionals have to free some time to gather together, which is a huge problem for them (Note 1-II, Note 2-II, Note 6-II-3) There seems to be a lack of recognition of the emotional labour when it is not directed towards a client, but towards the other partners in the case. As ‘Margaret Dean’ says:

Otherwise, everyone agrees that the case is worked through in a “perfect way” – however what is the price? Many hours of voluntary work, which is not formally registered as such, even for internal purposes – there is an element of neglect of the voluntary emotional labour, but it can’t be said which is the bigger problem: the frustration from the lack of recognition of the additional work (bitterness, [*unintelligible*], feeling offended) or the moral conflict if the work is not done properly, but the boundaries are observed. Theoretically, people who take huge amounts of money for clinical work say professional boundaries should not be crossed, but in fact there are things which are above professionalism – moral and human values (Note 1-II, page 3).

How difficult it is to work with other people when violence is concerned is illustrated by the fact that even the members of the team who secondarily encounter the issues involved in this work (like ‘Martin Duncan’, the administrator of ‘YANG’) find this knowledge disturbing:

[I encounter violence] through the written definition – the one from the written materials we are disseminating. [...] I am actually more often translating the interaction [between a client and a counsellor when cases are presented at supervisions with foreign specialists]. When I am translating cases, sometimes, I feel extremely bad – when I am translating cases, but also some of the materials [produced by ‘YANG’]. I think that even only reading them affects me in the same way, but my work is to translate them, not simply to read them. If I had to simply read cases, perhaps I wouldn’t read them. But because they *have* to be translated...in the sense that my encounter with these cases is not very willing. Perhaps in a certain way I have to identify myself with both the counsellor and the client in order to translate [the session] (Interview 3-III, page 1).

As the anxiety raised by the issue of violence and by working with severely traumatised people who cannot cope with the powerful feelings that overwhelm them, the mechanisms through which an organisation like ‘YANG’ copes with it are very specific, crucial and clear: professional standards and good practices in teamwork.

4.4. Teamwork.

The structure of ‘YANG’ consists of three sub-structures with separate but interdependent teams: the Help-line – which is the ‘gate’ of the organisation, the Emergency Unit – which is its connection with the practical aspects of the reality

with which they work and the core team where the projects are developed and longer-term psychotherapy is provided. The Help-line provides anonymity to those who call, information, emotional support and appropriate referral. The people who need emergency practical support are referred to the Emergency Unit and those who are ready to think about their situation are referred to the psychotherapeutic programmes. There is also a majority of people who are not referred to either of the programmes – those who call and need only some emotional support to deal with the problematic situation or whose requests can be addressed only by other organisations and institutions. The Emergency Unit does a lot of emotional work in terms of crisis intervention, but also provides links with other social services and relevant organisations. As ‘Laura King’ says in my third interview with her, ‘the core team of the organisation works with the psychological and the political reality whereas the Emergency Unit works with the social reality’ (Note 6-2-III, page 1). This is confirmed by ‘Ana Brown’ in my first interview with her, who says that ‘the long-term programmes work with the inner reality and the transference to expand the clients’ capacities whereas the Emergency Unit intervenes in reality to help clients, who are in a state of a crisis and because of this cannot act effectively in reality’ (Note 7-II, page 1). ‘There is a tendency of every unit’, she further explains,

to become more and more independent. There is a tendency towards “specialisation” at the organisation: the initial practice was that in different situations one person was taking on different roles – once a social worker, once a therapist, once a lobbyist; the future, the vision is that different departments emerge and develop, a kind of institutionalisation occurs (ibid, page 2).

Apart from the different structures, the containing framework consists of a set of procedures ensuring a team approach. Team meetings, consulting on cases/clinical meetings, group supervisions and trainings on professional skills, explains 'Ana Brown' in the framework of the third observed seminar, are the four components of the mechanisms through which the 'YANG' practitioners at the different departments increase their efficiency, solve problems in their work, monitor their practice and improve the services they provide (Presentation 3-3-V). By 'team' they mean the members of staff, who are united by a common goal, have a common workplace and 'communicate about the concrete work task(s)', she further clarifies (ibid, slide 2). Thus, the team is not a social group, because it is always connected with the need to complete a particular job. Nor is it a therapeutic group, because the main goal of the work is not to solve the individual or personal problems of the members, nor their interpersonal relations. In my observations, the team approach is also a way to carefully think issues through and to share responsibility. All four building blocks of this team approach are based, it seems to me, on the idea of openness, trust and partnership. This is expressed in the format of implementing them – at all events the members of the team sit in a circle without tables, desks and other obstacles between them. At the same time, there is always one person who is in charge of facilitating the discussion, usually the most senior in terms of decision-making or the most experienced professional in the case of the group supervisions.

The team meetings are focused, according to 'Ana Brown', on those aspects of the work which appertain to the management of activities and their administration as well as to the politics of the organisation and the programmes of the service (ibid, slide 4). According to my observations, 'YANG' has three types of such meetings.

The general one is held every Monday with all members of staff, including the coordinator of the Emergency Unit. The managers' team meeting is also held on Mondays before the general meeting and the decisions taken there are reported to the whole staff. There are also less planned team meetings around concrete tasks where the people who work on this task are gathered – for example, if some prevention material has to be developed or a particular event planned. Unlike in the rest of the meetings, here the team does not discuss the practice and work with clients. These events have a daily agenda. They are much more focused on a working task than on the emotional aspects of the work.

The clinical meetings dedicated to discussing clients are held twice weekly. The discussion focuses on particular cases. These are new cases to which a counsellor has to be appointed for a therapist or a case manager or difficult cases that need a follow-up. As 'Ana Brown' explains,

the case is presented so that all members of the group can be included as sources of help about the work on the case and the choice of strategies for intervention; the team is **not** used as a resource for the development of the consultant's professional skills, [because] the goal of the discussion is the improvement of the quality of the social service. (ibid, slide 5, *her emphasis*)

The clinical meetings are also used for the analysis of the cases and more general trends in order to inform the general strategy of the team. The main function of the clinical team meetings, in my observations, is to build jointly a hypothesis about the key emotional conflict of the client and the key obstacles at improving her situation together with outlining a plan how to address them. As it can be seen from this description, the first type of clinical team consultation serves to build initial hypotheses about the client and his or her case that is used to help the team

in deciding who is the most appropriate counsellor to do the in-take consultation. The task of the counsellor is to prepare for the first meeting (especially if a team with representatives of other agencies is already set up or is to be set up), to check this hypothesis with the client and/or through observations and to motivate the client for longer term work if necessary. Following the in-take assessment, in a second team consultation the team is used again to develop hypotheses about what the action plan and the goals to be discussed with the clients should be. The clinical team discussions are also used to qualitatively analyse the team members' practice in the process in which it occurs. Although 'YANG' collects and often presents statistical data about the number and profile of their clients, the team does not rely very much on this type of data. As 'Martin Dunkan', the administrator of 'YANG' explains: 'It is very difficult to coordinate the data collected in the different units. Also, sometimes there are technical difficulties when filling in the data – e.g. instead of 1 the counsellor presses 11, which spoils the final figure' (Note 3-II). Consequently, the clinical meetings are also used as a monitoring tool regarding the quality of the work and the trends that require a change in the current practices.

A specific form of consultation on cases is the multi-disciplinary team. The needs of survivors of violence are wide and often require the combined efforts of many specialists from various agencies. One of the most significant achievements in the work of 'YANG' and its partners are good practices in this area. 'YANG' works since 1997 to raise awareness about the specifics of trauma in survivors of violence with the aim of improving the response of other professionals to their needs. 'The issue is no longer a topic taboo', says 'Margaret Dean', a coordinator of the Emergency Unit,

and many professionals have passed successfully our training modules, which results in more appropriate treatment. For example, nowadays it is very possible that psychiatrists would make the diagnosis of a Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder rather than of various psychiatric conditions as it has been the case in the past. In working meetings, seminars and conferences we work together with other professionals to improve the referral and communication procedures between the service providers involved. Nevertheless, as it is difficult to train all working professionals, for many it is still difficult to understand the problem and to acknowledge the victims' specific needs, which sometimes leads to a lower level of their response (Note 1-II, page 1).

'Lucy Greenberg', a Coordinator of the Social Programme also observes that there is a significant difference in the quality of multi-disciplinary teamwork when the partners are already trained by 'YANG' and when they are not (Note 2-II). This is so not only because the training seminars increase sensitivity, provide knowledge and develop skills, but also because they help in making the relationship between the 'YANG' practitioners more humane and because they are motivating other practitioners. 'Margaret Dean', the coordinator of the Emergency Unit, presented to me the following case as an example of a successful teamwork consultation:

E. was 30 when she contacted 'YANG'. She had a 1,5-year old son and was 7 months pregnant. She contacted the organisation with a letter through an NGO in another country on occasion of violence from her partner, who in fact has helped her to escape from trafficking. To escape this new situation of violence she returned back to the country. After she was accepted in the Emergency Unit, she was mostly speaking about her relations with her partner, which became considerably troubled when he has learned from her parents

that she is diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. After this the incidents of domestic violence have gotten more frequent and more drastic. That is why she [has] decided to contact the police and to come back to the country. Another important area in the counselling process was the difficult relationship with her parents. She thought that the diagnosis she has, had prompted them to intervene in all her decisions, including about the children and to force her into treatment. She also thought that it was this tense relationship that brought her to the decision to leave them and to become a prostitute. Following this decision she has been involved in trafficking. Her main fears on arrival back were that her parents will send her to forced treatment and will separate her from her children. She rejected medical treatment of her condition, due to the side effects. The contradictions in representing her relationship with her parents directed the work of the counsellor towards working with the anger and bitterness she felt towards them, which led to encouraging her to view them more realistically and to even contact them. In a joint session with the parents it became clear that actually they are very supportive and understanding and wish to help her to raise her children. A multidisciplinary team was formed that consisted of a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, family therapist who works with the families of people with schizophrenia, social workers from the Child Protection Department regarding the care for the children and the case manager from 'YANG'. In a multidisciplinary team meeting a plan for coordinated action was developed, including how to support the improvement of the contact of E. with her mother who was provided with a consultation about E.'s condition and her needs related to the psychiatric condition. As a result of the

successful intervention, E. accepted her diagnosis, started appropriate medical treatment, returned back to her native town with her parents where she continues working with a psychologist and a psychiatrist.

Thus, it can be seen how important it is to achieve good coordination between the various specialists to obtain small but important changes in the lives of their clients. In this case, the factor that has made E. vulnerable to violence has been her medical condition and the difficulties of her family to support her adequately. It became clear that she actually has more personal resources – both inner and in terms of a supportive network than it appeared on the surface. The team consultation combined with individual counselling helped to empower her by strengthening her own more realistic vision, by facilitating the contact with her family and by involving the specialised services that can help her to take the best possible care for her children.

Another important component of building a containing framework is the group supervision of the ‘YANG’ team. Group supervisions are held at various intervals – sometimes every week, but also depending on the availability of experts external to the organisation. According to ‘Ana Brown’ in the same presentation, ‘the focus is on the consultant, whereas the case is in the background; the team is a resource for the development of the professional skills of the consultant; the goal is the professional development and refinement of the consultant’ (Presentation 3-3-V, slide 6). Often the professionals who carry out the supervision are foreign experts – thus, experience from abroad is adapted to the local practice of the organisation taking into account the specifics and peculiarities of the local context. Group

supervisions also help the team to learn from each other's experience as well as from the group supervisor. Not least, group supervisions are a way to reflect on the actual practice and sometimes on the procedure and policy of the service. Thus, they serve to facilitate the communication within the team for the purposes of increasing efficiency and to monitor the quality of the services provided.

The trainings on professional skills constitute a form of continuous professional education. The focus is on a particular problem in the work or professional topic where the presentation of cases serves as an illustration of the problem under study. Preliminary preparation is necessary – a relevant article is selected and presented, an external expert is invited, etc. The overall goal of this event is the enrichment of the understanding of a particular problem. An example of such training is the training on setting up a shelter which has been requested by many organisations, another example is the training on working with ‘difficult’ cases which I have observed. Although at first glance it seems a rather naïve request since it defines the problematic group only vaguely, this was understood by the ‘YANG’ trainers as a request to learn how to work with their own emotions of being overwhelmed by various groups of clients. Of course, the problems were further broken down into ‘work with substance abuse’, ‘work with psychoses’, ‘work with adolescents’, etc but the focus that crystallised was on the emotions of the practitioners themselves which were very similar in each of the subgroups of clients.

Each training that ‘YANG’ practitioners implement for other practitioners is unique and is a product of the constellation formed by various available written materials, the needs of the target group as grasped by the trainer, the interactive

and experiential techniques employed and the experiences of the participants as reflected upon *post-factum*. What ‘YANG’ practitioners try to do is to transfer certain relational experiences through activities, narratives, descriptions and some literature they are using in the hand-outs. Thus, they are trying to reconstruct different elements of both violent and non-violent relationships between people. The training seminars are actually about ‘interaction... communication.... connection’ (Interview 7-III, page 13). ‘Teresa Darko’ describes this process in the following way:

How do I prepare myself for a training? I am mobilising myself and I am mobilising all the ‘crutches’ – [written] materials, which in my view ‘talk’ in a good way. After I have mobilised myself, I think about the need of the group [*damaged*] and what technique to use to transfer [what I want to say] – [these can be very different techniques]. I use these techniques passing via their own experiences, through how are their own experiences reflected afterwards – because one is affected somehow by working on violence [...] Sometimes [the product is] a narrative [lecture], sometimes rather a discussion, sometimes we are searching together for a meaning. The most important is to find the technique that will reach the experience [meaning the tacit knowledge of the training participant – *my note*] (Interview 3-III, page 2-3).

This tacit knowledge is both the basis and the goal of the implemented trainings:

We ask them about their experience, I mean how and what do they encounter, and if you listen to their words it turns out that their experience is very limited, as if they don’t have any victims of trafficking, violence, etc of sexual violence and then what we do is to give the floor to those who have experience. We also ask them to write stories, diaries,

etc and they again use their experience to do [these tasks] (although they say they've got no experience). But we also give them many things which illustrate our experience, I mean concrete examples to illustrate concrete behaviours, symptoms (Interview 7-III, page 11).

This importance of experience for achieving the learning goals requires establishing a great degree of trust with the participants in the training seminars in order to help them to use their personal experiences in a constructive way:

when we were talking about the adolescents and all this, [the participants] passed through the experience with their own children. In the sense that at a certain point, the training [seminar] was redirected towards how they relate to their own children and the 'violence' there, I mean when they lie, when they don't [lie], with what aim, etc. and how do they [link] this with their work, and this was, I don't know, very valuable for these people [...] they started to feel very satisfied that they can work on these topics with the children, in the sense that there is a seemingly accessible way, which appeared interesting to them and they decided that it can be interesting for the children as well and that it will work out this way (Interview 7-III, page 11).

When training representatives of other organisations, it is also important not to take an expert position and to impose a ready-made model of a technique or approach on them, but to set other goals: to become clear that it is not possible to work on violence without a space for thinking; to discuss the differing viewpoints regarding the prevention of violence [or the recovery of the victims] of the two organisations; to learn to recognise violence and to contain it as well as to generally

increase the sensitivity towards it (Note 6-II-3). In this sense, what can realistically be achieved in a single training may seem very little but is in fact a lot:

[Although I imagine that few of the participants would try to implement in practice the projects they have developed in the framework of the training], from what they say, and it depends on the person, it becomes very individual at a certain point. Such and such person, who is interested in this and that issue, why a girl does so and so, after this [analysis] has learned certain things and has found an explanation for the girl's behaviour and has calmed down that the girl doesn't lie and now this is going to help her [the practitioner] personally to understand her [the girl] better and to be able to work with her (Interview 7-III, page 4).

All these events – team meetings, clinical consultations, group supervisions, and training seminars on concrete problems and skills - help the team to take decisions in a democratic and professional way and on the basis of careful consideration of a variety of factors, including by incorporating theory into practice. By providing a space to think through problems, observations, events they enhance the practitioners' understanding of their partners, clients and work in general. Thus, they help anxiety and other painful emotions not only to be contained, but to be used for the purposes of understanding. A very important individual and more private space that is further provided to counsellors is individual clinical supervision. In the next section, I will try to outline the components and processes in this particular aspect of building a containing framework the way in which the practitioners see it.

4.5. Individual clinical supervision.

The practice of supervision is surrounded by misunderstandings, explains 'Ana Brown' in her presentation in the framework of the seminars (Presentation 3-3-V,

slide 12). People often think that the main goal of supervision is surveillance of the staff's work and that it leads to sanctions. It is also commonly considered that only junior staff, with no experience have to use it and even that it will be the inexperienced staff members who will ask for it. By contrast, 'YANG' practitioners argue that the main goal of supervision is professional development and support, that there cannot be any punitive measures in supervision, that everyone working with people needs supervision and that it should be an established rule and a standard of work. The individual clinical supervision is implemented regularly on a weekly basis and the framework is similar to that of individual psychotherapy. The sessions are fifty minutes long and are implemented again in a spirit of safety, security and stability. The setting is also the same as that of the work with clients and usually the same counselling rooms are used. In terms of content, 'Ana Brown' explains, the sessions have five aspects: discussion of the client's problems in the context of interrelations between the consultant/client; examination of the therapeutic strategies and interventions; discussion of the therapeutic process and interrelations; counter transference; and discussion of interrelations between the supervisor/supervisee in the light of the work on the case (ibid, slide 14).

The functions implemented by supervision are educational, supportive and empowering, and managerial/administrative. 'Brown' further elaborates on them by first clarifying that the educational function is carried out by supporting the professional development. This includes 'assimilation of specific skills and knowledge; the development of understanding of the influence of personal style and personality on the work with clients; and the support of understanding of group relations and the use of teamwork' (ibid, slide 15). The individual clinical supervision supports and empowers the counsellor by acknowledging progress,

encouraging and rewarding, but also by at least three other approaches. It 'supports the consultant to cope with the stress and to identify its symptoms; gives the opportunity for the team members to express their feelings of anger, depression, confusion in a safe environment; and normalises their mistakes (every person makes mistakes)', which allows the supervisee to learn from experience (ibid). In the administrative sense, the supervision 'secures the attainment of the organisation's goals; secures quality of work with clients; distributes and utilizes resources effectively; evaluates the work's effectiveness; secures a good work atmosphere and provides ongoing support for the staff and decreases stress' (ibid.). Hence, the individual clinical supervision is a means of professional development that is based on learning, stress resistance and improved organisational functioning.

Although the process of supervision is close to that of individual psychotherapy it is also quite different because the focus is not the personality of the supervisee but those aspects of his or her inner world that are related to the professional role he or she implements. Consequently, the positioning of the supervisor is also different. As one of the participants in the fourth seminar dedicated to issues of supervision presents, the supervisor appears as a teacher, a facilitator, a consultant and an expert who uses theoretical, technical and procedural knowledge. Furthermore, the goal of supervision is to foster certain qualities in the supervisee. These are summarised by 'John Smith' as 'keenness of observation, ability to make associations, ability to synthesise and flexibly analyse concepts; ability to express the meaning of what is being observed' (Presentation 1-4-V, slide 3). He further quotes authors who stress the importance of personal inner integrity that allows the counsellor to identify with many people, to experience appropriate feelings and express adequate warm relations without a feeling of fear. Another key skill to be

developed is the understanding and usage of symbols. Each supervisee, says 'Smith', passes through various stages in his or her view what is useful for the client. Thus, supervision is seen as a journey of understanding that is guided by the supervisor as a more experienced practitioner. At the same time it is crucial that the individual clinical supervision provides a space for learning, exploration, support and development.

Another very important factor in delivering psychotherapeutic services is the counsellor's own psychotherapy. Although this is not an official requirement of the members of the team, most of them have their own psychotherapy. This is useful not only as a way to take better care of oneself but also helps improving the skills as a counsellor. The personal psychotherapy, explains 'Ana Brown',

makes you more aware of your own traumas caused by various degrees and forms of violence (because everyone has suffered one or another form of violence, it is actually the different traumas that shape us as unique personalities) and their consequences (the traumas are actually the various failures of us and our environment to cope with violence, difficulties and obstacles). These are reflected in the ways in which we react to our present difficulties and problems... The aim of the therapy is to teach the client alternative models. But also it makes you more aware of what it means to be in the position of a client or patient (regardless of how you are going to label it) – you tend to press your clients less, you are not so impatient to achieve change, you don't "bombard" the patient with interpretations and you don't rashly "feed back" the experience of the relationship with him/her (Note 7-II, page 3).

5. Linking levels of communication.

5.1. A 'Bottom-up' approach.

In a publication of another similar organisation entitled *Life Skills Manual*, the practitioners elaborate on the reasons why studying violence is important by emphasising the preventive and healing effects at both individual and social level of the study of violence:

The study of violence is important so that its occurrence in interpersonal relations can be limited. The knowledge of the mechanisms of a violent relationship allows individuals to react and to protect themselves when they feel threatened with getting involved in such a situation. The truth about the mechanisms of violence and suffering of the victims allows for increased public awareness and non-acceptance of abuse. This knowledge provides an opportunity to recognise the perpetrators and to decrease the possibility of violence. Additionally knowledge of violence allows for improved work of the institutions, by introducing norms and rules of relationships which will decrease the chances of abuse and practice of violence. Lastly, the study of violence enables its victims to cope with the consequences. (AAF, 2006:3)

Thus, the study of violence can be seen as a part of the system of violence, one that is able to re-direct both the occurrence of the phenomenon and the process of coping with its consequences.

'YANG' was established in the 1990s as a service that will provide psychosocial support to women who have experienced domestic and sexual violence. It quickly gained recognition by other NGOs and the first clients who had been rescued from trafficking were referred to the organisation from abroad. Consequently, together with another NGO joined an international network for prevention of trafficking.

Initially, the labour division envisaged 'YANG' to implement the social assistance and the prevention campaign, whilst VAD had the lobbying campaign to carry out. This shows how since the very beginning 'YANG' was trying to position itself solely as a non-governmental service provider. Despite its resistance to get involved in political activities, the pressures of its own work were forcing the team to expand both in terms of numbers and in the scope of its activities.

On one hand, at the time there were just a few organisations promoting good practice principles in providing psychological and social services in the mental health area. There was a group of five organisations and several practitioners (mostly active psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who were also teaching at the leading universities). On the other hand, the mid-1990s were the time when feminist movements broadly propagated the need of organisations working on private forms of violence and facilitated their establishment in as many countries as possible. To get recognition, however, 'YANG' had first to popularise and promote the principles of community service, so the organisation launched its first lobbying projects.

On the other hand, a year later it became clear that the programme cannot be implemented by both organisations. The other organisation was relying on classical principles of lobbying and campaigning, as well as on principles of journalistic work. For 'YANG', following its experience in the area of domestic violence, campaigning had to be anchored in the experiences of the survivors and they were available in their most authentic form through the counselling sessions and the communication during the whole process of psycho-social support. Thus, the organisation took over the whole programme and expanded its team with more

professionals who were also participating in the team discussions of clinical cases and some of them were also working with women who have experienced violence. This illustrates one of the key principles of the so called 'YANG' model that brings together work with real people and their sufferance and policy making on different levels, prevention and training, in which sequence each activity is based on analysis of real cases. In practice, this means that the same practitioners who work with clients would be also developing the projects and other lobbying and preventive documents. In addition, they will implement training seminars and participate in working groups analysing the current legislations and developing national action plans and proposals for changes in the legislation representing the interests of the survivors and the potential victims.

In doing so, the practitioners at 'YANG' proceed from the individual and the particular towards the general and the principle; they adopt what they call 'a bottom-up approach' – they begin with individual experiences in order to understand the general principle and what should be done to address the problem. Being a human phenomenon, in their practice violence is seen just as a category that facilitates the translation of individual experiences into the language of policy-making. Understanding the phenomenon is made possible by understanding the individual and his or her dynamic relation with others, including with the context and the whole network of relations that have made the occurrence of the problem possible, hence – where the solutions for solving it lie.

The process of understanding violence for 'YANG' practitioners begins with talking and negotiating with the person who has requested their services. This process can be illustrated by the following summary, presented by 'Laura King':

as a social and clinical worker I meet the clients [survivors of violence], to discuss with people who are referred here how and with what we can help them; this means to understand what happens to them, what the risk is for them; what their experiences are with a view towards what happens with them; and all this is to be considered in the light of what we understand as violence and to make sure that there is no risk for the life or health of the woman or her children in the family or in the couple. And after making an assessment of her situation, including of her preferences, to negotiate how we are going to interact with each other and to undertake some of the possible actions related to making connections with different institutions in order to resolve in any direction the situation related to violence with a view towards the expectations of the woman regarding what she expects to happen as a result of our work...(Interview 7-III, page 1).

Being a crisis interventionist is associated with the feeling of 'being overwhelmed by the expectations of the client to intervene in the reality' (Note 6-II-3). For example, the woman comes from a village in the countryside. She believes that the only way to stop the violence is to run away – she wants accommodation, a job, and money for herself and for her children (ibid.). The same interviewee further explains that the relationship with the client is based on various negotiations of the best action plan to help her: negotiation of the opinions about the client with the other team members, negotiation with the client herself (they practice client-centred counselling) while at the same time balancing between re-structuring the inward reality and social intervention. All this presents a huge emotional workload (including regarding her relationship with other institutions) which 'goes wasted if

the client doesn't feel that it is important' (ibid.). Nevertheless, the material circumstances also play a significant role in planning the needed intervention.

Thus, the development of general strategies and policies begins 'from the bottom'. In this sense, the strength of 'YANG' approach is in bringing together the individual and the social within the practice of each individual team member. 'Kate April', for example, a psychotherapist and a PR of 'YANG' describes her work as follows:

Primarily, I identify myself through the work with clients, because its volume increased significantly, at least for me, over the last years and that is in terms of both – the number of clients and the duration of the work with them and may be thirdly awareness also increased. So, this is the main thing with which I am identifying myself. The other thing I am doing in 'YANG' [...] is the [work with] media. I am trying to re-negotiate this work with colleagues so they would speak with them, because I don't want to do this at all and I have to overcome myself in doing so. What else I am dealing with? I am dealing with institutions and NGOs. How do I do this? Everyone is doing this, moreover, [that] there are already people [in the organisation] who are coordinating projects on their own, but usually, especially when launching the new projects, we use people who already work with clients. So this is what I am doing. The last thing I am doing is supporting the coordinator of the Emergency Unit (Interview 5-III, April 2006, page1).

In this process of working simultaneously at the individual, the organisational and the social and political level, the main tool is each counsellor's transformative work. The following vignette illustrates what I mean in the words of one of the

informants, who has both a substantial experience in working psychoanalytically with victims and the experience of lobbying on the highest political level for their interests:

I am in both positions – to work in the counselling room and to go constantly to different places and to speak. [...] I am meeting commissioners, etc. [...] These people, they ask what the situation is with trafficking, etc...and this is when I experience in myself this [process of] translation (but also with our institutions), this translation of the personal experience towards the social level. The same happens in interviews with journalists – although they know that I want to speak about prevention, they still want something concrete. You are right that “YANG” is a place where all these things come together from the different levels, but at the end of the day they come together in us, in our minds. And this is the important thing for me: all the time when I am meeting these important people [EU commissioners, ministers, other decision- and policy-makers and journalists], I am proceeding from a specific form of self-confidence – I am not a researcher, but I’ve got very concrete things to share [from my clinical work]. So this is it: on one hand you can speak at the level of the everyday experience, on the other – you have to translate this everyday experience into the language of politics, policy, legislation (Interview 10-III, page 1).

This process of involvement in policy-making at the highest political level is implemented on the basis of a combination of lobby work through the media and networking with the institutions and through the work with them on concrete cases. By the time I did my fieldwork the team was satisfied with the legislative changes achieved up to then. With the involvement of ‘YANG’ various laws related

to violence protection were developed and adopted by the state. Their development, 'Sharon Cross', psychotherapist and director of the organisation explains, required 'a huge amount of enthusiasm and expense of energy' (Memo 7-I, page 1). The new and even more demanding task has become to facilitate the process of implementing these laws in practice. As the same informant puts it in her next interview with me:

When I look back, and when I am recollecting, when we started, it was hard at all levels. In the sense that we had to help each other in order to be able at all to talk about violence. Now, after 10-11 years, I can say that at both the individual and the social level it can be talked about, the media themselves, the people know, talk. The talking, however, is still socially desirable, so to say. It depends on the individuals who are beginning to talk – if they are educated, they are interested and can talk in details. If they adopt a different attitude they speak about it secretly and in public they present it in a socially desirable way. And the big difficulty, for example with the law about domestic violence, is that we as think tanks, as pioneers together with some other organisations working with victims, we managed to pass a law, which was stuck for around two years in Parliament precisely because of the same reason, because at least 50% of the people – as shown in the sociological polls, I can show you the last research by the Centre for research of the public opinion - 50% of the people still cannot understand why there should be a law against domestic violence and think that the state should not be involved in private matters. In other words, we managed to do something which is at the edge, i.e. we made something which we managed, overstraining, to make it happen [...]. With our efforts and under external pressure, these laws happen. Now, in order to work these laws, there really is a need for the bigger part of the people to think that they have to work. But it turns out that they don't think this way at all.

They secretly say, especially certain groups of people, that they are prostitutes [victims of trafficking], the same way 50% of the people continue to think that the women victims of domestic violence are [in this situation because of their own fault]. So it is still very difficult. It is still very difficult and we only think that the things are easier because there are laws. It is true that we can rely on them and say 'do your job' and to some degree including the police officers are trained by their resources and by ours to intervene for example with the law for domestic violence on the side of the woman. And then you have the legal basis to press, to lobby, to require, which gives a slightly bigger chance to the victims of domestic violence. But in certain situations, it still remains difficult [...] There are some changes, there are many people who already think in accordance with our opinion, they speak and act like us. But there is this [...] that is left over from the [past], to agree on the surface, while in fact you are totally ignoring and you just pretend that you agree, I begin to notice this as a phenomenon related to violence. (Interview 9-III, page 1-2).

Working with the attitudes is the most important effort 'YANG' practitioners make. In this process, they rely very much on the vocabulary developed by recent psychoanalytic studies. They see in it a bridge between the experiences of the survivors, the common sense and the language of politics. As 'Ana Brown' explains:

I think that what I am trying to say is that it is very difficult to look in your self and understand [at a commonsense level] when you encounter self-destructiveness and destruction of the connections. I am trying to employ this let's call it "psychoanalytic" language and jargon in order to translate all the accompanying experiences into an intelligible humane language. [Because when developing a policy], one has to have a specific

attitude supported by adequate knowledge what happens with the people when they have experienced such violence (Interview 10-III, page 1).

To achieve this change of attitudes through lobbying, 'YANG' practitioners combine work on concrete cases, work in multidisciplinary teams, work with the public and policy- and legislation-development. The focus of communicating with other practitioners and lobbying for each particular case is not violence but the needs of the clients and what can help them to re-build their personal and social situation in a manner free of violence:

Part of our job is to understand what we expect from different institutions as something that has to be done for this particular person...The focus is actually not on the fact that this woman has experienced violence rather it is about what her needs are and what has to happen and what has to be done around her [social situation] (Interview 7-III, page 4).

'Lobbying', 'Margaret Dean' says, 'should not be aggressive and critical, but should appeal to the beautiful sides of being human' (Note 1-II, page 3). However, in extreme cases, there are no problems in asserting and insisting both formally and informally on behalf of their clients (ibid.).

Regarding the institutions, the first and the main thing that has to be done and which in my view is done, is sensitising. To avoid the situation, in which – this is a real case – a child comes to a kindergarten every day with blue marks and complains to the official who says: "What do you want? Your mother is buying you ice-cream!". This type of practices shouldn't be tolerated at all and what the institutions should do is to acknowledge that this thing [domestic violence] exists and that it is a

problem and to find ways and mechanisms which would allow the institutions themselves to contain the anxiety of being involved in a very emotionally charged situation of the family. An intervention which is also emotionally charged and in which you bear great responsibility. In my view, one of the reasons for the total denial of the existence of violence and the consequent refusal to intervene, is the basic – even Oedipus – anxiety that you enter a space which you shouldn't, the bedroom of the parents. And there should be mechanisms created within the institutions themselves that would help them to contain this anxiety. I.e. they shouldn't neither over-react in their intervention nor [*unintelligible, perhaps 'be passive'*] (Interview 4-III, page 5).

The focus of their lobbying efforts at the higher level is to participate in developing working mechanisms and practices: 'When there are good rules and mechanisms created...the people are not bad you see...And when they feel that they help to someone, they feel satisfaction and personal happiness. I think that this happens and I can see it [with many practitioners] (Interview 8-III, page 8).

If they don't like something, or if they think something shouldn't be done this way regardless of what you'd tell them [...] they wouldn't do it. [If you] tell them 'This should be done this way', this is definitely a lost cause. So social advocacy goes hand in hand with training and the creation of like-minded individuals...Actually, this is even more important, this is even more important...[...] [The goal] is to create a culture and an environment [*pause*] in order to reach the point when the process is irreversible. To be able to change [other practitioners'] attitudes, but the attitudes are the most difficult to change. (Interview 8-III, pages 12-13)

The Internet has become an important way of working with the public. ‘Martin Dunkan’, the administrator of ‘YANG’ and of its website and the internet forum explains that this aspect of their work is voluntary, spontaneous, and self-initiated: the idea about the website and the forum came from the number of email requests and the interest of readers of newspapers and magazines where information about the organisation had been published (Note 3-II). The forum is often used by clients and volunteers answer to them – thus, it has become yet another gate to the services (ibid.). However, he later explains, ‘[i]t is not necessary to have experienced violence in order to think about violence’ and most of the forum users are just people who have something to say about violence – the main idea is to create a community rather than to just discuss various topics (Interview 2-III, page 1). Consequently, according to the same source, there are 21 cases registered to be self-directed through the Internet in 2007 alone which is an increase from previous years.

The media representation of violence can often become an obstacle to understanding violence. This is so in the cases ‘where there is gossip, there is a perverse thrill and on the other hand there are these over-displayed lachrymose broadcasts or articles, which serve the [re-]victimisation of the victim, but through the complaint’ (Interview 4-III, page 6). ‘These are’, she further says,

the two extremes of ineffective rhetoric about violence – on one hand, the tradesman interest in the perversion, and on the other – the misunderstood compassion, this starting point does not lead to any form of thinking about the way out of this situation. This repeats one very black-and-white picture and doesn’t help in any way. Of course, however, the work of the media is not therapeutic and it couldn’t be, so I think that

what recently happens and what is good for the media to do, is to use the [professionally prepared people]... [The productive media discourse is] the investigating one that says ‘this is the problem, look how horrible it is’, which should be intended to help the community to work through what is happening, to create a space to speak, to think, instead of resulting in just stating “this happens everywhere”, [which] is not working through, [but a] denial. So if the biggest share of the media remain anchored in this position [of investigating], keep this position of theirs, I think that this is good news (ibid, page 7).

‘Kate April’ is the PR of ‘YANG’ and as such her work involves a great deal of consulting journalists on the materials they are working on. ‘I am’, she explains, ‘aiming at making the people to think a bit more deeply in general – from this concrete message and if nothing can come out from the material [article or broadcast], at least this concrete journalist [to start thinking more deeply]’ (Interview 5-III, page 4). The biggest problem, according to her is that there rarely are journalists who are really motivated to write on the issue. Which materials are best to use can be predicted from the approach of the journalist coming to the organisation for such a consultation:

They ask very concrete questions. They ask very concrete questions and the other thing that distinguishes them is that the people who are more thoughtful don’t want ‘to be given’ a client at any price. They’ve *got* a vision about the way of thinking, about the experiences of the clients and can write a *huge* lot of material...on this basis. There was recently a female journalist from one of the women’s magazines, can’t remember which now, she was very aware [of the issue] and then I was struck – she has written a *huge* article, full of interpretations on the issue, including key

experiences, why this happens, from where everything begins; I haven't told her, she did 'dig' them on her own. It is truth that my opinion was there too, but most of it was her own work, which means that she thinks about the issue. There was another woman who came and told me 'Listen, I've got personal experience with violence and I can give a lot. However, I need a professional opinion, to see how it is from a professional viewpoint'. She has also made a great article. But these are people who in some way have thought and they don't come to tell you "In fact what we need is one victim [whose story to present]" (ibid, pages 4-5).

Presenting personal stories to the public through journalists is not considered good practice by the practitioners in 'YANG'. However, they also see the positives of presenting cases:

I believe that the journalists are much more influential than us. One such story is very 'shaking', and written well or written by person who heard it first hand has a huge impact...but it is a short-term impact. I.e. it goes in the archive of this particular [newspaper], someone has been moved, the woman feels supported because five neighbours and one cousin call to tell her that they have read the material and 'how could he', 'how could she has the courage'... She feels helpful, because several other women will call us and seek help – all this has a response, which is significant. The difference is that it is short-term, nothing will be done in other aspects. But for her, for the woman herself – it is extremely useful and I strongly support women to talk as long as there is no *that* kind of a journalist on the other side' (ibid, page 5).

5.2. Adopting academic knowledge.

‘YANG’ is fully utilising academic knowledge and at the same time is actively engaging in adapting it to the local conditions and circumstances as well as in disseminating the outcomes. This includes a combination of theoretical, practical and policy-making knowledge. The organisation has actively participated in the development and implementation of key anti-violence laws. Not only was it a key factor in creating a supportive public climate for the acceptance of the laws, but it also took a key role in the working groups drafting the legislations and developing the regulations for their enforcement. Since the enforcement of the laws, ‘YANG’ continues its involvement by systematically monitoring the process of their implementation with a focus on the best interests of the victims. It actively participates in the work of the state coordinating body, developed under the law, influencing the plan for activities of the shelters and centres for survivors of trafficking in accordance with the ‘YANG’ model.

Not only partnerships and forums for exchange were intensively used, but members of the team studied abroad and took steps to put this experience into practice considering the specifics of the context in terms of both the organisation and the local context. In addition, the main programmes were established following training by the ‘original’ programmes, mostly in the UK and generally the programmes were informed by a careful review of the available literature that later on grew into several major projects (which are now almost taken for granted): the ‘YANG’ library, regular reading seminars combined with discussion of cases, literature research and translation of selected papers. On the other hand, since its very establishment, the organisation was disseminating knowledge and understanding to other organisations and groups both in the country and abroad.

This process started with the very establishment of the organisation, but was institutionalised several years ago.

A recently emerging trend is participating in research projects¹⁸. 'YANG' was among the research project partners that produced various researchers and reports. Traditionally, 'YANG' is a main point of reference for students' research and theses on the issues of violence. Members of staff of the organisation have received an advanced training in research skills in the MA and PhD programs of the leading national and foreign academic institutions.

6. Conclusions.

The core of the present project is an empirical exploration, an attempt to unpack the 'ideal' understanding instead of aiming at evaluation. It studies the practice of the non-governmental organisation 'YANG' that provides support to survivors of violence and works to create the conditions necessary for their recovery and re-integration. A key concept that bridges understanding violence and support to the survivors is that of trauma. The explorations of trauma allow understanding violence from the survivors' viewpoint and provide the opportunity to dynamically define violence and flexibly adjust the strategies to prevent and address it. These strategies – whether individual or at the organisational and societal level – require building a holding environment for the sufferers and a containing framework that prioritises understanding. In this chapter I have explored the ways in which both violence and trauma are approached by the practitioners at 'YANG' by creating a space for thinking and understanding at individual, organisational and social and

¹⁸ The research projects are reported here deliberately starting from the most recent and going backwards in time.

political levels. I have done so using individual interviews-as-conversations, group discussions with practitioners from three other countries, archival materials – project proposals, publications and training materials, as well as my own observations as both an observer and a participant.

The difficulties in defining violence in practical terms are addressed by my informants by focusing on the notions of harm and disintegration whilst acknowledging the dynamic, contextual, the subjective and intersubjective nature of violence. Violence for them is seen as a relational problem, a problem in the communication, as a lack of alternative resources – both within oneself, and within the interactions themselves be they inner resources or resources in the reality. Considering violence as a process while approaching it in practice, is a journey and a constant process of discovering, exploring and constantly re-negotiating the meanings behind violence, the traumatic symptoms and the present life. In addition, this refusal to ‘freeze’ the experience in a fixed definition provides an opportunity to keep one’s mind open and to ‘discover’ new forms of violence from what people have discovered (or are discovering) for themselves. Hence, the dynamics of violence requires also considering the various contexts in which it occurs but also a kind of triangulation through creating alternative contexts in which it is assessed – between the sufferer and his or her surrounding, between the client and the counsellor, between the counsellor and his or her supervisor and colleagues. A limitation of the practice I am exploring is that it has the resources to understand phenomenologically only half of the reality of violence – the perspective of the victims, hence this part of the thesis deals mainly with this aspect of the phenomenon of violence.

The concept of trauma facilitates the practitioners' access to the phenomenon of violence and allows not only defining flexibly violence, but also provides a framework, in which its various forms can be categorised, explored and understood. This concept also helps to understand the responses to violence to the degree that inner workings of trauma are seen as the roots of violence, its production and re-production in society. In this paradigm, trauma is seen as a set of mal-adaptive defensive mechanisms that serve to protect the ego from the overwhelming anxiety of experiencing or witnessing violence. Violence is seen as coercion, threats, emotional violence, isolation, devaluation, rejection and accusation, sexual and economic violence. At the surface, trauma appears in the form of confusion, suffering, fear, feelings of inferiority and mental instability, self-blaming, violation of the boundaries of the personal (mental and physical) space, dependency on the perpetrator(s). In children, violence should be seen not only in the actions listed above, but also in the lack of actions, in terms of neglect - all these result in detrimental effects on the physical and mental development. Further, through the prism of trauma, violence can be cut across axes of duration and perceived threat for life on one hand. On the other hand, its acuteness will depend on the involvement of the human factor – whether the violence has been caused intentionally by other human beings and with the involvement of the victim him or herself. These categorisations show that violence cannot be conceived independently of the nature of the various forms of violence, neither can it be separated from the individual and social context that all affect the direction, severity and duration of its consequences.

The concept of trauma is a psychoanalytically informed concept that challenges the stereotypical mystification of psychoanalysis. In the practice of 'YANG' psychoanalysis is a method rather than a theory, one that helps to understand the

subjective and intersubjective world whose dynamics is considered of primary importance for the human existence and functioning. This approach requires considering a personality structure that is seen as populated by inner objects that are exchanged by human beings in their interaction. In this sense the key to understanding violence and the work with trauma are considered the phenomena of transference/countertransference and that of defensive mechanisms. Inevitably, this approach is linked with considering pathology but in the sense of what lies behind the symptom – emotional or behavioural. Trauma thus is seen as a set of emotional reactions, of behavioural and relational mal-functions that are nevertheless a normative response to violence. Trauma has the capacity of building on previous traumas as well as to affect even those who are not directly involved in the situation of violence. It is a concept that bridges tacit knowledge generated in practice and observations with existing theories. Being focused on the inner world, it allows generalisability across cultures and contexts by employing a humane and commonsense language from the realm of emotions.

The experience of violence is one that transcends the usual human experiences and thus faces individuals and their surroundings with emotions, questions and experiences with which they are not equipped to cope. The exchange of these rough unbearable emotions results in a vicious circle, in which sufferers are victimised and re-victimised again and again not only by the direct perpetrators of violence, but also in society – often by the very practitioners who are supposed to provide support and protection. The development of a capacity to live with the traumatic experience requires a quality of the relationship with the surrounding that is expressed in the concept of the holding environment used by ‘YANG’ practitioners. The goal of the ‘YANG’ practitioners working in support of

survivors of violence is to provide an alternative personal, professional social and political environment, in which the painful emotions, confusing thoughts, maladaptive behaviours, destructive relationships and unbearable experiences can be thought through, integrated and transformed into more adaptive components. This environment is based on a focus on understanding the transference and countertransference in a context of safety, security and stability in order to contain the overwhelming anxiety raised by the disintegrative experiences of violence.

Thus, trauma as an effect of violence is seen as a relationist concept, a qualitative change, a process and a part of a complex system – so the way out of it should be similarly complex (see above). Safety, security and stability are created at the physical level as much as in the relationships – firstly with the counsellor and then by transferring the model of this relationship to reality with other significant people. Teamwork and individual clinical supervision provide the counsellor with his or her own space for thinking and understanding to enable him or her to hold the client until he or she develops sufficient inner strength to derive meaning and act adaptively in the world. This is done by using the organisation as a dynamic system as such a space for thinking, experiencing and understanding and as a container of the unbearable anxiety raised by facing phenomenologically violence. The framework for this to happen is provided by a teamwork approach: team meetings on administrative and policy issues, clinical consultations within the organisational team and in multi-disciplinary teams, group supervisions and thematic training seminar and by providing individual space in clinical supervision.

The knowledge derived in this containing framework is used not only to hold the sufferers and to help them integrate their painful experiences, but also to expand

the notion of a holding environment into the wider social and political environment. Individual psychotherapy and support has proven to have a limited effect if the context remains victimising and re-victimising. Thus, the 'YANG' practitioners were forced to intervene at the level of law-making and law-enforcement representing the viewpoint of the survivors and opening a space in which practitioners who support and protect survivors of violence can reflect on their practice and experiences. This has happened at both the level of adjusting the legislation to the needs of the victim and by working for developing attitudes in the practitioners that will enable the effective functioning of these laws. In doing so the practitioners proceed from the individual experiences translating them into commonsense language and the language of emotions and experiences in order to incorporate them into preventive and re-integration services and policies. Thus, one of YANG' strengths is that the same practitioners work at the individual, the social and the political level. In this process, they often adapt western knowledge and practices to the local conditions especially in terms of good practices in the areas of mental health, human rights and democratic principles.

CHAPTER IV. AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW: THE PLACE OF UNDERSTANDING IN 'YANG' PRACTICE

1. Introduction.

One aspect of understanding violence is to understand it from the victim's perspective. We have seen in the previous chapter that this process can be facilitated by the concept of trauma. As Hoffman (2005:36) says, 'the awareness of trauma seems at various times to surface and then subside until it is rediscovered with the next bout of violence and the next wave of sufferers'. The Fall of the Berlin Wall with the consequent breakdown of barriers to the travel of knowledge and ideas resulted in such a revitalisation of the explorations of trauma following the acknowledgement in post-socialist societies of the existence of violence. The introduction of theories and practices led to new viewpoints on the social realm, in one of which private forms of violence such as rape, domestic violence, bullying, trafficking in women and sexual harassment in the workplace were brought to the public domain. Spaces were provided to the sufferers to explore their experiences and to seek protection and recovery.

To understand the phenomenon of the organisations that brought about this change, we have to look at the origins of this approach both theoretically and politically. At the level of the content of their work, the practice of 'YANG' is shaped by a linkage with psychoanalysis and this is the knowledge they employ and disseminate. In terms of its functions, the organisation serves as a vehicle for democratic and human rights' values. The combination of these approaches is not unproblematic and many of the issues that confront 'YANG' practice require closer examination. In this chapter I will first provide an overview of the

developments that have affected the emergence of ‘YANG’ practice. From there I will proceed towards some of the issues that arise from my observations of this practice:

- What is the relationship between understanding and resisting violence?
- How does understanding differ from defining or describing violence?
- From the data it seems that violence is an intersubjective process – how can we discuss it in these terms?
- Why is understanding actually important when considering the interaction between a victim and the one who is trying to understand?
- What space for understanding is there in a context where the provision of material goods is considered paramount?
- In the context of a division of labour between those whose job it is to understand and those who are ‘doing things’, can we separate understanding from the practicalities of living?

Thirdly, this chapter deals with the consequent first-order theoretical questions: what is the relation between theoretical understanding and practical support given that the one is not possible without the other? In other words, how does the activity of understanding violence fit among other activities of mind: e.g. what is the relationship between understanding and thinking, what are the links of understanding with blame and forgiveness, how does understanding relate to judgement? An interesting observation that needed further exploration was that understanding lies in the middle between empathy and knowledge, that it is the mediation between subjectivity (empathy) and objectivity (knowledge). From here

the question about the ways in which understanding, action and intervention are interwoven arose.

The fourth part of this chapter deals with the *second order question*, which is: from the ways in which practitioners combine theoretical understanding and practical support, how can we (in the social sciences) develop our own sociological understanding of violence given that there is little agreement on what violence is and that we are working from a low base line in which violence is generally reduced to the discourse of violence?

2. Theoretical background of ‘YANG’ practice.

According to Herman (1998), one of the main authors that inform ‘YANG’ approach, the first theories of trauma are about the discovery of changes in the inner world that have been caused by external events and can be treated in a conversation. Below, I will summarise her argument. The first theories of trauma emerged in analysing the response to traumatic events of train engineers, middle-class women and war veterans in the XIX century. The ‘forgetting’ of these theories is related to the workings of economical, patriarchal, bourgeois and political factors as much as to the incapacity of consciousness to accept the unbearable experiences that constitute trauma. The re-emergence and development of these theories, on the other hand, is about restoring the dignity of the survivors, the normalisation of the experiences that follow trauma, and about naming a ‘problem without a name’ as in the case of the rape trauma syndrome identified as a result of the efforts of the 1970s women’s movements.

According to Herman, psychoanalysis originates in the XIX-century explorations by neurologists such as Charcot, Freud, Janet, and James of three modern-age maladies: engineers' malaise, middle-class women's hysteria and shell-shock in war veterans. These explorations resulted in making two big discoveries about the human mind. The first is that alterations of consciousness can exist, that is traumatic events can have a special type of effect on the mind - a 'dissociation' or a 'double consciousness'. The second is that these alterations can be treated by talking: Freud and Breuer called it 'catharsis', Janet used the term 'psychological analysis' and one of Freud's patients – Anna O. – simply called it 'the talking cure'. Behind all of these labels is the idea that the precipitatory events need to be brought into consciousness by putting them and the associated emotions into words (usually with the original intense feeling that accompanied them).

However, says Herman, these theories soon were forgotten. Traumatized railway engineers presented a financial threat: they were simply discharged whilst railway companies invested in research proving that trauma is just a way of evading duty. On the other hand, hysterical women were seen as cases of study but never as individuals: Charcot for example has often been accused by contemporary feminists of doing a 'vivisection of women under the pretext of studying a disease'. Freud himself abandoned his theory about the child sexual abuse as the origin of hysteria and replaced it with the seduction theory and the theory of the Oedipus complex. Not least, authorities maintained that war neurosis was a proof of inferiority: sufferers were subjected to dishonor, electro-shocks and were often shot dead for cowardness.

The concept of trauma, argues Herman, emerged from the ruins of these theories to restore the dignity of the victims and to name 'the problem without a name'. According to her, this process started with the work of Rivers (1917). He liberated the idea of a possible psychological trauma for men. In his work with traumatised soldiers he used the 'talking cure', while making them feel safe, and treating them with respect and dignity. In scientific circles, Kardiner (1939) was the first to promote the concept of trauma as a normative response to violent events by recognising that 'any man could break down under fire and that psychiatric casualties could be predicted in direct proportion to the severity of combat exposure'. However, it was not officially acknowledged until the 1980s, when the anti-war movement had initiated the recognition of psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war. The second significant event was when the characteristic syndrome of psychological trauma became a 'real' diagnosis with the American Psychiatric Association's categorisation of 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD). Meanwhile, the 1970's women's liberation movement brought the recognition that PTSD is most common among civilian women in their private lives: an issue taboo due to fear of public humiliation, ridicule, disbelief, shame. For the first time there is a recognition that trauma studies should also engage in social change. The discovery of a 'Rape trauma syndrome' (Burgess, 1972) was linked with the finding that, similarly to war veterans, victims suffer from insomnia, nausea, startle responses, nightmares or numbing symptoms - most of the symptoms resembled those described in combat trauma. Thus, the sufferers of non-heroic violence were recognised as equally deserving of attention, support and rehabilitation. Furthermore, this knowledge was used to start building an environment of acceptance and understanding in which the dignity of survivors of

violence can be restored and their capacities employed in order to overcome the debilitating consequences of violence.

Another important line of investigation related to trauma is pursued by authors who explore collective forms of violence such as the Holocaust. In addition to the issues already discussed, these forms of traumatisation raise further questions which are summarised by Hoffman (2005: 37):

Altogether, while we have studied the individual psychology of trauma intensively, we still do not perhaps understand enough about its collective aetiology, the external causes that produce it on a large scale. Why do certain kinds of war breed massive trauma and others do not? What are the specific agents in conditions of collective violence, of deep psychic damage? It may seem even indecent to ask such questions, or to look for nuances among modalities of violence. And yet the questions need to be asked if we are to think about actual forms of human behaviour [...] and about our moral and emotional responses to them. Indeed, the attempt to make distinctions, however troubling, may help us understand something quite important about the relationship between the meanings of human actions – moral, ideological, metaphysical and their psychic impact.

The reasons why a focus on trauma is often neglected when thinking of violence are complex, but one of the main is its unbearability for the human mind. 'Perhaps the very idea of trauma', Hoffman hypothesises, 'in its strong form, is too disturbing to keep constantly in mind' (2005:36). Phenomenologically approached, as trauma, violence threatens the very basics of our meaningful existence in the world – the needed safety, security and basic trust in the world around us. To facilitate the development of a capacity to live with such a knowledge in survivors

of violence, the practitioners in 'YANG' rely on building a 'holding' and 'containing' environment as presented in the previous chapter together with the arguments why such an environment is needed.

To understand the modus of linking various levels of communication in order to create such a holding environment, we have to go beyond our local context: what does an NGO mean? This, I believe, will help to understand better the forces and influences that affect the organisation beyond the feminist ideology and their own discourse of psychodynamic professionalism. The abbreviation is surrounded by lots of terminological muddles. According to Najam (1996), there are at least 49 acronyms with which NGOs are known world wide. In fact, the same structures are known in the UK as voluntary organisations, which is perhaps linked to their historical evolution from church services and the associated Christian paternalistic values, whereas in the US, where the profit sector has been predominating traditionally, the emphasis is on distinguishing NGOs from the profit sector – hence the name 'non-profit' organisations. However, these labels also bear different connotations in public opinion – in the UK the term 'voluntary' organisations also denotes that they are not professional as social services will be, while being 'non-profit' for some authors actually suggests that these organisations have a business-like character, but no commercial goals.

Clark (1991) distinguishes between six types of NGOs: relief and welfare agencies, technical innovation organisations, public service contractors, popular development agencies, 'grassroots' development agencies and agencies governing networks. In reality, however, most of the NGOs at present do all of these, which often affects their effectiveness and/or affects the people working there. Thus, whilst 'YANG'

started with the intention to become a public contractor and a service provider (and this is still the desired outcome of its work), meanwhile it had to engage in lots of other activities and indeed being recognised as a trustworthy partner, it had to also defend itself against other roles being imposed on it by outside pressures. To understand these pressures, we also have to understand where the donors – mostly West-European governmental programmes and charitable organisations – come from.

Until 1985 NGOs were rarely mentioned academically, but research since then shows an interesting history. The early NGOs originated more than 200 years ago, which is mostly linked to the struggles for independence in the south. It is there that issue-based organisations such as the anti-slave trade and peace movement originate. There was a second wave, this time in the north, after World War I, some associated with the Catholic Church (CARITAS), but also organisations like ‘Save the Children’, which were associated with the first Child Protection Laws. After World War II already ‘strengthened’ organisations like Oxfam (1942), Catholic Relief Services (1943), and Care (1945) expanded their relief work in Europe and moved into the 3rd world after the Welfare Act. In the 1950-1960s such organisations increased in numbers in the West and focused on poverty, modernisation and generally shifted towards grassroots organisations. This latter shift was an active attempt to address post-colonial critiques that NGOs based in the West often are not really adequate to local conditions and instead of bringing a change encourage unhealthy abuses. Thus, NGOs have built a reputation of being actors resisting oppression (especially poverty-related) while at the same time their efficiency when orchestrated from abroad has been under suspicion.

The academic and rather romanticised interest of the 1980s that perhaps partly lies behind the successful founding of 'YANG' is much more associated with the linkage of NGOs with democratisation processes in Eastern Europe. As Hemment (2007:49) summarises, the concept of civil society was central to the project of 'anti-politics', an oppositional stance that opposed the socialist state by addressing the individual. Though commonly, especially retrospectively read as a desire to *join* the capitalist West, according to her, the dissidents' civil society was an imagined 'third way' between communism and capitalism. She cites David Ost who describes that these East-European advocates saw civil society as a sphere of an expansive civic participation, a 'permanently open democracy', in which civic activity is 'based neither in the state nor in the market place, but in the vibrant political public sphere itself' (1990: 30-31). Confidence in civil society, Hemment says, was expressive of a longing for a moral and just society, governed by values that transcended dirty politics, where the individual was able to exercise his conscience and 'live in truth'.

In Hemment's explanation, this neo-Tocquevillean stance resulted in a strong 'civil society' propagation in the 1990s from both the right and the left: for the liberal policy-makers the NGOs would provide the needed balance between the state and the market whereas for neo-liberals, the NGOs were considered the 'third way' in providing social services to replace the ineffectiveness of state services. As one of the few anthropologies of recent NGOs shows, for local people in Eastern Europe, there was additionally the question of social responsibility: 'in the light of the collapse of state support, who should be responsible for guaranteeing citizens' welfare, for taking care of the old, the young, and the infirm?' (Hemment, 2007: 46). Not only did these organisations have to provide for the disadvantaged, but

since everyone was disadvantaged in one way or another, as Hemment also shows, the NGO sector was also a newly emerging job market for numerous highly educated and experienced professionals, who had been left unemployed after the democratization processes at the beginning of the 1990s.

From this viewpoint, it is easier to understand why big parts of the pressures on ‘YANG’ were directed towards implementing lobbying activities rather than simply towards education or victim assistance. Education and psychotherapy can help to create citizens – active subjects of democracy. But the other important component of democracy is the rule of law, which first requires adequate laws and corresponding policies that would enforce it. The abrupt social, political and economic changes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s revealed that former socialist states were neither legally nor in terms of human resources and other capacities prepared to meet the wide array of the aspects of the needs of their citizens and to face new challenges. Furthermore, these changes exacerbated most of the already existing social problems, especially those related to interpersonal violence and the position of vulnerable groups. On one hand, it became evident that many inequalities and aspects of interpersonal violence, especially those related to the personal sphere, are widely not recognised officially and are generally a topic-taboo while at the same time the same issues are being normalised, often justified and even in a way idealised in the popular imagination. On the other hand, tensions in these societies intensified due to increased poverty, polarisation, and everyday frustration. This intensification of tensions, in combination with the effects of undermining the rule of law both in reality and in the perception of citizens increased the level of interpersonal violence. The changes, however, also brought the potential for addressing these problems. Most importantly, not only

overt censorship and control over knowledge import from the West were banned, but lots of civil society groups were allowed to represent oppressed groups and to defend their interests. This provided the possibility for promoting a democratic society and a human rights approach by opening a space for considering the experience of countries with a longer history in addressing these issues in a democratic way.

3. Understanding and the practicalities of living.

It is in this theoretical and political framework that the practice of 'YANG' has developed. From the findings of its observation presented in the previous chapter it seems that understanding plays a crucial role in resisting violence in several ways. To begin with, by a focus on its interpersonal dynamics and communicational aspect 'YANG' helps individuals to recognise its first signs and to avoid it by replacing it with healthier ways of communication. When encouraged among members of the public and generally at the social level, the process of understanding helps to create an environment which is less tolerant towards violence, one that is more supportive to the victims with a view towards their recovery. Consequently, perpetrators can be identified and measures can be taken to prevent further violence. The increased awareness of violence and its dynamics results also in more efficient institutions. The healing effects of understanding help to overcome its consequences for the victims and to improve their wellbeing.

Understanding as I found it in 'YANG' practice is actually not simply an activity of mind but a quality of the environment and the relationships in this environment. In this sense it differs from defining or describing violence. The importance of the emotions and especially of the emotional exchanges as well as the importance of

the phantasy world and the exchange of phantasies is widely unacknowledged in both academic and working environments and yet in my observations these have turned out to play a crucial role in the process of understanding. ‘The “love” implicit in empathy, listening, and trying to understand, in nonseductive devotion to the task, the sense of full acceptance, respect, and sometimes the homely phenomenon of sheer dependable patience’ are emphasised in building a holding environment by Stone (1981:114) and his conclusion very much summarises what ‘YANG’ practitioners are striving for. The other critical element of the holding environment, as emphasised by the author of the concept, Winnicott, is its framework, or operating boundaries (Stringer, 2003). These boundaries are maintained at a symbolic level that considers and respects both the importance of personal integrity and that of the quality of the established or maintained supportive relationship between the client and the counsellor and the supportive network when multi-disciplinary teams need to be formed.

This approach of ‘YANG’ is developed on the basis of a view of violence as an intersubjective process. This raises the question of how we can discuss it in these terms. The idea that violence can be a mutual process allows the possibility for moralists to blame the victim. On the other hand, such an interpretation empowers the victim to re-gain control over his or her life. This contradiction lies behind the dynamics of re-victimisation which consists of both the victim and the environment blaming the victim to the extreme that some victims are stigmatised thus pushed to the margins of society and denied access to its resources. For ‘YANG’ practitioners the victim participates unconsciously in violence due to his or her cumulative trauma, which renders blame on him or her inadequate. ‘That is why the first task when facilitating the process of recovery is to take away the guilt

from the victim and this is how the Emergency Unit team intervenes', says 'Sharon Cross'¹⁹. 'The thesis that the victim can somehow participate in the violence is a very dangerous one when presented in public', confirms 'Ana Brown'. 'That is why, she further explains:

our main message to the media and the practitioners with whom we work is that the victim is not guilty of what has happened to her. However, the clients at the long-term therapeutic programmes come to us precisely with the request to explore their participation after the crisis is over and the blame has been taken away. Our view that violence is an intersubjective process is derived from the [psychoanalytic] school of object relations and its findings are confirmed in our practice. The cumulative trauma, the series of developmental traumas make victims more vulnerable to violence and for us the main way to prevent violence is by means of individual long-term psychotherapy. At the level of policy-making we always say that addressing one form of violence requires also dealing with other forms. [For example], preventing trafficking in women requires dealing with domestic violence...[because we have seen in our practice] that most of the victims of trafficking [have been abused in their families]'.

Thus, we have to consider that violence has many layers, the deeper of which is the unconscious with which psychotherapists deal whereas morality operates at the level of consciousness.

In this sense, understanding is important in the interaction between the victim and the one who offers to help. On one hand, it brings a relief for the victim because meanings are discovered and the knowledge about his or her own participation in violence helps to develop preventive and protective behaviour. However,

¹⁹ I have discussed the issue with 'Sharon Cross' and 'Ana Brown' at the stage of writing up, that is why their explanation is included at the discussion of the findings rather than at the chapter with findings.

understanding also requires a great amount of reflexivity and sensitivity by the side of the one who guides this process. When the person is in danger or overwhelmed by fear, anger and shame by recent incidence of violence, the knowledge about his or her previous traumata cannot be useful and constructive. The exploration of the previous traumas is only possible at a stage, in which the victim is safe and stable.

In many contexts the provision of material goods is considered paramount and little importance is invested in understanding. Unsurprisingly, one of the main difficulties is to open a space for thinking and understanding when the request usually is for a house or an income. Similarly for donors the improvement of the client is associated with measurable and observable achievements. However, from the examples presented by 'YANG' what they consider important is the change in perception, behaviour and personal strength. These are slow and difficult processes, which is unsurprising given that the clients of 'YANG' have to compensate for developmental failures in line with working through the consequences of the devastating violence they have experienced. On the other hand, if the basic needs are not covered, if one does not have a shelter and food, an income and stability, thinking and understanding is not possible.

That is why it is not possible to separate understanding from the practicalities of living. This is reflected in the structure of 'YANG' departments. The Emergency Unit, as they say, is focused on 'doing things' and intervening in the outer reality whereas the long-term programmes are focused on understanding and work with the inner world. However, they emphasise that the practitioners in the Emergency

Unit are ‘clinical’ social workers²⁰ to denote that the social worker also accounts for the importance of the inner reality and keeps an eye on the inner dynamics of emotions, cognition and phantasies. The psychotherapist on the other hand, often works in a network of other practitioners who help the client to solve his or her practical problems. In this process, the role of the psychotherapist in these multidisciplinary teams is to help the network not to lose sight of the emotional level while solving the material problems.

4. The place of understanding.

Theoretical understanding and practical support are interwoven in the practice of ‘YANG’ both with clients and with other practitioners and policy-makers. On one hand, ‘YANG’ practitioners identify themselves with their professionalism, which also implies that they are very much guided by academic theories. On the other hand, the practice constantly confronts them with the need to choose which interpretation is most appropriate and effective, to solve problems and to develop plans for action. Unsurprisingly, psychoanalysis – which is seen as a method rather than as theory – is chosen. However, they also emphasise that their practice is psychoanalytically informed rather than being pure psychoanalysis. The cases on which they work require a capacity to apply the theories flexibly and often the theories on their own cannot adequately address the concrete situation. That is why, they build hypotheses and these hypotheses are constantly being checked with the client as well as through the changes that happen as a result of their interventions. Thus they constantly keep an eye on what they call the process level – the dynamics of the relationship in terms of employed defensive mechanisms by

²⁰ ‘Clinical’ denotes also pathology and I encountered some organisations who call this type of worker ‘educator’ to avoid (rather unsuccessfully) a negative connotation.

both the counsellors and the clients as well as the phenomena that take place in the transference and the counter transference. Not least, however, they also consider what they call the content level – what is being said, what problems are presented and what their possible solutions are given the available resources.

Thus, understanding and thinking cannot be separated in the practice of supporting survivors of violence. Unlike other counselling situations, the risk and the danger are constantly present on one hand. On the other hand, the many traumas that have built on each other have formed a complex constellation, in which the red thread running through has to be followed with significant effort. Furthermore, the clients come because they got stuck in the complicated circumstances of their everyday lives. In this sense, thinking as problem solving, as being constantly alert, as accounting for as many factors as possible and the context is an activity of mind that cannot be separated from that of understanding. It means that not all of the counsellor's and other team members' thoughts can or should be shared with client, at least not immediately. An important skill is what is to be said when, at which stage the client will be ready to bear, to hear, to understand and to use the interpretation or the solution offered by the counsellor. Furthermore, the real skill is actually to provide a partnership-based discussion, in which the client can find the solution or reach the correct mutative interpretation on his or her own. Thus, understanding is an important aspect but not on its own – in most of the cases a lot of 'thinking under fire' is required as well.

Understanding and thinking about a situation of violence, especially with a survivor of violence, challenge the one who seeks to understand by confronting him or her with the temptation to judge. This is so because violence is morally charged both

as a life event and as a concept. It is difficult to stay and listen to the clients' expressed emotions while suppressing one's own emotions, frustration and often helplessness. It is equally difficult not to transfer the blame to the other side and to remain non-judgemental thus allowing for the own interpretations and judgements of the client to emerge from the mountains of moral judgements developed by society and by the clients' environment. Working with couples who have a problem with violence is one of the biggest challenges: 'working with couples', shares "Ana Brown"²¹, 'helps you to see literally how violence is developed in the accumulation of unbearable emotions transferred from one side to the other'. The temptation to judge with the consequent temptation to attribute guilt to the one or the other side – regardless of whether one works with a single client or with a couple – prevents the process of understanding being developed as guilt and blame render the inner world unthinkable.

This analysis reveals that understanding lies between empathy and knowledge, hence between subjectivity and objectivity. Empathy refers to the process of acknowledging and perceiving the inner reality of the other person – his or her feelings, emotions, thoughts, viewpoints, concerns and vicious circles. Knowledge, by contrast, requires an objective perceptive and a detachment from the subjective components of the topic being studied. Both have their limitations: empathy cannot grasp and comprehend all the aspects of the inner world of another person whereas knowledge can never be as objective as it strives to be. In their practice, the practitioners at 'YANG' have to constantly oscillate between empathy and knowledge in order to bring a change at both the inner and the outer reality of

²¹ This is also part of the discussion of the findings not of the actual research, so I have considered it more appropriate to include this comment in this chapter rather than in

their clients. This shows that the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity in practice is not straightforward and indeed the two are bridged by the activity of understanding.

This positionality of understanding in the area between objectivity and subjectivity requires reconsideration of the role played by understanding in the development of interventions and action in general. To begin with intervention, it is important to emphasise that speech – for one reason or another – lies at the basis of the social interventions. I mean that the social scripts – every spoken or written word and even every thought that have entered the public space, especially when authored by people who are in a position of power, have the capacity of turning into social actions. Hence, the quality of the actions that will be undertaken will depend on the quality of such a public script. This is illustrated in the ways in which ‘YANG’ projects, policy and legislative initiatives are developed. Their roots are in the counselling room and the objective obstacles that have been identified in the situation of the client, behind the subjective experiences. Through the discussions at the team meetings and at the multidisciplinary discussions patterns are identified and projects are developed. The activities of each project are then again discussed in teams and with partners. The goal of these projects is to contribute towards the development of a policy that regulates human relations in a trauma-informed manner - that is one that aims at taking away the guilt from the people who have experienced violence and at restoring their human dignity, their previous functioning (why not an even higher level of functioning ?) and finally at accessing their real personal and societal potential regardless of the victimising circumstances. Understanding thus turns out to be a dynamic activity that can be

that of the findings.

divorced neither from theory nor from the practicalities of living. In addition it bridges subjectivity and objectivity, which has significance for the development of successful interventions.

5. Feeding back to theory.

It is difficult to understand violence in terms of both accepting that it exists and in terms of finding the most suitable ways to explore it. 'Violence is with us', Rappeport says (in Sadoff, 1978:33-34),

whether we like it or not, and to date we have found no way of controlling it. Violence is something we don't understand, something we all deny in ourselves. Violence is something we believe is not part of normal human behaviour and, thus, we say it must be pathological behaviour. If it is a pathological behaviour, then it must be something psychiatrists can understand and treat since they deal with pathological behaviour...Society has relegated violent behaviour, in fact, all behaviour that it cannot clearly understand, to the realm of psychiatry.

Unsurprisingly, we find a similar situation of an organisation of psychologists works on the issue. The observation of their practice, however, shows that their effective intervention is due to a trans-disciplinary approach, one that can tell us a lot about a possible sociological approach to understanding violence. Hence, this section deals with the *second order question* raised by this research: from the ways in which practitioners combine theoretical understanding and practical support, how can we in the social sciences develop our own sociological understanding of violence given that there is little agreement on what violence is and that we are working from a low base line in which violence is generally reduced to the discourse of violence? I will focus here on the contestedness of the concept of

violence both sociologically and in everyday life, on its intersubjective quality, on the effects of structure (mainly gender) and on the links violence makes with itself.

As we have seen in the second chapter, from the sociological perspective violence is a polysemic concept. 'YANG' practitioners deal with the consequent contestedness by adopting a dynamic definition of violence, in which the main criterion is the presence of a human relation, in which at least one is being hurt. In doing so they account for the one-sided perspective, which is available to them as well as for the context and framework of each individual case with which they are confronted - until a more general pattern of the cases emerges. In this process, at various stages, they discuss the version of the client and their observations and compare this version with the available theories and the viewpoints of other practitioners. When a new pattern emerges, as in the case of trafficking in women in the practice of 'YANG', the legitimacy of the category is then negotiated in the public space to allow further exploration and the development of policies to address the problem. In this sense, at each stage of approaching, defining, conceptualising, researching and addressing the problem we need to be aware that violence is not a concept whose meaning can be taken for granted. This is confirmed by Sumner (1997), who says that

'[i]n practice, as we know from everyday life, very often the facts of [each particular case of violence] are more complex than they first seemed, our ethics are rarely consistently and abstractly applied, our implicit explanations are structured more by our desire to condemn the facts of the case, and the context in which judgment is made can colour all' (Sumner, 1997:3).

Violence reveals in the previous section to be an intersubjective phenomenon. The way to study the phenomenon of violence for ‘YANG’ practitioners, thus, is by means of regular limited sessions in which they explore their clients’ experiences. Although the goal of these sessions is the improvement in the wellbeing of their client, ideally they take the form of a non-judgemental on-going exploration of their clients’ lives and all the issues they want to discuss. Similarly, perhaps motivated by a wish to do justice to the disintegrative experience, ethnographers of violence also often purposefully avoid making ‘essentialist’ statements or positing overarching theories about violence, preferring instead to search for understanding and reflexivity (Nordstrom and Robben, 1996:9). The practice of ‘YANG’ confirms that this is a productive approach both in terms of efficiency in practical support and as a scientific inquiry.

Nevertheless, we should not forget that the majority of the people who use ‘YANG’ services are women and children who have suffered domestic violence. This suggests that this is one of the most widespread forms of violence among the gender-based forms of violence. This fact also highlights the need of an approach that takes culture and gender seriously, one that also ‘recognises the link between intimate individual actions and social/structural determination’ (Bourgois in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004:304). Thus, for example, a 2008 report of ‘La Strada International’ speaks of a cycle of violation of women’s rights that leads to trafficking in women – the existing gender stereotypes and the vulnerable position of women in the family, in the labour market and in the process of migration are highlighted as the root causes of this particular form of violence. From my observations of ‘YANG’ practice, it seems that due to their disadvantaged position in society, women and children are not only more vulnerable to violence, but also

less equipped to cope with its consequences – including to deal with the institutions that can help them improve their social situation after the violence is over. Consequently, the efforts of ‘YANG’ practitioners are twofold aiming at increasing both the inner and the social resources of their clients together with working at the level of the social framework – attitudes, legislation and policies.

‘YANG’ practitioners emphasise the capacity of trauma to take a part in the process of perpetuation of violence. Thus, another important cause of violence reveals to be the existence of violence itself, which suggests that societal tolerance to violence is to be blamed for its perpetuation. ‘Violence gives birth to itself’, say Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:1), ‘so we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence – or, as we prefer – a continuum of violence’. In extremis this can be exemplified by whole cultures that develop a traumatic identity built around violence and trauma. Violence results in a vicious circle in which violence gives birth to either victims or perpetrators and the whole cultural context perpetuates this vicious circularity. The same circularity can be seen behind interpersonal violence to the degree that authors speak of inter-generational aspects of trauma.

6. Conclusions.

The practice of ‘YANG’ professionals suggests that violence is most accessible through the framework of exploring trauma. Trauma enters the scientific domain in the XIX century and is very much linked with the restoration of the dignity and the normalisation of the experiences of sufferers of non-heroic forms of violence. This was made possible by acknowledging that an inner world exists and is significantly affected by external extraordinary events, especially by human-made violence.

Thus, the sufferers of non-heroic violence were recognised as equally deserving of attention, support and rehabilitation. Furthermore, this knowledge was used to start building an environment of acceptance and understanding in which the dignity of survivors of violence can be restored and their capacities employed in order to overcome the debilitating consequences of violence.

Trauma, according to Hoffman (2005: 41) who explores the phenomenon in the context of the Holocaust, requires accounting for the difference between tragedy and traumatic event:

For tragedy, of course, involves a conflict – agon – between opposing principles and agents. Trauma is produced by persecution of subjects to whom all agency and principle have been denied. Tragic struggle may entail moral agony, but it leaves the sense of identity and dignity intact. Violent abuse can lead to a deeper penetration and fragmentation of the psychic cells, of the victim's self and soul.

Thus, trauma reveals to be not simply a result of an action, but of an action that has affected the core of our mental being in the world. This, she also says, requires acknowledging the importance of 'the meanings of human actions – moral, ideological, metaphysical and their psychic impact' (ibid: 37). In this sense, the context in which violent events take place and the consequent trauma is experienced plays a crucial role. This is the first component that helps understanding 'YANG' efforts of building a holding environment.

In this chapter we have also seen that it is not by mere chance that these efforts are made by a non-governmental organisation in Eastern Europe. It is not quite clear what is meant by the abbreviation NGO, but it seems that it aims at denoting

differences between their approach and the approach of governmental agencies and the actors in the business sector. In Eastern Europe these organisations - according to some authors - actually bear the hope for an imaginative third way between individualistic and collectivistic approaches that is grounded in the local community capacities to deal with social problems proceeding from a view of 'anti-politics', a view grounded in humanitarian values that transcend politics. One of the main problems that emerged in opening such spaces after the fall of the Berlin Wall was the scope of interpersonal violence and the lack of preparedness of the existing social structures to address it. It can be said that in this sense the organisation explored in this research has played a role in developing an innovative approach towards violence as a social problem. In my view, its effectiveness is derived from the leading role of understanding employed in their approach.

'YANG' practice is grounded in resisting violence by means of understanding. This understanding is not simply an activity of mind but a quality of the environment, which is described as implicit love by some authors and relies on a respect for personal boundaries. A sensitive area in understanding violence is its intersubjective quality that allows victim-blaming interpretations. However, 'YANG' practitioners find that such an approach if employed in a non-judgemental manner allows for empowering rather than for invalidating the victim. It is crucial for this empowerment that the unconscious participation of the victim is taken into account with the consequent goal of making such knowledge available and usable to their consciousness. Thus, understanding violence from the viewpoint of the victim requires a special sensitivity, reflexivity and tactfulness between the counsellor and the client, in which the client's defences are taken into account and respected. It is very difficult, however, to employ an approach based on

understanding in an environment, in which the material has a superior value. The material and the practical and the emotional and the intellectual are in a complex interwoven relationship when the endeavour is to understand and thus address violence. The place of understanding - as revealed by 'YANG' practice - then lies between theorising and practical support, between thinking and supporting, and between judgement and empathising. Consequently, understanding seems to lie between empathy and knowledge, hence between subjectivity and objectivity. This positionality of understanding in the area between objectivity and subjectivity requires reconsideration of the role played by understanding in the development of successful interventions and action in general.

It is difficult to understand violence and as all unexplainable human phenomena the temptation is to attribute dealing with it to the realm of psychiatry and psychology. The findings in the previous section and their discussion, however, show that the practice of 'YANG' can also help sociological understanding. It does so by showing that a dynamic definition of violence can be productive and that indeed it does justice to disintegrative experiences. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach is justified due to the intersubjective quality of violence. Such a dynamic and phenomenological approach should account for structural influences, especially taking gender seriously. Finally, it is crucial to understand better the role of violence itself in the perpetuation of violence. Thus, a sociological approach to violence is possible and furthermore – needed.

CONCLUSIONS

1. A glance from above – an overview of the thesis.

Traditionally violence is a subject approached in law and the various branches of psychology. This thesis proceeds from the assumption that violence, especially its epistemological aspects, can equally be a subject of social studies. This is so because its dynamics is directed not only by biological, neurological and psychological factors but also by social systems of meaning and human relations. Such an approach requires accounting that theoretical knowledge about real-life phenomena is filtered through subjective and personal experiences. Consequently, this thesis has focused on researching the process of understanding violence that is employed by practitioners working to support survivors of violence, to promote understanding and attitudes of non-acceptance of violence in society. In doing so, I have been guided by the intention to reveal the key features of their understanding and to feed back these characteristics into a sociological approach to studying violence.

A starting point of this exploration was the consideration that socially causative relationships play a significant role in understanding violence. Also, it was important to bear in mind that approaching the problem requires avoiding dramatic vocabulary as well as avoiding expanding the discourse of violence to everyday affairs creating the impression of omnipresence thus doing nothing to further our understanding of the issue explored. Not least, I have made a conscious effort to avoid moralisation, normalisation and reductionism that also often accompany perniciously the discussion of the topic. In approaching the problem, I have

suggested that violence is a problem that transcends our usual categories and requires a transdisciplinary framework that is anchored in understanding.

'YANG' Foundation was chosen as the site for exploration of the process of understanding violence. This choice was partly motivated by convenience, but also because its practice is relevant to the research goals and objectives. The mission of the organisation is to foster constructive communication between people and to promote gender equality. It directs the efforts towards meeting a wide range of social goals of which the most relevant to this project are those related to establishing social attitudes of tolerance towards difference, respect to suffering, and non-acceptance of violence as well as stimulating understanding in society and acting as an intermediary between state institutions and NGOs and coordinating their efforts on the problems of violence against women and children. Thus, although the organisation prioritises the direct psychosocial work with people who face problems related to violence, it also works at the social and political levels with other practitioners, policy-makers, organisations and institutions, and journalists and scholars. The organisation lobbies with regard to concrete individual cases as well as for the limitation of the problem of violence, the protection of the victims' interests and the development of mechanisms for recovery and re-integration of the victims. It actively disseminates knowledge about violence and its consequences, the good practice principles in victims' recovery and re-integration and the strategies for preventing various forms of violence. Its efforts are directed at national, regional and international levels.

The research findings were complemented and triangulated by research among 23 other organisations and the involvement of 15 practitioners from 14 similar

organisations in three other countries. This research within the research was motivated by both the needs of the research project and the trends in the expansion of the work of 'YANG' in these three countries. Consequently, qualitative data from the preliminary stage of the research was complemented and further explored in the framework of peer discussions within the 'YANG' team of facilitators of this new project as well as during thematic discussions with these other practitioners of issues, standards and principles of the work in support to survivors of violence. Thus, the exploration focused on the links made by practitioners between understanding and support in their everyday practice and when developing strategies and policies. Due to the limited timeframe of this thesis, this research within the research expands beyond my research project and many interesting and useful conclusions are emerging without being reflected here. Nevertheless, core processes and ideas have been reflected in this thesis, even though many of the conclusions of this thesis are not fed back to this separate project despite that they have certainly motivated its conceptualisation and methodology.

Behind the research project presented here lies the observation that despite the recognition of violence as a major social problem, the theory of violence is not developed sufficiently. This is linked to a general misperception of violence as a problem that is attributed to 'other' individuals, 'other' cultures and 'other' societies. It is a concept that is taken for granted and self-evident. On the other hand, it may be also that doing justice to disintegrative experiences requires an ongoing exploration rather than an all-encompassing theory. This research endeavours to contribute toward a step forward in exploring the problem by considering the process of its understanding as a crucial factor in resisting the real

phenomenon, helping the victims to go back to their normal lives and enhancing our understanding of how we understand the world. In this sense, understanding is seen as more than a mere mental activity of particular individuals but as a social product of various frames, interactions and relationships. Hence, I approached 'YANG' as a discursive space in which various conceptions of violence are negotiated as a reflection of epistemological processes in society at all its levels starting from the individual and the intimate finishing at the level of public awareness and policy-making from where it is fed back to the private realm of the human relations and the individual experiences.

The approach I have chosen is phenomenological in that it starts from the views and experiences of those whose everyday job is to understand violence for the purposes of limiting its occurrence in society and coping with the consequences for the victims and the community. This approach was motivated by the unstable epistemological positionality of violence as an intellectual category, an instability that affects the debates surrounding the problem, its theorisation and empirical exploration. On one hand, there have been normative arguments surrounding violence. On the other hand, there has also been a long-standing debate on whether violence is inherent in humans and thus unavoidable. These debates require clearer distinction of what violence is and what it is not in terms of both a definition and a concept. Further, there is a wide range of methodological and technical issues that have to be accounted for when researching the phenomenon empirically. Nevertheless, one of the conclusions of the literature review was that although violence is predominantly approached as a psychological phenomenon, its epistemological exploration is equally if not more important, especially given that subjectivity itself is socially inscribed and epistemologically shaped. The latter

works in the other direction too – subjectivities affect the ways in which we frame the social realm, its structures and processes. Consequently, I have chosen to explore precisely these processes as they can be observed in this particular organisation and its partner organisations involved in a similar work. Such an approach is very useful because of providing rich qualitative data that can be used to improve our knowledge on how an understanding of violence emerges. However, case studies have the limitation of being difficult to replicate and to generalise. In this sense, the endeavour here is not to provide an overarching theory but to focus on the how-aspects and the meanings behind the practice of this organisation and the practitioners involved.

The literature on violence is wide and reveals that the process of understanding violence is a non-linear, ongoing, difficult and complicated process guided in modernity by the principle of non-acceptance of violence. The vast body of literature suggests that violence takes extremely varied forms and may possess many different qualities. Hence, to accommodate those multiple facets, the issue of violence can be approached on the basis of clear distinctions, including distinctions of types and forms, dimensions and structures of meaning, dynamics and contexts. Nevertheless, as an academic concept, violence as such can be a vehicle for understanding human relations and especially those aspects that correspond to the evil sides of the human condition – to the areas, which in modernity are delimited by the endeavour to expand human capacities and to allow the individual to reveal his or her full potential. One approach to studying violence that has been traditionally employed can be to focus on its causes and consequences. An alternative recently emerging approach is to focus on its phenomenology and on thick descriptions. With this thesis I am suggesting that the

latter is particularly fertile when aiming to analyse one of its dynamic aspects as a process, namely the process of its understanding as a means of limiting its occurrence, helping the affected to cope with its consequences and facilitating the development of policies, practices and strategies to address the problem.

Traditionally, violence is approached as an ontological, objectively existing phenomenon and as an unproblematic and self-evident concept. Its sociology, however, reveals that it is a polysemic and contested concept, whose exploration requires accounting for aspects of social construction and cultural codification. In this sense, it is academically and practically interesting to examine the ways in which subjectivity and violence are mutually implicated in the contemporary world as much as to explore what influences are shaping our visions of violence thus directing the dynamics of its occurrence - some of the authors reviewed here suggest that cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence. Sociologically interesting factors also include (but are not limited to) the culturally different meanings and interpretations of violence both across cultures and throughout various historical periods; the disciplinary frameworks used for viewing the problem in various ways thus often distort the picture, the position of the viewer within the system of violence – be it that of a victim, a perpetrator or a bystander²². Not least, it should be noted that labelling something as violence - regardless of how appropriate the label is - remains a moral and ethical judgement. In addition, a crucial issue that has to be considered is that the dynamics in the definitions of violence reflects the changing power balance in the context, in which it actually occurs – for example, it was only after the greater involvement of women

²² The position of the by-stander will be also affected in turn by the degree to which he or she is identified with either the victim or the perpetrator.

in society that gender-based violence was recognised in the public space. Last, but not least is the question that concerns research and the ways in which research findings are to be read in the light of the researcher behind the project as well as in the light of how research is utilised, used, abused and misused in policy and practice.

However, this is not to say that sociology does not possess also the potential of exploring violence itself – there are a wide range of factors involved in various forms of violence that speak of the need to approach the problem from a sociological perspective as well. In fact some of the authors reviewed here warn that too acute a focus on individualistic approaches to violence distorts the attention from wider social factors that contribute to its occurrence with the result that mostly changes in legislation are advocated instead of developing wider strategies of preventing and containing violence. Cited among these factors are the socially insecure context, combined with low levels of income, literacy and healthcare, which result in both higher levels of frustration and poorer equipment to deal with these frustrations. Another frequently cited cause of violence is the existence of violence itself with its tendency to reproduce itself, which also suggests that societal tolerance to violence is to be blamed for its perpetuation. In this sense, there is undoubtedly such a thing as violence and its dynamics and causation is worth being studied especially with a view towards addressing the problem. However, the present research does not deal with violence as an ontological category and reflects instead on its epistemological aspects.

2. Summarising the findings.

In approaching this area of the epistemological aspects of violence, I have chosen not to proceed from a given hypothesis or theory, but to allow space for reflection and for real-life experiences to shape the second order understanding about the processes involved in understanding violence. Instead of aiming at an overarching theory as the final product, my endeavours were motivated by a desire to produce a picture of the context, of processes of change in which tacit knowledge is brought to the surface, of resultant learning and of theorising in a mutual exchange with the researched subjects. Consequently, when reading the findings, it should be considered that the research process was a non-linear, emerging and dynamic process, in which I have been occupying and oscillating between multiple roles of insider and outsider, practitioner and theorist, and in which the various stages were building on each other and each was motivating the next one. Consequently, the presented picture is a self-other exploration of processes, meanings, frameworks – generally a journey of exploring the qualia involved in the everyday practice of the researched practitioners.

Action research is more of a living practice, so it is impossible to present all aspects of the resultant learning. Instead, this document is a snapshot of the process of exploring the tacit knowledge of the involved practitioners, of which I am one, at the moment of finishing my PhD research. Consequently, this thesis presents just the tip of the iceberg of the accumulated in the years knowledge, understanding and experiences. It should also be taken into account that, like all social research, the thesis reflects mainly my perspective as a researcher through the window opened in the framework of this research. An important peculiarity of this research is its transdisciplinary nature characterised by my endeavour to produce a more

comprehensive picture that incorporates interdisciplinary modes of reasoning. Although this attempt at dissolving boundaries between philosophy, psychology and sociology can be considered one of the key strengths of this research, such an approach has also a range of cognitive, institutional and epistemological constraints. Additional constraints inherent in any research projects were those related to polyvocality, and power and ethical issues. These were addressed by employing a combination of understanding based on critical thinking, social-epistemological stance and psychodynamic approach as well as greater reflexivity in both researching and at the stage of writing up.

The practice of 'YANG' is an example of one of the ways in which violence can be addressed: by means of social containment through the process of its understanding. Such a non-violent way has its limitations – it is a slow process, it requires a lot of energy and good motivation as well as personal, professional and material resources. Nevertheless, it is an efficient means of doing justice to disintegrative experiences, of showing respect to suffering and the personal dignity and integrity, of working on the basis of acknowledging human vulnerability and of building resilience. This thesis is a small contribution towards understanding this process and revealing some of the key characteristics of such an approach. We cannot escape from the reality that violence is also an objective act and unsurprisingly the mainstream efforts at addressing it are focused on this aspect of violence. When victims are to be compensated and perpetrators restrained from re-offending, the objective aspects of violence are not only important, but usually crucial. This thesis highlights that the subjective aspects equally deserve attention when policies and practices aiming at prevention and containment are to be developed. Without questioning the importance of objectivity in exploring violence

this thesis has focused on exploring the epistemological, subjective and intersubjective processes and their qualities as it is those processes and qualities that are less well known and understood.

Violence can be defined on the basis of assessing physical and mental harm. Such a definition is dynamic in that it accounts for processes, contexts and meanings, causes and consequences, of considering each case on its own merits. It is dynamic to the extent that not only should one not focus on a fixed definition, but that one should view the conclusions reached in the process of its exploration with a sparing measure of confidence only. Violence can be unavoidable, but should not be justified – it is perpetrated in modern societies due to an absence of other personal or situational resources. Although eradicating violence is too optimistic a goal to be followed, efforts at searching for alternative solutions and modes of communication are extremely valuable and often fertile. This is so because of all social evils, violence bears most of the hope for overcoming both its causes and consequences being placed in the realm of the human relations and interactions that is of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Although at first glance violence seems meaningless, if we approach it in these later terms, it can be seen in terms of meanings transferred and exchanged between the participants involved in such a dynamic system. The way forward as a result is working on expanding the resources and capacities of the people, structures or communities that are being affected by violence for the purposes of preventing its occurrence, of interrupting and re-directing its dynamics and of coping with the consequences.

Although it is often seen in these terms, the practice of ‘YANG’ shows that violence is usually not a rupture of one’s personal narrative, that it is not

meaningless, even though the meanings attached by both perpetrators and victims are negative and deficient. Although violence has many layers and can be seen through various frameworks, even structural violence is perpetrated by and upon people with their subjective worlds and intersubjective exchanges. Consequently, it is a phenomenon accessible through exploring the inner world and the symbolic meanings attached, that is through an empirical phenomenological stance. As the experiences of the perpetrators are usually not accessible for exploration, one of the main ways of exploring violence is through the prism of the victims' experiences that surround it – an exploration facilitated by the concept of the trauma resulting from violence. Such a starting point in the experiences is not unproblematic, however. There are cases and situations, in which people claim to have been victims of violence when they were not – for example, people who cannot tolerate any frustration or people with clearly psychotic claims. The opposite is also often the case – some victims, for example, have higher thresholds due to the significant role played by violence in their childhood, or often people do not identify themselves as victims because of the stigma attached and the reigning prejudices. These exceptions do not diminish the need for an approach that starts from the experience, because the objective realities of violence are important mainly in a 'law-and-order' approach. When the goal is containing violence and its consequences as well as building a resilience in society to prevent the actual occurrence and to strengthen individual and social capacities to cope with the consequences, the focus can be on the subjective components.

The experience of violence, whether labelled as such or not, is associated with the feeling of something bad and wrong going on with oneself. This is so because such disintegrative experiences challenge our basic being-in-the-world and our capacities

to derive meaning from our lives. It is an abuse of boundaries and the will of the other person usually employed to get rid of one's own feelings of powerlessness by projecting them into the victim whether by physical, symbolic, psychological or metaphorical means. These experiences are interwoven with every aspect of the life of the affected person – his or her functioning, thoughts, behaviours, relations, emotions and generally his or her capacity to act, to symbolise and to derive meanings. Thus, the effects are different in any moment of exploration and they can change depending on the response from the environment. This capacity of the environment to intervene and re-direct the process of meaning-making, in order to be used effectively, requires that the discussion is not framed by pre-given definitions, but that the focus is on emotions, perceptions, ideas, relations, and behaviours. In this way, the practitioners at 'YANG' build tacit knowledge session after session and client after client. To develop and utilise this knowledge their own understanding, experiences, thoughts, ideas and emotions are used as an additional source of information and are triangulated in discussions with their supervisors and colleagues in purposefully designed meetings.

Categorisations, conceptualisations and definitions, but they stand in a tense relationship with the unique circumstances of each particular situation when the work of the *individual* counsellor with the *individual* clients is concerned. This is different in the public space where a degree of generalisation is required in order to raise awareness and to increase the sensitivity of other practitioners, the media and the public. Such a complicated balance between working with particulars and working with categories, concepts and definitions is achieved by using the concept of trauma that facilitates such a dynamic way of thinking about violence in its various forms. The concept of trauma as a result of violence allows an

understanding of various forms of violence from the perspective of the victims. It begins with an understanding of what is done to the victims by the perpetrators – a range of actions against their will and stated disagreement that have resonance on the ways in which victims feel. These include use of coercion that results in fear and suffering; threats and acts of physical violence that shake the basic trust needed for everyday being-in-the-world; emotional violence that results in feelings of inferiority, humiliation and mental instability; isolation and control that lead to dependency; devaluations, rejections and accusations that at the extreme result in victimisation; sexual coercion and economic control and abuse that aim at creating dependency in the victim. In children, in addition to forms of emotional, physical and sexual violence, neglect should also be considered a form of violence due to its detrimental effects on physical and psychological development. In approaching the trauma, it should be noted that the duration and the degree of threat to life should be accounted for as well as the factor of own involvement and the involvement of other human beings in the act of violence. In addition, other factors that affect trauma are a range of personal, situational, and environmental factors that play significant roles in the dynamics and consequences of violence. All these should be assessed following the assessment of the risk to life of the victims and their surrounding.

Understanding violence through the prism of trauma requires an acknowledgement of the existence of an inner world populated by dynamic objects that not only exists but is of primary importance. The constellations of these dynamic inner objects depend on the ways in which defensive mechanisms are employed, on the personality structure and on the symbolic and emotional exchanges employed in a relationship by means of transference and countertransference. Consequently,

various forms of pathological (in the clinical sense) behaviours, personalities, affects and relationships can be observed and play a role in the perpetration of violence, its after-effects and consequent perpetuation. Instead of a medical approach, however, this correlation of pathology and violence requires greater understanding and reflexivity of what meanings are communicated and transferred through the symptom. As a result, violence can also be linked to tolerance defined as the delay between interaction and action, a delay in which the symbolic aspects of what is being communicated in the interaction are decoded and responded to. Such a process of understanding requires an emotional contact with the other person. Although originally such an approach is derived from psychoanalytic interpretations, it is and can be applied in practice by various other practitioners. On the basis of exploring each individual case through this prism, new meanings of this theory can be found and utilised for the purposes of a better understanding.

In practice, trauma reveals itself through a range of negative emotional and cognitive experiences of the victims: a feeling of failure, of no way out, of crash, of rupture but also loss, danger, humiliation, sadness, inferiority, danger, surprise, fear, mistrust, suspicion, confusion, anger and uncertainty. In more general terms it can also be seen in terms of all-encompassing strong emotional and physical stress that changes forever one's perception of life. Trauma also has to be considered in its cumulative aspects and its capacity of transferability. Thus, trauma should be understood not simply as a sum of 'symptoms', but as a complex phenomenon that builds on previous history and that can affect secondarily people who were not directly involved in the act of violence. Understanding trauma is useful because it is a category that cuts across different cultures and levels of background accumulations of practical experience – the concept speaks in commonly accessible

humane categories. At the same time it not only helps to understand better the victims and their inner world, relations and behaviour, but also assists observers and practitioners to structure their own, often pre-verbal, experiences. One of the most crucial aspects is understanding the mechanisms by which victims can be re-victimised, even including attempts to help them. Thus, systematic healing work can be planned and developed in order to address not only trauma but the underlying problems. A significant role in these processes is played by developing and understanding related theoretical concepts and categories, thus improving the professional language which in turn allows the conceptualisation, improvement, communication and utilisation of tacit knowledge generated in practice. Thus, practitioners working on the issue of violence open a space for thinking and understanding violence.

This space for thinking and understanding is legitimate and needed because the environment plays a significant role in directing the dynamics of violence and its consequences. At present the society does so by creating sheltered environments, in which survivors feel their dignity respected and experiences acknowledged. A necessary further step is to expand this 'holding environment' beyond the specially designed services and centres towards the wider society. Violence 'psychologically "bombards" the sufferer with the immediate experiences of human vulnerability, the harshness of reality and the unavoidability of death. This gives birth to disturbing and difficult existential questions that affect the person at all levels from the content and quality of emotions and cognitions to personality structure, behaviour and relationships. The surrounding of the affected people often in turn finds these questions disturbing and difficult and is confused by their expression in relationships and behaviours. This is especially evident in victim-blaming and in the

rejection of aggression that results from violence. A worthwhile goal is to provide an alternative to the survivors, one in which they can think through the painful emotions, confusing thoughts, maladaptive behaviours, destructive relationships and unbearable experiences.

Violence produces disintegrative experiences which have paradoxical consequences. Among the most confusing manifestations of this quality of violence is the consequent involvement of victims of violence in its reproduction and perpetuation. This is often linked with the fusion of violence with other social 'illnesses' such as psychoses, personality disorders and substance abuse as well as with the often destructive turmoil of adolescence. This compulsive repetition of violence and its blending with phenomena of personal and social dysfunction requires stronger containing efforts. These efforts can follow the model in which the mother works through the flux of the emotions developing in the infant. The basis of this model is in understanding the emotions and behaviour of the other person especially when he or she cannot understand them on his or her own and in finding appropriate ways to communicate these emotions and behaviours back to the person concerned in a manner that is meaningful for him or her, thus allowing him or her to use them constructively. The unbearable emotions are usually communicated mal-adaptively by means of projection instead of communication. The receiver of the projections can feel threatened, offended or projectively identified with the rough transferred emotions, that is to experience them as his or her own emotions. The result is an equally and even more destructive reaction – either physical aggression or other form of re-victimisation or self-destructive feelings or behaviours. By contrast, the person or the people who can play the role of containers develop their capacities to analyse and understand this

countertransference by searching for the meanings behind the projections. This process is the main quality of the so called 'holding environment'.

This holding environment is not a property of a single person nor does it rely on prescriptions and clearly defined actions to be taken. Rather its development requires a whole containing framework to be built in terms of setting and parameters of communication. Its key characteristics are three pillars – safety, security and stability that are created at the level of physical safety and security as much as by means of partnership, non-judgemental attitude, acceptance and respect of the personal boundaries, but also by means of regularity and consistency. This is so because trauma as an effect of violence turns out to be a relationist concept, a qualitative change, a process and a part of a complex system – so the way out of it should be. The capacity of each member of this alternative system to provide safety, security and stability and to contain and work through the emotions adequately would depend on the whole set of respected principles and procedures followed. A significant role is played by theoretical knowledge combined with empathy and an individual approach, but these are directed towards the practicalities of living rather than towards further upgrading the already available knowledge. All this is framed by 'the life of an organisation', whose structure and procedures in turn aim at containing the emotions that arise secondarily in the people who themselves try to contain survivors (and perhaps perpetrators).

The process of understanding violence should also account for the anxiety involved. Each organisation has to deal with anxiety arising from the need for structures and boundaries necessary to produce services or goods. The anxiety is also increased because any organisation is situated in a human community and is

built by human beings with their sometimes conflicting needs, aspirations and desires. This requires acknowledging that an organisation functions in two modes – one focused on the working task and another which is emotional. In the emotional mode, the failure of the organisation to contain anxiety in its members results in higher burn-out levels, also known as ‘compassion fatigue’, ‘vicarious’ or ‘secondary traumatisation’. This phenomenon is linked with the fact that working on the issue of violence requires a significant amount of emotional labour which also has an emotional price. To compensate, an introduction of practices and principles promoting a team approach are required with the consequences that various specialised departments emerge. The goal of these departments is to allow for specialisation and often separation of the practitioners into teams with differing tasks – some of them would be dedicated solely to working with the practical aspects of resolving a violent relationship whereas others will work exclusively with the inner reality.

The team approach plays a significant role in improving the understanding of both individual cases and general trends in the dynamics of violence with the consequent improvement of techniques. This approach is set up by several types of team meetings - general team meetings, consulting on cases/clinical meetings, group supervisions and trainings on concrete topics and on professional skills. All of these are based on openness, trust and partnership.

The general team meetings appertain to the management of activities and their administration as well as to the politics of the organisation and the programmes of the service. The focus here is on the working task rather than on subjective and intersubjective experiences. The clinical meetings are very much concerned with

exploring the phenomenological aspects of the work with clients. Their main function is to build a joint hypothesis about the key emotional conflict of the client and the key obstacles to improve her situation together with outlining a plan how to address them. The clinical team discussions are also used to qualitatively analyse relevant general trends as they occur. The needs of survivors of violence are wide and often require the combined efforts of many specialists from various agencies, which is made possible by establishing and working in multi-disciplinary teams. This enriches the understanding with various specialised viewpoints and allows a fuller picture to emerge. Thus, small but important changes in the lives of affected people are obtained by achieving good coordination between the various specialists.

The group supervision is another form of team discussion that allows adapting foreign experience to the local context, learning from the experiences of all participants, reflection on clients, practices and policies, as well monitoring the efficiency and quality of the services provided. Much information about the process of understanding violence is revealed in exploring the training seminars on professional skills and various relevant topics. They show that a combination of theory, own experiences, reflection, exchange of experiences, and simulation may play a crucial role in understanding violence and its consequences. Finally, more private forms of exploration and support are the individual supervision and the personal psychotherapy, which help practitioners to understand better and to learn from their own experiences as well as to assimilate the acquired knowledge and skills. All these frameworks are focused on bringing to the surface and exploring tacit knowledge in a context of trust.

Exploring violence is a part of the efforts to contain violence and its consequences. An important part of this process is awareness raising and attempts at influencing policy-making from the viewpoint of the interests and needs of those who suffer violence. This is especially important in a context in which the very idea of a community service for survivors of violence is new. On the other hand, classical principles of campaigning are not applicable because they usually neglect the experiences of people who are not included in the scope of organised interest groups. Behind the efficiency of practice the explored in this thesis resides the 'bottom-up principle', which strategies are developed on the basis of analysing concrete cases from the real practice - proceeding from the individual and the particular towards the general and the principle. Thus, understanding the phenomenon is made possible by understanding the individual and his or her dynamic relation with others, including with the context and the whole network of relations that have precipitated the occurrence of the problem, hence – where the solutions for solving it lie.

This process begins with assessing each individual situation and searching for resolutions to the individual problems. Initially, the focus is on the material and the practical in this exploration, while the long term effort is directed at thinking and understanding. On the basis of analysing and categorising the individual trends, a more general approach is outlined. This is made possible by involvement in both the individual and the policy-making strategy. Thus, each practitioner is a tool for translating individual experiences to the language of the politics, policy, legislation. The next step is to use the opposite process of facilitating the implementation of the policies and legislation into everyday life and the concrete cases. The key to success is the work towards transforming attitudes and working with psychological

resistances. In this process the focus is not on violence itself but on the factors that have made it possible and that affect the strategies of exiting a violent situation as they reveal themselves in the analysis of the needs at the individual level. A next order issue is to increase the sensitivity of the individuals at the institutions working with people, to help them open their eyes to the problem and direct their attention to developing mechanisms and procedures by which it can be contained. The development of such mechanisms and procedures brings a relief and a higher satisfaction to the practitioners in these institutions. Lobbying should not be turned into 'fault-finding' thus blocking or at least making more difficult the functioning of the organisation, but should allow for utilising the strengths of the practitioners and the institutions. It is more about creating an alternative culture and environment that would promote healthier and non-violent communication and relationships.

The work with the public is also important in creating a holding environment for the victims at the wider social level. The most efficient way to do this is to involve members of the public into a discussion on violence via the Internet or the media. The latter approach is mediated by journalists and their own agenda. As a result it is possible that instead of promoting understanding, articles and broadcasts dedicated to violence pursue the scandal or otherwise distort the picture of violence for mercantile purposes. This requires an additional effort to stimulate deeper thinking on the issue in individual journalists as well as to help them evaluate what the consequences and effects of their work may be, especially when individual destinies are at stake.

The processes involved in understanding violence by the practitioners I researched are strongly influenced by ideas, knowledge, practices, policies and legislations generated at the international level and in Western countries. This is done in the format of various exchange forums and collaborations on policy-making, training and research projects with like-minded practitioners, experts and academics. Another important factor that frames the understanding of the researched practitioners is their academic training in psychology and psychotherapy, including in Western higher education institutions. Consequently, inevitably their approach and findings are influenced and shaped by these factors as well. The starting point, however, is in the experience and the open-minded search for meanings and solutions to problems.

3. Stepping back and looking forward.

In this thesis I have addressed violence in the social realm with a focus on violence in relationships. By collecting implicit, tacit knowledge from practitioners working in 'YANG' via semi-structured interviews and as a participating observer, I have attempted to investigate the practitioner's experience of violence. The practical investigation is limited in many ways, in particular, it is limited mostly to the victim's side of the experience of violence and, specialising even further, it is limited mostly to reports from women who underwent violence in their relationships. In addition, aiming at unpacking 'the ideal' situation, no evaluation of the efficiency of the explored practices is offered nor is there an account of the obstacles the practitioners face. Nonetheless, this practical input can reasonably be expected to provide an impetus to sociological research into violence. Contrasting the practitioners' experiential accounts with the multitude of theoretical outlooks on violence, in particular the theoretical epistemological approach, surprising

insights can be gleaned, commensurate with the expectations accompanying the leaving of the theoretician's armchair.

The theoretical investigation showed how extraordinarily difficult it is to give a definition of violence that is both congruent with the everyday notion and theoretically sound, which is neither too general such as to be useless, nor too rigid, possibly neglecting well-recognised types of violence such as structural or symbolic violence. The upshot of the theoretical investigation was to adopt a dynamic definition of violence which is relative not only to the cultural and ethical background of the subjects involved, but also takes into account the victim's subjective experience. It is obvious that such a definition is limited to relational violence but this does not pose a significant obstacle to the current investigation.

In the fieldwork part of the investigation I have shown that the practitioners at 'YANG' do not have a foundational definition of violence either, in spite of the fact that nearly all their work revolves around it! Both explicit and tacit knowledge of the practitioners has been sought through appropriate methods and it has been observed that the notion of violence is not as rigorously circumscribed as would be necessary to forge a definition from it. As a concept, the practitioners' understanding of violence turns out to revolve around the victim's emotional response to an act inflicting harm. This should not be mistaken for a strict subjectivist approach, as all practitioners acknowledge the need for verification through professional psychotherapeutic means. Furthermore, the concept of violence is relative to the objectives of the use of the term. Whenever psychotherapeutic support of the victims is the main objective, internal objects and the concomitant, almost purely subjectivist understanding is preferred. When it

comes to lobbying and legal projects, a more all-embracing approach to the concept is adopted, one that may have 'harm' at its centre, but attempts to raise the public's consciousness to the subjective, internal aspects. In this sense, the concept of violence used in 'YANG' is multi-faceted and which facet predominates depends on whose light is shone on the issue.

While the investigation has centred on one organisation working with victims of violence and is limited in several ways as to which kinds of violence can meaningfully be considered, important lessons for future sociological investigation of violence can be learnt nonetheless. Firstly, to make the results of an investigation meaningful, the concept of violence needs to have those facets emphasized which are important for the type of violence under investigation. In the present work, this was the subjective side emphasizing internal objects rather than the merely physical aspect. Secondly, a hard core of the everyday notion needs to be maintained in the concept lest the research become disconnected from other fields of sociological enquiry. Presently, the notion of 'harm' as a base for violence is thus essential. Thirdly and finally, the (almost involuntary) organic historical progression of 'YANG' from an organisation concentrating on aiding the victims to a lobby group with significant political influence demonstrates that violence necessarily transcends the immediate relationship in which it occurs. It is thus clear that researchers who investigate violence will find themselves forced to consider the whole political and societal environment in which it takes place, just as those psychologists concentrating initially on solely aiding the victims found themselves propelled to intercede at the political and societal level.

This work at the political and societal level is a continuation of more than a century of struggle of practitioners, academics and activists to have the problem of violence recognised and the experiences of the people who have suffered violence acknowledged, respected and normalised thus restoring their dignity. Questions that require further sociological exploration in this regard should be directed towards the collective etiology of both trauma and trauma recovery, paying special attention to nuances between modalities of violence. At yet another level, this work of 'YANG' is also a product of a recently emerging vision of a permanently open democracy in which civic activity is based neither in the state nor in the market, but in the public sphere itself. As the practical application of this vision is a rather new phenomenon, further investigation into the efficacy of such an approach is needed especially with regard to containing violence. A possible and necessary future research in this direction is the development of qualitative indicators and methodology for measuring the efficiency of non-governmental organisations and the strategies and policies developed by them.

Further research is also needed into the question of the emergence and properties of the process of understanding violence raised by this thesis. I have found that it plays a crucial role in containing violence and its consequences by essentially non-violent means. This understanding turned out to be more than a mere activity of mind and can be characterised instead as a quality of the environment and of the relationships. A significant role in it is played by emotions and phantasies, by contexts, boundaries and frameworks. However, such an understanding should not be divorced from the practicalities of living, as the practice that I have explored suggests. It is academically and practically interesting to explore how other organisations and institutions dealing with the issue build their own understanding

of violence. Would the findings be repeated in other organisations? How does understanding violence emerge in the public imagination? What meanings are generated in literature and generally the arts and culture?

According to the theory behind the practice of the researched subjects that they find applicable and useful, violence is an intersubjective phenomenon. Its understanding in these terms requires finding the approach and language to explore it without blaming the victims. Such an approach and language should focus on exploring the properties of violence as a form of communication in which unbearable experiences, especially powerlessness are communicated. My informants find the psychoanalytic language capable of solving the contradictions evoked by such an observation, which calls for an interdisciplinary research focused more on what the achievements of psychoanalysis in understanding violence are.

Another key conclusion is that understanding violence is an inherently ethical process that goes hand in hand with thinking. This understanding is impossible without combining it with support of the survivors. This requires that researchers of violence should approach the issue with greater sensitivity and reflexivity towards the needs of those affected, especially the victims. Consequently, in many situations, understanding violence requires a non-judgemental approach as guilt and blame render thinking impossible. Thus, it can be said that such an understanding occupies a place between subjectivity and objectivity, between empathy and knowledge. In the light of this finding the properties of action and intervention can be explored further.

In conclusion, understanding violence is a non-linear social process that lies between subjectivity and objectivity, which is by no means a spontaneous process. It plays an important role in the process of containing actual violence, in re-directing its dynamics and in coping with the consequences. Sociology rarely approaches this problem, but the present research has found that although the problem requires a trans-disciplinary approach, a research into violence neglecting the sociological aspects is incomplete. Furthermore, a sociological approach is not only possible but also needed.

However, from the ways in which practitioners combine theoretical understanding and practical support, how can we (in the social sciences) develop our own sociological understanding of violence given that there is little agreement on what violence is and that we are working from a low base line in which violence is generally reduced to the discourse of violence? The experience of the practitioners at 'YANG' shows that understanding violence is by necessity a process in which meanings cannot and should not be fixed with certainty and forever. Instead, an approach directed towards a constant search for meanings is not only intellectually productive, but also brings relief to those involved that resists the repetition of violence. Such an approach is particularly efficient when it is enacted holistically and hermeneutically in a stance that does not divorce thinking and practice, language and relatedness, feeling and cognition. From these conclusions, it is not difficult to return to the phenomenological framework that has inspired this project and finish with the words of one of the most prominent phenomenological authors in answer to the last question: 'The relation between the same and the other, the welcoming of the other, is the ultimate fact, and in it the things figure not as what one builds but what one gives' (Levinas, 1961:77).

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2. List of empirical materials.

2.1. Notes from interviews and observations at stage 1 (the summer of 2005)

Memo 1-I	Memo from conversation 1 with 'Margaret Dean'
Memo 2-I	Memo from conversation 1 with 'Teresa Darko'
Memo 3-I	Memo from conversation 1 with 'Kate April'
Memo 4-I	Memo from conversation 1 with 'Laura King'
Memo 5-I	Memo from conversation 1 with 'Mirabel Jane'

Memo 6-I	Memo from conversation 1 with ‘Mary Stewart’
Memo 7-I	Memo from conversation 1 with ‘Sharon Cross’
Memo 8-I	Memo from conversation 1 with ‘Rina Jane’

2.2. Notes from interviews at stage 2 (the winter of 2005-2006)

Note 1-II	Notes from interview 2 with ‘Margaret Dean’
Note 2-II	Notes from interview 1 with ‘Lucy Greenberg’
Note 3-II	Notes from interview 1 with ‘Martin Duncan’
Note 4-II	Notes from interview 2 with ‘Teresa Darko’
Note 5-II	Notes from interview 2 with ‘Kate April’
Note 6-II-1	Notes from interview 2 with ‘Laura King’
Note 6-II-2	Notes from interview 3 with ‘Laura King’
Note 6-II-3	Notes from interview 4 with ‘Laura King’
Note 7-II	Notes from interview 1 with ‘Ana Brown’

2.3. Transcribed interviews at stage 3 (the spring of 2006)

Interview 1-III	‘Transcribed interview 3 with ‘Margaret Dean’
Interview 2-III	‘Transcribed interview 2 with ‘Martin Duncan’
Interview 3-III	‘Transcribed interview 3 with ‘Teresa Darko’
Interview 4-III	‘Transcribed interview 1 with ‘Deborah Neil’
Interview 5-III	‘Transcribed interview 3 with ‘Kate April’
Notes 6-III	Notes from interview 1 with ‘Catherine Damien’
Interview 7-III	‘Transcribed interview 5 with ‘Laura King’
Interview 8-III	‘Transcribed interview 1 with ‘Isaline Huton’
Interview 9-III	‘Transcribed interview 2 with ‘Sharon Cross’
Interview 10-III	‘Transcribed interview 2 with ‘Ana Brown’

Interview 11-III	‘Transcribed interview 1 with ‘Jane Taylor’
Note 12-III	Notes from interview with ‘Isabel Peterson’

2.4. Used in the text materials from the preliminary stage (stage 4) of the research within the research (May-November 2006)

Questionnaire I.1-IV

Presentation 1-1-V	‘Smith’, J. ‘Introduction to psychoanalysis’
Presentation 2-1-V	‘Brown’, A. ‘Psychological defences’
Presentation 1-2-V	‘Smith’, J. ‘Difficult clients: how psychoanalysis can help?’
Presentation 1-3-V	‘Smith’, J. ‘The life of the organisation’
Presentation 2-3-V	‘Smith’, J. ‘Attention – burn-out!’
Presentation 3-3-V	‘Brown’, A. ‘Professional standards and good practices in team work with victims of trafficking’
Presentation 1-4-V	‘Smith’, J. ‘The process of learning in clinical social work’
FSS 1-V	Feedback summary seminar 1
FSS 2-V	Feedback summary seminar 2
FSS 3-V	Feedback summary seminar 3
FSS 4-V	Feedback summary seminar 4

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Figures and illustrations.

Fig. 1 The research as a cyclical process

Please, insert Figure 1

Fig. 2 Stage model of the research relationship in fieldwork

Please, insert Figure 2

Fig. 3 ‘YANG’ Foundation: Organisational Structure
Please, insert Figure 3

Fig. 4 Procedures
Please, insert Figure 4

Fig. 5 Communication on inter-individual level
Please, insert Figure 5

Fig. 6 Communication on inter-institutional level
Please, insert Figure 6

Fig. 7 Communication on social level
Please, insert Figure 7

Fig. 8 The research as an emerging picture out of a puzzle
Please, insert Figure 8

Fig. 9 Categorisation of violence across axes of danger and prolongation with some examples
Please, insert Figure 9

Fig. 10 Typology of trauma based on the human involvement in the act
Please, insert Figure 10

Fig. 11 Waiting space in the Rehabilitation Centre of 'YANG'
Please, insert Figure 11

Fig. 12 Counselling room at the 'YANG' Rehabilitation centre
Please, insert Figure 12

APPENDIX 2. Note-taking from interviews: Sample.

Interview schedule: The intention is to have an open and unstructured conversation, loosely focused by my intention to know more about the process of knowing violence from the perspective of her work. I begin by briefly presenting my research in terms of how academic knowledge about violence relates to their practice and how they get access to practical knowledge about violence. From there onwards I intend to follow her thoughts of what is important.

Summary of the session: The session was focused on the relationship between academic and practical knowledge, between intervention and thinking in ‘YANG’ practice and between violence and psychoanalysis generally. Some practical issues related to the trends in the organisation, especially with a view towards problematic areas (funding and withdrawal from lobbying) were also discussed.

Observations: ‘Ana’ is relaxed and seems comfortable with my questions even though I do not take an active position as an interviewer.

Tips: Underlined is my summary of the topic discussed, direct quotations from the interviewee are in italic, my clarifications are in brackets and it is indicated that these are my notes, my questions are in grey.

Notes:

1. The relationship between academic and practical knowledge: the knowledge gathered in academia and that gathered in ‘YANG’ cannot be compared in terms of

quality – in the work with clients they use both, *‘but the orientation of ‘YANG’ is towards reality, every-day experience, life itself.*

2. Intervention and thinking:

2.1. How is this division reflected in the structure of the organisation? The long-term programmes work with the transference (by interpreting the relationship here and now in the session – my note), whereas the Emergency Unit intervenes in the reality. Still, however, the long-term programmes have a problem when there is a clear need of intervening in the reality. E.g. issuing a certificate that the client has used the care programmes (clients use them in court – my note) – it changes the relationship between the counsellor and the client, so they have decided that another professional will be issuing the certificate, not the counsellor. But the question is whether the problem might be duplicated, so may be there is a need of a separate structure within the organisation to deal with such requests? This is how the different structures in the organisation emerge, but it is very difficult to separate them. In the long-term – there is a tendency of every unit to become more and more independent. *‘There is a tendency towards “specialisation” at the organisation: the initial practice was to pretend that you are someone with a different role; the future, the vision is that different departments emerge’ -> institutionalisation?*

2.2. What does a ‘psychoanalytically informed approach’ mean? The psychoanalytically informed approach is very flexible: each client can use an individually designed pack of services and all of them would be informed psychoanalytically but rarely a pure psychoanalysis will be used. *Regarding the ideological element of the psychoanalysis – ‘since Freud it has passed through a significant development and now it is nothing more or less than a method’. Isn’t there a problem with*

pathologising the victims: *'this is the reality – it can't be said which one comes first, the clinical disorder or the violence, but the reality is that they co-exist and it is a fact that when one works with survivors of violence they have got various forms of pathology. Violence is an individual problem, but also a cultural one – it is related on one hand to a low emotional (but not intellectual) capacity, but on the other hand it is linked with the ways in which the people in our society (but perhaps also in others) approach the interpersonal problems; it is a consequence of the lack of tolerance'.*

2.3. What is the relationship between psychoanalysis and violence: why is it a priority of 'YANG' (if it is a priority)? 'YANG' encourages the personal professional development, in the sense of development as a psychotherapist. Does this mean a neglect of other aspects of development? No, all development is encouraged if it corresponds to the priorities of the organisation. This trend in 'YANG' is linked with the emergence of a professional community in the beginning of the 1990s when 5 centres were created to develop a clinical approach to the heaviest social problems – the violence and the drug abuse. So, this is a question of priority for the organisation combined with that of the people working there – their motivation and aspirations. *'Overall, in this sense, the work with survivors of violence is not different from the work with people in general – one can observe, although to different degrees, the whole spectrum of emotional, behavioural and personality disorders'.*

3. Thinking and action: why is it important to have a space for thinking?

'Violence itself often is a consequence of an action [for solving an interpersonal problem] which has not been preceded by thinking – a problem of the communication within the people themselves and with the other'. However, their philosophy does not exclude action at all.

3.1. Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy of the members of the team: your own psychotherapy *‘makes you more aware of your own traumas caused by various degrees and forms of violence (because everyone has suffered one or another form of violence, it is actually the different traumas that shape us as unique personalities) and their consequences (the traumas are actually the various failures of us and our environment to cope with violence, difficulties and obstacles). These are reflected in the ways in which we react to our present difficulties and problems... The aim of the therapy is to teach the client alternative models. But also it makes you more aware of what it means to be in the position of a client or patient (regardless of how you are going to label it) – you tend to press your clients less, you are not so impatient to achieve change, you don’t “bombard” the patient with interpretations and you don’t rashly “feed back” the experience of the relationship with him/her’.*

3.2. The empowerment: there is an attitude among the European donors to give money for the women to do something: *‘yes there is a lack of clarity and understanding overall that it is not so important to do something, but to think and develop your personal capacity’.*

3.3. Can the therapists be more active - at the court for example? They can but this is a completely different role and function. The simplest example is with the certificates issued for the court – because of the name of ‘YANG’, for the woman it is not enough that she has been referred to a lawyer in another organisation, she wants the organisation to somehow represent her in court. However, as a consequence the therapy does not work – the woman behaves as “a good patient” and makes everything possible to present herself in a socially-desirable light in order to pay back for the certificate and to show her counsellor that she “deserves” the certificate. In very heavy cases, though, they appear at the court as experts – for

example, 'Ana' has to testify at the court for the case of incest of a 12-year old girl. The girl seems ok now but 'Ana's task is still to show that this is bad, that actually the fact that the girl appears to not have symptoms at the moment indicates a worse long term outcome. 'Ana' is very worried because she has to rely only on the expert position, although she know that she is right because of her experience with clients who have suffered an incest in the past.

4. Problematic areas:

4.1. The funding of the organisation: the idea is to search for alternative sources of funding, but mostly to use self-funding and to work with all types of problems. 'Ana' does not have fears for the future because of the coming opportunities for state funding. She is not afraid for the future either because the organisation is very strong politically, independent to a large degree and everyone knows this. The strength comes from the vast and already nearly unconditional support for the organisation by the side of western organisations and governments. Consequently, however, 'YANG' works like a business organisation – under huge pressure. *Isn't it precisely because most of the donors at the end of the day have their own agenda, which is usually not the same as that of 'YANG', that the organisation has to make a double effort? 'This is the reality – we need to balance'.*

4.2. Withdrawal from lobbying: The key lobbyists at the organisation have children and families, so they are withdrawing from active lobbying. But the main reason for this withdrawal is that the foundations have been laid – there is a law against trafficking, against domestic violence, a law for equal opportunities. From this point on, they can leave this domain to other organisations. *In an international plan – is there a retreat?* No, on one hand it is difficult to travel for most of the

members of the team – either due to children, patients or the language barrier, people who could have afforded this either have left the organisation or changed the focus towards other personal priorities. On the other hand is the institutionalisation of the international network – there is a person appointed to represent the network.

Memo: Tolerance is defined by her, it seems to me, as allowing oneself enough time to think and understand the other person – his/her inner world, her/his motives, the symbolic meanings of his or her behaviour. In this sense, tolerance is about understanding in the sense of emotional contact. Similarly, ‘Treatment, at its best, is about connectedness, about emotional contact, about making sense of what is apparently meaningless, and of re-discovering one’s good objects...’ (Garland, 1998: 28). Emotional contact is about empathy – about understanding what people feel even when they themselves cannot easily articulate their emotions, often because these emotions are too painful and unbearable to stay in contact with, or because the personal history has resulted in rejecting altogether the existence of an emotional aspect of the world.

Reflection:

Point to reflect on	My thoughts
What was this session intended to achieve?	This set of interviews aims at gathering preliminary information and to inform a more structured set of interviews to be implemented at the next stage of fieldwork.
Why did I attend the session?	‘Ana Brown’ is one of the key figures in ‘YANG’ – she is a coordinator of the international programme, a manager and

	<p>one of the first psychoanalyst at the organisation (but also in the country).</p> <p>To a large extent it can be said that together with the co-founders she is one of the people framing the philosophy of the organisation.</p>
How relevant was it to my needs?	The session brought important insights into the qualities of the process of knowing violence employed by the organisation and provided an update into the recent developments and trends.
Were the interactions with other researchers an important part of the session?	I approach my informants as co-researchers and in this sense the interaction was very productive.
What was my contribution to the session?	I aimed at providing a framework and at keeping the focus on the process of knowing and understanding.
Did I feel able to participate in a way which helped me develop my skills or ideas?	The interview was useful in helping me to improve my interview skills, especially active listening. In terms of content it stimulated me to think about the relationship between thinking and intervention/action.
What were the important things that determined the way I approached this session?	The key factor was the stage of development of the project which is at a preliminary stage –I am trying to keep my mind as opened as possible for new ideas and opinions.
Did it help me to develop my approach to research?	This session was helpful in demonstrating the usefulness of keeping

	a focus.
What were the positive things I got out of attending this session?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rich information gathered - New insights - Improved interviewing skills - Development of research rapport
Were there any negatives?	The interview was a bit chaotic, some of the links can be explored further. It will be useful to practice summarising and asking open questions.
Could I approach this kind of session differently to achieve more?	<p>It was a very good session and the interviewee was very cooperative.</p> <p>However, at the next stage I need to develop and follow a more structured schedule.</p>

APPENDIX 3. Transcribed interviews: Sample.

Q: As you know I am interested in how we understand violence, how we negotiate between different conceptions of violence and how these differing conceptions interact with one another. I thought that you are one of those people who mediate this negotiation in the social space. But suddenly, I realised that when I am asking you about this, I assume that I know what your work is, while in fact this might not be the case. So my question is first: what is your work?

A: Do you mean my overall work? On one hand, I coordinate a project for enhancing the capacity of the officials who work with children [...] to work on the problems of violence...for organising training on the issue of violence. This includes the training of officials from police units and child counsellors for the prevention of delinquency, child protection units, units responsible for delinquency of minors and juveniles, the agency for social assistance, the ministry of education, etc – how to make trainings for the prevention of violence. It includes the presentation of this type of work to the institutions..., discussions of how they react [to violence] and how they could develop preventive trainings, what they mean by ‘preventive practices’...On the other hand, as a social and clinical worker I have to meet the clients [survivors of violence], to discuss with the people who are referred here how and with what can we help them; this means to understand what happens to them, what the risk for them is; what their experiences are with a view towards what happens with them; and all this is to be considered in the light of what we understand by violence and to make sure that there is no risk for the life or health of the woman or her children in the family or in the couple. And after making an assessment of her situation, including of her preferences, to negotiate

how we are going to interact with each other and to undertake some of the possible actions related to making connections with different institutions in order to resolve the situation related to violence with a view towards the expectations of the woman regarding what she expects to happen as a result of our work...

Q: When you were presenting your work, I had the impression that it seems your work is more focused on the prevention rather than on violence itself?

A: Do you mean the work with clients?

Q: Overall, your work – as an approach.

A: Yes.

Q: So, I was wondering what you mean by violence for yourself.

A: I don't have an overall conception

Q: How do you experience violence in your work with clients?

A: When I work with clients, I think about physical harm/injury – in a first place, this is the leading factor. That is why I explore what the perpetrator does, what his violent behaviour is, when [and] in what ways it happens. This allows me to judge the possibilities of how often it can happen and depending on how impulsive it is, to evaluate whether it is related to a risk to life. So, in the first place, this is the

physical injury. Then the psychological element follows: what are the experiences of the woman as a result?

Q: So from your viewpoint violence is what the perpetrator does? So in your perspective, there are clear criteria who is the victim and who is the perpetrator?

A: With a view towards the threat, the risk to life – yes. What happens in a family, who and in which ways perpetrates violence, what functions it serves and what roles are involved in this family – all these are second order issues.

Q: Do you relate those to the violence or are they absolutely different issues?

A: They are completely different issues.

Q: Can we say that violence is limited to the realm of physical interactions?

A: No, but from the perspective of this type of work, from the viewpoint of the crisis counselling, this is basic within the assessment and [this is the leading element] – including the experience of the woman and the risk for those close to her. After [this step is made] we can think of what exactly happens and we can consider all the other forms of violence: some violation of boundaries, manipulation, impossibility of communication and interaction, the impossibility to negotiate, the experience of stifling and restraining.

Q: Do you think that there are difficulties in understanding violence?

A: It depends by whom.

Q: Do you think that there are difficulties in recognising or conceiving violence?

A: To recognise violence is not such a big problem, but to think through violence seems to me more difficult.

Q: Why?

A: *(pause)* Er, because apart from the question of what needs it serves and what benefits it brings for the person perpetrating it, it is difficult to understand why, exactly, it exists *(pause)*.

Q: As if there is no meaning, is this one of the very few forms of interaction between people which is totally deprived of meaning?

A: ...a form, which is anti-what-it-could-have-been – the good between them, ...love, development, things like this. When we wanted to talk with the children [with whom training on the prevention is made] about what is violence, it was difficult to distinguish between what violence and aggression. In fact, we chose something related to the harm/damage – a form of inflicting harm ...and a trauma, but mostly harm was what we wanted to include. The same happened when we were talking with adults, [...], the question was how to understand [...], do I perpetrate violence when I am asking them to study? *[illegible]* again we reached only the point of agreement on harm.

Q: It seems that there are difficulties in drawing the line between violence and the other forms of power and control...

A: Yes, and especially in relations of dependency.

Q: You, for yourself, do you feel that you can discriminate between them?

A: No, rather not...

Q: ...because it is very easy to pass from the one to the other; as if it is more important to ask yourself the question when violence begins [rather than to find the answer].

Can't understand the recorded passage, seems that there is another question, but she cannot answer because it is too general.

Q: How did your perceptions regarding violence change after you started working?

A: ...I thought that violence is something which is irreversible, that it is a possession of the people who have more possibilities for power and control, of those who are stronger physically...that you cannot oppose it, just cannot avoid it other than by running away; and that, yes, no one can and there is no way of helping the victim and that they alone have to [unintelligible]. When I started this job, I learned the things that we say here – that they need to seek help, that they have the rights to receive help, that they should receive help, etc that in fact there is no need to run away from this situation, but there is a need to put some limitations

[unintelligible], that the guilt is not falling on the side of the victims because they are very weak and this is the reason why they cannot defeat it themselves [unintelligible] and that the others cannot do anything because aggressiveness is something uncontrollable. As a consequence, the next question concerns having more understanding of what happens in terms of experiences that result from violence, how does it affect [the victim], how does it happen that the victims appear weak and helpless (the way I thought them to be) and how it makes them feel helpless and incapable to react [unintelligible] began to understand why those who appear aggressive and uncontrollable[unintelligible] And then the last stage was regarding the types of causes that form such suggestions and about the underlying needs (or rather deficits) [pause]

Q: Many things...

A: I just thought what is the present stage – in which the situation is very complex, you don't know the boundaries – what stands where; how [the woman] can protect herself [*unintelligible*] how the loss of life can be avoided [*unintelligible*] all the other issues [*unintelligible*].

Q: The other issues are not black and white [*nods and mbms*] [*pause*] And what have you learned from the others who work on the problems of violence? When you look from their perspective? [*pause*] Are there any problems that you face with the representatives of other institutions? Do you have the feeling that you are speaking different languages [when you are speaking about violence)?

A: I don't know if it is about different languages, ...because ...I am not sure that this is the case...Part of our job is to understand what we expect from different institutions as something that has to be done for this particular person...The focus is actually not on the fact that this woman has experienced violence rather it is on her needs are and on what has to happen and what has to be done around her [situation].

Q: As if the question about what violence is is left in the background ...As if somehow it is clear that this is important, and that something has to be done and the focus and the problem is on what has to be done [mhm]. And if you have to describe the difference between your position and the position of the other professional?

A: Er, at least in my work and communication... that is when I interact with other institutions or when implementing trainings, there is one ...it happens as if I am ...we are imposing our viewpoint and we correct theirs which we consider to be wrong...about not understanding the person who experiences violence. And you understand that this is the lack of understanding, but at the same time I am saying that in this case I don't [explore enough] their understanding, [as if] they should adopt our viewpoint... The things that they, I mean how I remember the things said by different people in the trainings is related to the problems they have got with the children in their work – the overall aggressive behaviour and all the problems that constitute their everyday practice and the overall aggressive behaviour [unintelligible] How to help them if they don't want it – 'tell us how to ask someone who doesn't want help to come and contact you'. In fact, we don't empathise enough to their problems from the viewpoint that I am not working in a

home so I am not imagining [*unintelligible*] and I am not responsible for 40 or 100 children and for what the communication with them is like and everything else. That is why, it is as though I was telling this person ‘such and such things are important, these are things due to its [the child’s] development and things that have happened to it, that is why you feel these things and hope that what I am telling you will make you to feel at least a bit calmer’. And [as if] he answers that ‘it is good that I started to understand [the children] better but it doesn’t make me to feel calmer because I still don’t understand how to defend my authority...’[*pause*] We’ve got some mismatch regarding the conceptions of guarantees [...] to guarantee the trust of the people in this manner [*unintelligible*] [constitutes a mismatch with] what is prevention, what happens there as much as what is this [therapeutic] relationship, what happens in it [*unintelligible*] and how to help, what is violence for the victims.

Q: It seems that what you do with these institutions is often to help them to work with perpetrators of violence whereas you [‘YANG’ and you yourself in individual therapy] work with the victims.

A: I am thankful for this remark concerning the perpetrators, but this is not what happens...In fact, if we were talking about how to deal with aggressive behaviour this would have made them feel better than when talking about the children being victims and about their aggressive behaviour as a consequence of the fact that they are victims.

Q: So you re-formulate that they are perpetrators and that they are seen as perpetrators through the view of children as victims in all cases?

A: And so we don't satisfy them in any way and [*unintelligible*] and they feel very unprotected.

Q: I was wondering whether this is linked very much with the feeling of helplessness and the question of what to do in a concrete situation, as if it is hopeless in a certain way [*pause*] Is there much hopelessness in the work with teachers because of this vicious circle that the perpetrators are in fact victims?

A: No, because we didn't name this thing...We have never said "These kids are aggressors and since they are aggressors, this or that should be done".

Q: So you think that somehow this is a limitation of your approach?

A: Yes.

Q: And that is why the result is a lack of satisfaction in your clients?...or partners...I don't know how do you call them...

A: No, they are not clients, we call them 'target group' [in the project proposals]...

Q: Target group because you are bombarding them [*both laughing*] You are changing their attitudes...[*pause*] It seems that there is a feeling that 'YANG' are the experts, on the grounds that you work with the victims of violence; as if there is a difficulty to step besides the expert position and to work in equality with the teachers.

A: Definitely.

Q: Where does this difficulty come from?

A: [*pause*] I've got no idea...I just know that this is how it is expected and this is how I position myself [*unintelligible*] During the last training I thought a lot about why ...it is just us talking... ...it was a training of trainers...and I thought a lot about how it is as though it is expected of us to [*unintelligible*] and [when someone presents and tries to speak as an expert the others try to stop him]. There is no listening to what he has done, and there is a difficulty in listening because in the moment in which this and this person says what they have done for the children who have experienced violence, a part of the people don't listen to him.

A: I wonder whether this happens because our culture is such that [it is expected that] in order to participate in a training the trainers have to give you something and when you speak a lot yourself you don't allow them to speak, or is it because the topic of violence is such that no one is brave enough to claim being able to work well [*unintelligible*]? [This is the problem that you don't have enough time] to think through what happens in one training in order to use it in the other one.

Q: But this is what you want? To be able to transfer the experience and practice from the one training to the next one?

A: And that is why I want to pay for some additional supervision myself, this time regarding trainings [*smiles*]²³.

Q: What you say sounds very meaningful to me, it seems that there is a need to think this way because it sounds as a need to step aside from the situation of training or of communication with your partners or the target group.

A: I will consider this through the prism of the problems from the trainings of specialists to work with children who have experienced violence...and adolescents...And at one moment, I realised that what is missing is [precisely] the image of the child, the experience of the child, the feelings and everything else – simply ...you are faced with an abstraction of what its needs are and how you have to deal with them, but what is missing is the contact, the touch, your relationship with the child.

Q: You mean the teachers or you as a trainer?

A: Yes, for the teachers...but also for me [as a trainer], suddenly you are asking yourself who are we speaking about, who is under question here?

Q: Why do you think this happens?

A: When discussing this [with the other trainer²⁴], we thought that perhaps we didn't use enough experiential [techniques], we didn't [*unintelligible*] manage to 'go beneath their skins' to experience directly in order to reach something – to work that way.

²³ Supervision for training implementation is not foreseen in the 'YANG' budget – the trainers discuss with the co-trainer the seminars and if there is a particularly difficult

Q: Is it possible that in the very work of the teachers the children have been left as an abstraction rather than simply your technique being wrong?

A: Yes, this is the case....because the children are too many for one teacher. And the result is that, as one of them says, (one participant who was following me in the corridor to tell me about his insights any of which had any application, I mean ...i.e. the person has got acquainted with a very broad literature, but cannot use any of this in his work [simply] because he doesn't understand it and in one moment, and he couldn't stop talking, there was [*unintelligible*] again this). And he was telling [the story] how the children wanted to talk with him, but he can't pay them enough attention and tells them [instead] 'You are 40, how can I pay to any one of you individual attention!'. And I thought to myself – this person, what does he do in that moment, I mean following me this way in the corridor! I could reply to him the same [*smiling*].

Q: As if the children become an abstraction because the teachers themselves are very much identified with them... (*nods and mhms*). Do you have sometimes the feeling about your own work that after having 40 clients the client as such becomes an abstraction?

A: Oh, this is a frequent problem of mine! I mean that often I am identified so much with my clients that I am losing the boundaries of where do I finish and where does my client begin – as an experience and as a problem; as if I tell myself that I have to solve this problem, in the sense that this is my problem and it is me

situation, they can discuss it with the Coordinator of the Training Centre – my note.

²⁴ 'YANG' normally works in teams of at least two trainers.

who has to solve it; that I need to have an answer for myself in order for her to have an answer as well.

Q: Which is a bit more different than what it seems to happen with this teacher who reads lots of books because he feels helpless and tries to catch up somehow with reading. While you compensate your experience of helplessness by taking too many things from the client, too much responsibility [pause] Or may be this is not compensation, may be it is something else.

A: I just realised that I have forgotten to talk to one psychologist whom I had to call and I've forgotten...Meaning, that this was in relation to taking responsibility because the people who had to develop projects about how to work with the children and to make them sensitive regarding how to recognise violence, a part of them had written the projects whilst another part – they started to say that they do not have much time or for example one psychologist told me that she doesn't feel identified with the [organisation] where she works and doesn't want to do anything for them [this organisation] and doubts that she would want to do anything for them...So I suggested to her several options and we will talk with her today in order to discuss her decision. [...]

Q: Is this related to violence? Is it possible that when someone works with violence he or she tends to take more responsibility precisely because violence has to be stopped [as a default assumption] or is this just a peculiarity of the work – people engage in doing things and then find that they have no time to accomplish the tasks because they are too busy?

A: [*pause*] I don't know...In the case with this psychologist, simply the communication with the [organisation] in which she works is impossible – something that had never happened to me before. The director hardly gave her permission to participate in one of three trainings, doesn't want to take money to do prevention and I feel very ambivalent regarding this [situation]. I myself have very limited time-terms, in which I have to accomplish the things [the project].

Q: Do you have a feeling of satisfaction from what you are doing, do you feel that there is a meaning in what is going on or at a certain point it becomes just a talk-shop? Do you think that they introduce in their practice some of what you are discussing?

A: I think they do introduce some of the things, but very few. This is how I imagine it. I mean, from what they say, and it depends on the person, it becomes very individual from a certain point onwards. Such and such person, who is interested in this and that issue, why a girl does so and so, after this [analysis] has learned certain things and has found an explanation for the girl's behaviour and has calmed down that the girl doesn't lie and now this is going to help her [the teacher] personally to understand her [the girl] better and to be able to work with her.

Q: Which in fact sounds like a lot...

A: Yes, but I speak about one person from ...how many trainees...may be around 100 trainees, etc... Or I am thinking about [some participants in our trainings], who – when we were talking about the adolescents and all this, they passed through the experience with their own children. In the sense that at a certain point, the

training [seminar] was redirected towards how they relate to their own children and the ‘violence’ there, I mean, for example, when do they lie, when they don’t [lie] with what aim, etc. and how they [link] this with their work, and this was, I don’t know, very valuable for these people.

Q: Yes, and this sound to me as if the professional experience has passed through the personal experience and all this – through the trainings, which sounds perfectly valuable...

A: [*unintelligible*] they started to feel very satisfied that they can work on these topics with the children, in the sense that there seems to be an accessible way, which appeared interesting to them and they decided that it can be interesting for the children as well and they now work this way.

Q: When you make trainings, do you transfer your own experience in working with clients or do you work with their practice and their experiences?

A: [*pause*] We ask them about their experience, I mean what they encounter and if you listen to their words it turns out that their experience is very limited, as if they don’t have any victims of trafficking, violence, etc. or of sexual violence and then what we do is to give the floor to those who have experience. We also ask them to write stories, diaries, etc. and they again use their experience to do [these tasks] (although they say they’ve got no experience). But we also give them many things which illustrate our experience, I mean concrete examples to illustrate concrete behaviours, symptoms.

Q: Do you have the feeling that you are successfully transferring your experiences from working with clients, do you manage to describe them successfully?

A: To a high degree, in fact to a very high degree. I've got this feeling because in the moment in which they have to write and to think about what is going on and what *they* would do, how they would proceed er...[then] things happen and they can enter the role/adopt the role [required from a role play as an experiential exercise]. To what degree and whether in a valuable manner – that cannot be evaluated.

Q: I was asking because it is very difficult to transfer your experience regarding violence, especially when you work with someone, so I was wondering whether you write your case studies when you present them at the training or do you use the cases of your colleagues?

A: The cases come spontaneously – as associations driven by the context of the discussion.

Q: How do you narrate them? Do you make a narrative in advance or do you improvise?

A: It depends what exactly you want to illustrate.

Q: Isn't then the woman herself lost? Isn't she becoming some kind of abstraction?

A: I haven't thought about this. I think, when you want to show how and why something happens, for example the hysterical seizure and how you have seen it, in this sense you narrate how you have seen it, what has happened.

Q: Do you use narratives about the violence, not about the symptom, but about the violence?

A: Yes, we use them, again to illustrate.

Q: How do you manage there; considering that this is not something you have seen personally, do you have to use the words of the woman?

A: Yes, this is what you do, you say that according to the words of the woman, you have understood that such and such things have happened' and then what is objectively observable.

Q: That is, on one hand you describe what objectively exists²⁵, on the other hand – you describe her subjective experience the way she shares it, and finally you say what your observations are; this way triangulating all these – compare the one with the other in order to get the most realistic picture?

A: Or [rather] to transfer such an objective picture, which can also be objective.

Q: How about [the trainees], how do they react to this description?

²⁵ I am asking this question because I have seen some of the case presentation, which begin with what the facts are – e.g. 'the client was referred to us by the practitioner X with

A: They listen in silence, I don't know how to describe it... With their associations...

Q: It should be difficult to know how they link this description with their personal experience, or how do they try to imagine in pictures the things...

A: They give you such information in the feedback form – how did they experience the training...or how did they feel in the training...or how did it trigger the association about this and that communication with this and that child.

Q: I.e. what you try to do is to transfer certain relational experiences through activities, narratives, descriptions...perhaps through some literature you are using in the hand-outs. This way you are trying to reconstruct different elements of the relationships between people – not only when there is violence, but also in a more ideal situation – through positive models [*nods, yes*] when there is trust.

A: Yes, interaction... communication.... connection [*pause*]

Q: [*pause*] Do you work with media?

A: No.

Q: Not at all?

such and such complaint. She had bruises, broken ribs, etc'. By 'objective' I mean what is available objectively as an information to the counsellor.

A: Not at all..., I'm avoiding them [*laughing*]

Q: [*laughing as well*] Why?

A: Because...I'm afraid to stand...in such an...expert position, to be competent...[*long pause*].

Q: What would you like to tell people who would read research on understanding violence?

A: ...To know why it is important for them to understand violence [*smiling*].

Q: Actually, do you think that it is important to understand violence?

A: [*long pause*] It seems that it is very important, because I just realised that from all problems – heavy social [problems] on which I wouldn't be working, violence is the only thing that happens between a person and a person, unlike the other things...which happen in a different way...in the relationship, so I think it should be known.

Q: For some people, poverty is violence as well - because it is caused from one person to another...

A: It is possible, but not in the same way [violence is immediate infliction of sufferance]. If we focus our attention only on the interaction between two people, on what is immediate between them, then the things seem much more changeable

...on the communication between them, then the things seem much more changeable than that such and such people are poor and the others are rich.

Q: You think that there is more hope?

A: [*Nods, mhm*] Yes, because it depends on your own perspective, understanding – on something that streams from you. [Something, which is] a way of interacting and relating.

Q: I was just thinking that from what you've said violence seems not so hopeless as other social problems are...The way you have formulated it, it contains in itself the hope to overcome it. Precisely because it is in the control of the person concerned. When you speak about violence it seems that you mean violence in the intimate relationships. You don't think about political violence, for example?

A: The things there are too big – there are too many relations and interests, etc.

Q: So, if we can categorise violence, one form will be social violence, such as poverty. The other will be political violence where there are many more interests. And the last one will be the violence between people and this is the one you work with?

A: And this is the one where you can influence things, through your connection with the person involved.

Q: Is there something which I did not ask you but which you think is important to be said?

A: What is important for me now is to be able to see the whole picture, because I think I got stuck in many limitations, many particularisations.

Q: And what is the bigger picture?

A: The objective realities, which I have to explain for myself, for example in the boarding schools.

Q: Do you mean the contexts?

A: Yes, the contexts. I have to add for myself various details. I need to know more about the groups and the institutions, simply because it is something I miss in my work. In the sense that this causes loss to the work on the prevention and with the institutions. In the sense that we can focus on two things, but we can't abstract them from the whole context. When we say 'we will train you precisely on this, we identify precisely this need in your case', at the same time we don't know whether this is precisely the holistic need.

Q: Can you give me an example?

A: One example are the trainings for prevention of trafficking, especially for job seeking among children. The training for job seeking is very much abstracted from many things, which are related to what my place is, my behaviours, my relations,

the place where I live, the group in which I live, everything that happens with me. And [instead of addressing these], we say ‘we are giving you something that is applicable to you and is applicable to other children somehow; it is about how you have to seek a job because we are requested to help you in finding a job after you graduate and leave this school because you have to integrate yourself. And we will work this way with you.’ But this is not the reality.

Q: So there is a large generalisation when you work with groups?

A: Not only, some things are abstracted from their context, because there is a certain request [to us], because this is what the [funding] organisation is doing – [...], they want to promote their agenda, etc. However, you have to somehow fit the things [the training agenda] accordingly and you are, in fact, not very adequate. The things [in life] don’t happen this way, but you begin *making* them to [appear to] happen this way.

Q: Mhm, you impose your viewpoint and your approach because you work on a certain project, which is funded by a certain organisation [*she nods*]. How can you overcome this problem?

A: I can’t overcome it. I can enhance my understanding about what happens and from there on, I don’t know whether my understanding will influence any change or whether it will rather force me to acknowledge that I can’t work in this area at all. Seriously, I can tell myself that there are many structures lacking, that there is not enough understanding...I don’t know [what else]...I can tell myself that there

are too many basic things lacking, which [first] have to be established in order to create conditions for something to exist and to be developed.

Q: Again a risk of hopelessness?

A: May be there is actually an attempt of running faster than the clock in a way.

Q: Mhm, you have to acknowledge the reality.

A: And that's why you have to know it [the reality]. But this can't happen while you see it only through what you must see.

Q: Thank you very much for your time, this was a very interesting discussion.

A: Thank you, hope I was useful.