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*Football is a sport for girls: The experience of the Dream Team*  
*Arciscampia*

*Il calcio è uno sport da ragazze: l'esperienza della Dream Team*  
*Arciscampia*

*Abstract*

L'articolo intende raccontare il lavoro delle autrici impegnate nella realizzazione del progetto Dream Team ArciScampia, una squadra di calcio femminile composta da adolescenti tra i 14 - 20 anni. Un'esperienza di inclusione sociale in ambito sportivo, che rientra tra le attività dell'Associazione di Promozione Sociale Dream Team – Donne in Rete di Scampia.

L'intervento sul gruppo di adolescenti, accomunate dalla passione per il calcio femminile, nasce da un'attenta osservazione della realtà territoriale che segnala indici elevati e concomitanti di persone detenute, popolazione femminile scarsamente scolarizzata, complessità dei nuclei familiari e, non ultimo, larga diffusione di stereotipi di genere. Questa innovativa esperienza di calcio femminile rappresenta una possibilità di crescita e prevenzione del disagio psicosociale e garantisce alle adolescenti coinvolte uno spazio fisico e psichico in cui dar voce ad aspirazioni, desideri e vissuti.

Lo sport e la vita di gruppo sono il contenitore all'interno del quale sperimentare una dimensione di crescita attraverso il confronto tra pari e con gli adulti di riferimento, in un ambiente che spesso si declina al maschile.

*Keywords:* calcio femminile, adolescenza, inclusione sociale, sport

### *Abstract*

The article aims to tell the work of the authors involved in the project realization Dream Team Arciscampia, a women's soccer team of teenagers between 14 and 20 years. An experience of social inclusion in sports, which is one of the activities of the association of social promotion Dream Team – Donne in Rete in Scampia. The intervention on the adolescent group, sharing a passion for women's football, is the result of careful observation of the territorial reality that signals high and concurrent indices of persons in custody, poorly educated female population, complexity of families and, not least, large diffusion of gender stereotypes. This innovative women's football experience is an opportunity for growth and prevention of psychosocial distress and ensures the teenagers involved a physical and psychological space in which to give voice to the aspirations, desires and experiences. The sport and the group life are the container within which experience a growth dimension through the comparison between peers and with adults of reference, in an environment that often declines to the male.

*Keywords:* women's soccer, adolescence, social inclusion, sport

Adolescence is a self-discovery, during which every subject is busy with an experience: the one of living; of existing; to be busy with a problem. (D. Winnicott, 1965, p.50).

### *Introduction*

Despite a lot of women consider sport as a transitory experience, and certainly not a professional life plan to marry with, there is a group of girls in Scampia who dream to play football, in order to turn a passion into a project, a purpose, a goal to successfully achieve.

Also football can be a sport for girls, despite it is an historical prerogative of male gender and, consequently, sexist. Media's talking about it very little and, often the athletes- also at a competitive level- are described in relationship with their physical

appearance and their own social roles (as wife, mother etc...). However, recent years have seen a turnaround that has increased the female participation to this kind of sport.

In particular, the experience we want to tell you, is the one shared with a group of teenagers of the Scampia district, ranging in age from 14 (fourteen) to 20 (twenty), who share their passion for football and, as teen-agers, are involved on a double level: on the one hand, the development of a personal adult identity in a sociocultural context characterized by gender stereotypes, on the other hand the investment on a life plan, often complicated by social and familial dynamics which preclude a reflection about aspirations, desires and goals.

The role of young women in Scampia is often in line with gender expectations tied to a stereotyped social system, in which women assume a premature function of caring and support for the family, leaving sometimes the school for a job or sacrificing social life to deal with the management of the house and the phratry, in absence of their parents.

So, the idea of creating a female football team in a context in which the disadvantage occurs especially during the adolescence, seemed to us as a possibility of social inclusion, growth and prevention in relation to the difficulties that daily arise, in a phase in which the need of autonomy goes hand in hand with the necessity of affective and relational support.

We thought about sport as a social tool of prevention and recovery in relation to the problem of juvenile unease.

## *2. Adolescence and sport*

Before telling our experience, it is appropriate to examine the theoretical setting of our speech, which combines the practice of sport to psychological job in the group. In fact, doing sport activities during the adolescence represents an important and formative opportunity: it contributes both to physical and psycho-educational development, offering moments of socialization between same age guys and formative moments for competition, team game, comparison and rules respect.

Practicing sport is in itself an important occasion of psychophysical development for teen-agers (Barber, Stone and Eccles 2005), able to stimulate pleasure and fun, but also a protection from psychosocial risks: according to our experience, it is in the context itself that the experience acts as a container to sustain the comfort and the growth of individuals and the development of a sense of affiliation both to the group and to the team.

a) *Short background about adolescence*

Psychoanalytic literature, starting from 1930s, defines adolescence as a second birth, through which the individual reaches a new balance and starts to structure his/her own identity. The first author who systematized the concept of identity in relation to adolescence was Erik Erikson (1968), who described as teen-agers main task the one of reaching a sense of cohesive and unitary identity, starting from the fragmentation of the identifications since childhood. The development of a stable identity is part of the possibility to integrate his/her own characteristics, potentialities and aspirations to acquire childhood, in a continuity process with the past (Erikson, 1968).

Today the phase of the adolescence appears to be considerably lengthened, including an age range from 10 (ten) to 22 (twenty-two) years (Goossens, 2006): this happens because on the one side there has been an anticipation of the age in which the first physical changes of puberty happen and, on the other side, there has been some social changes that have made teen-agers economically dependent from their families longer, busy in their studies or in the strenuous search of a stable job.

Actually, life precariousness has moved forward the realization of projects that are typical of adulthood such as marriage, the entrance in the job world and parenthood, giving space to what Arnett (2000, 2004) defines as *emerging adulthood*, an exploratory period of their own potentialities and possibilities that, even though it grants to the teen-ager to evaluate his/her affairs, attitudes and personal needs, it can produce frustration that changes itself in a constant transformation of his/her own life plan, searching for the right road to be done.

Both A. Freud (1936) and the Laifers (1986) underline the dynamic and creative aspects of the adolescent crisis and how they represent a real development's conflict, a breaking point.

In this period, young people's interest is focused on the body transformations due to the puberty: they compared themselves with the uncertainty and the undefined and they are absorbed by deep physical, psychic and relational transformations, typical of this age.

The evolutionary duty of the teen-ager develops through three macro-areas: changes invest relationships with their parents, relationships with same age guys and relationship with their own sexually mature body (Laufer, 1970) and, the way to relate to the others is elaborated according to new acquisitions and new somatic feelings.

It's in this phase that the teen-ager compared himself/herself with the requests coming from his/her environment, related to the acquisition of a specific gender role: in the first place it's the family that makes explicit both social and cultural expectations related to the development of the teen-ager personal identity, according to the biological and anatomical belonging to male or female gender. Some teen-agers, facing with changes of their own growing body, with contemporaries and with their parents, run into what Laufer defines as evolutionary breakdown,

a breaking among the physically mature body and the feeling of being passive in front of the needs originating from the body, a fracture in the process of the image integration's mature body compared with the representation of then Self (1975).

The teen-ager, in the meantime, has to tolerate the doubt, the loneliness, the sadness coming from all this. The operation, in all its emotional ambivalence for the split of parents, disappointments with themselves and with personal ambitions, the painful renouncement of the childish bisexuality fantasy with a progressive awareness of sexual identity, constitute some inevitable elements of the adolescent route, that has, in the ability of mourning elaboration, its key element. The main worries about teen-agers revolve around physical changes and changing body confusions: it is not a child body anymore, but it is not even an adult's body.

Soon, the teen-ager realizes that he/she is out of his/her family, but not yet in an heterosexual life group, even if some social relationships can prevail inside same sex groups (Copley,1996).

The development of the identity and the relationships that the individual tightens during his/her own life are influenced by the existence of a media, internal and external world, that inevitably influences teen-agers. In particular, the group of peers has an important role in the construction of the Self: it is, for the teen-ager that is in a progressive abandonment from the family of origin, a primary object of identification, through which can experience and redefine the characteristics of his/her own concept of the Self (Palmonari, 2001).

In this process of construction of his/her own identity, life group becomes predominant and acts as background for the development of personal, sexual and also social identity. It cannot disregard, even in the choice of sports to practice, from the influence exercised by the relationships with the others and with the context of belonging, from family

models, social models and from the group of the peers in which the experience develops. In particular, as we have seen by our experience, family can set both as element of support and as element of trouble in the choice of sport (Antshel and Anderman, 2000).

*b) Sports during the adolescence*

In the last three years, ISTAT has noticed - through the "Aspects of daily life" multi-purpose investigation and run on a sample of 50 thousand individuals - that 1 (one) person in 3 (three) play sport in his/her own free time. In Italy, the most widespread sport is football, with 1.099.455 card-carrying players.

What has recalled our attention is the transformation, recently happened, of the role that women cover in sporting context. About gender equality, inside the federal world, there aren't statistics that allow us to fully describe how the female involvement in sport has evolved. However female presence appears unbalanced due to the masculine one, both in the sporting practice and in workers sector. The greatest incidence of women is among technicians (21%), while the percentage drops to 19% for executive roles.

For boys, sporting activity can constitute a "bridge" among adolescence and adulthood, an activity through which is built, in meaningful way, the identity of the subject and where developing his social dimension. In preadolescence age, sport gives boys important tools of communication and representation of the external reality. The reasons that underline the choice to practice sport are different: the need of making friends, testing their own sporting abilities, facing exciting situations in order to try to overcome them, and not least, the desire to maintain a good physical form.

In the motivation study context about practicing sport, a great impulse was given by Gill, Gross and Huddleston's works (1983), who highlighted the difference about gender. For girls, among other reasons, prevail: fun, learning new abilities, competing, belonging to a team and taking pleasure from challenges. For boys, is important taking pleasure for challenges, fun, competition and experiencing new abilities.

However, despite the theories and searches about sport's importance during the adolescence and functions that it brings, Cones and Istat data of the last 2015-2016 two-years period, reveal a different situation. They show how, in the adolescent period, we assist to a great abandonment of sporting practices for different reasons such as the excessive competitiveness, sexual relationships, stress coming from competition and a bigger investment in the social and friendly sphere. Interest's decrease toward the sporting

practice seems happening in the age range from 14 (fourteen) to 17 (seventeen) years. The interest for sport seems to gradually decrease regardless of the gender. However, despite the age of approaching to sport ranks later for boys than girls, these last ones anticipate the age of abandonment of the sporting activity. After majority, for the athletes the decrease continues gradually, while sporting activity seems growing for males.

Before dwelling on our experience, some considerations about the perception of female football in Italy must be done. It is still relegated to borders, with a low visibility from the media and a lack of plans from both Federcalcio and National Dilettantes League, that can make glimpsing some margins of growth. In several regions of Italy some structures or funds are missing and, the low visibility that the female football has in our country, doesn't allow societies and sponsor to invest in medium and long term projects. To all this, some cultural and social problems which set limits are added: the tendency to consider football a male sport is still too rooted in the Italian social territory.

Reading these data hasn't encouraged us in developing a sport-oriented project: our aim has been the one of offering a consistent and supportive help to young teen-agers of our territory. So, the speech not only wants to create a football team understood as in any other sporting society, but also realize activity aimed at ensuring an experience of reflection, comparison, clash, competition; furnishing a solid network able to support the experimentation of the Self, that is typical of the adolescence.

### *3. Arciscampia Dream Team: the experience of a suburban female football team*

#### *a) Context of reference: Scampia district*

The Arciscampia Dream Team project is born and it's part of the experience and history of the Dream Team Association of Scampia. It's a suburban district, sadly jumped to the honors of the crime beat in the last 15 years because of its complex problems. It is a territory in which lives a deep contradictory dynamic, because from one side we assist to the proliferation of high social degrade situations, and from the other side the same social complexity has given push to the creation of territorial nets created by citizens and associations, busy in the daily retraining of the district.

A careful observation of the social reality of the north area city shows high and concomitant indices of prisoners, female population that is poorly educated and family

groups often forced to live illegally in busy houses and in promiscuity situations. There are a lot of single-parent families with an absent consort for detention or three generation families. In addition to this, most of the families composed by the underclass, have economic problems. Think that the 60,6% of them, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Municipality of Naples (including the territories of Scampia, Chiaiano, Piscinola and Marianella) have an income ISEE that goes from 0 to 4500,99 euro.

Socioeconomic discomfort it's often caused by a lack of experiences different from the contexts of origin, which produces an under-development of competences. It contributes to the non-participation in social life and, especially for young people, to scholastic life. This phenomenon hits especially the young women of the territory, whose cultural role reduces the possibilities of movement and development and it's often associated to abuse phenomena among their own homes. The percentage of boys who prematurely leave education and formation system is high (19%) and the percentage of NEET - not (engaged) in education, employment or training (36,4%), in comparison to the Italian average (15%-26,2%). Actually, in Scampia there is an high degree of educational poverty, seen as a privation for children and teen-agers to experiment their own abilities, potentialities, aspirations and living in a context that is able to offer them the opportunity of growing both from the emotional and relational point of view, in order to allow them a peaceful discovery of themselves and of the world. Starting from the analysis of the social data it seems clear that the risk of juvenile deviance and violence is high: in particular, the data of the Community Profile of the 8<sup>th</sup> Municipality (2011) underline how woman is still relegated to a social and economical condition of deep backwardness. Since the youngest age, because of the widespread and massive models of underestimation and devaluation of her figure, the woman is brought up to the subjugation, that is first of all sexual, and attributes her a mere role of object, to take and show, to steal and then return to the family of origin with the sign of the possession: the early pregnancies. Parental responsibilities are often practiced by the only adults who are there, the grandparents. Teen-agers are taking out of school and they stay home doing housework, forced to assume a specific gender role inside the family, related to handling and caring aspects. The complex social crisis that these phenomena provoke, becomes a condition of failure for individual growth and for the activation of economical and human resources. It is, on such aspects, that the Dream Team Association (association for social promotion born in Scampia in January 2009) acts. Its purposes are the expansion and professional development of women from urban areas who live in social and



environmental conditions of degradation; it manages, thanks to professional volunteers, an host counter, a psychological listening, a legal advice desk, a guidelines for work, online with public institutions and the third sector of the territory.

It is also the main headquarters of an anti-violence center, the one with a protocol of agreement with the Interinstitutional network of Naples. The association reserves its services to a particular use: it's for women, mothers, grandmothers of the territory who are in trouble, offering them its physical and psychic spaces for the creation of a social dimension, and it is in this context that, in 2015, it has started the sporting experience of the Arciscampia Dream Team.

*b) Birth of a team*

The Arciscampia Dream Team is a project that cannot count on external financings and for this reason it has involved professional figures that provide their own service for free. The target of intervention is a group of 13 (thirteen) girls in an age range from 14 (fourteen) to 20 (twenty) years who are in a bad scholastic situation (discontinuous frequency or repeaters) or they abandoned school, have a critical family situation (unemployed parents, prisoners or illiterates): young people who, because of the gender role that the sociocultural environment attributed to them, are penalized both in the study opportunities and in professional development.

The team is born from shared intents between the Dream Team Association and the Arciscampia Football School that, through football, picks up all the children and teenagers of Scampia who love sport and feel for football an endless passion and, at the same time, see in it a possibility of redemption and a way to escape from a social, community and familial reality. The field, understood as a physical place, represents for the community of preteens and teen-agers a meeting and relational dimension where growing together. The sporting association is so a theater of meetings, clashes, discovery and also football opportunity. The Dream Team Arciscampia it's the first female football team of the school to accept those girls who have answered positively and spontaneously to the Dream Team Association proposal, pushed by the common passion for football and by the desire of sharing a project that, through sport and the through experience of a team, represents since the beginning an opportunity of growth and experimentation of the Self.

The project is divided in three levels:

- Sporting level: trainings are planned twice a week, supervised by a trio of trainers and a tutor. The presence of a female tutor in the locker rooms and during trainings has been thought to guarantee support for the girls, so that they can have experience of contact, sympathy, regulation and a stable reference point. Since the team isn't included in any regional or national championship, it plays both friendly games and tourneys with female teams of the Campania region and not, where the girls can prove themselves in the course of demonstrations with social aims (Tourney of Pink Bracelets, Umbria Best Match, Antiracist Mediterranean).
- Group level: alongside the sporting activity has been activated a space, both physical and psychic, where teenagers can give voice to their thoughts and group dynamics, made themselves explicit by competitive and often conflictual dimensions; group meetings conducted by a psychologist, expert in adolescence, are planned every fifteen days.
- Sociocultural level: in order to implement individual and psychosocial growth, different educational routes have been activated, with particular attention to female health, culture and personal formation. Girls were accompanied to visit a female free clinic of the territory in order to promote an healthy and affective sexual development during the adolescence and to prevent risky sexual behaviors such as precocious pregnancies; in addition, some guided tours to the discovery of the historic-cultural heritage of the city of Naples are planned, with the aim to promote the knowledge of the territory. There are also after-school programs, supervision of the scholastic progress for those who are still at grad school, and orientation sessions for those who have abandoned the studies.

The participation in the team is subjected to some simple rules: constancy in the scholastic frequency, presence to the psychological group, participation to some Dream Team Association activities. By virtue of a so complex and variegated national reality, to think about the creation of a female football team in a complex context such as the one of the north area in Naples, Scampia, has meant starting from the observation of the psychosocial level and from the community in which the association operates. We kept in mind some factors: first of all the age, because adolescent period results more exposed to the assumption of risky behaviors, often adultified, and to the scholastic dispersions; secondly, we considered the bond between the sporting practice and the adolescent period; thirdly, the relationship between the territorial reality and the gender stereotypes

rooted in it. So, we directed and founded our job starting from some important considerations: the greatest part of teen-agers decide to dedicate themselves to a sporting activity for pleasure and fun, for the positive effects on the body, or because, as in our history, the innate passion for football makes sport the main channel through which we can express ourselves and escape from family and social reality. We considered also the gender stereotype for excellence, according to which football is solely and exclusively a prerogative of the masculine world and, especially in relationship with the girls territory affiliation, that the female world must be only devoted to acquit caring roles. We considered the possibility and the hypothesis to meet a family resistance, a parental one, an impediment related to a dimension that we could define generational; which is the belief according to which football is not a sport for "female", powered by the taboo that women have a specific place to occupy. A taboo that, through the mechanism of the psychic transmission<sup>1</sup> among generations, takes root in the community mentality and relegates young teen-agers to pursue a destiny already written. Such familial resistance turned into fear for the sexual dimension, tightly connected to gender stereotypes and related to the choice of a sport as football: in fact, families appeared worried about the excessive exposure of the sexed body through sporting practice, about the discovery of the other sex and about the possible choice of an homosexual love object.

The absence of a project destined to involve different age groups, starting from childhood, and the stereotyped ideas rooted in the territory where we operate, have been the elements that made complex the constitution and the formation of the team. The Dream Team Arciscampia, in fact, is born thanks to the word of mouth, in the absence of planned sporting test: transmitting information to the territory, giving communication of the possibility of living an experience of female football has met an initial mistrust of the

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<sup>1</sup> The discourse of transmission is properly explained in two texts: Totem and taboo (1913), and Introduction to narcissism (1914). In the first text, Freud analyzes how the transmission of taboo occurs in social organization and in psychic reality, and by which means and contents it happens. The taboo is set as intermediary between two subjects, takes strength and power thanks to the qualities and charisma of the person who transmits it and it's set as desired and forbidden. Subject's prohibition transgression, gives him strength and dangerousness and it's transmitted by contact with the object. The transmission so happens through the contagion. It would reflect a process which realizes an unconscious, the one of transmitting. To fully understand how the passage of taboo happens in the psychic life, Freud uses obsessive model prohibitions. Prohibitions are old taboo imposed with strength by the outside world, from generation to generation. Their transmissibility could be attributed or to the tradition represented by parents authority and society, or to the fact that they will be organized in the following generations, seen as genetic patrimony. Freud formulates, in that sense, another hypothesis to explain the mechanism of the psychic transmission. It's possible, in fact, to distinguish between two hypotheses: the first one refers to the tradition and to culture, believing that the social and cultural system assures the continuity from generation to generation; the second one can be found in the prohibitions organized by generations as part of the inherited psychic patrimony.

external environment, but also the fear of the extraneous one, of what is unknown and of the exposure of the female body in a masculine world ready to judge. It makes you wonder how the context in which sporting experience lives, can represent a protective factor for teen-agers comfort, sustaining their growth as individuals and as athletes.

As part of our project, the reference context for girls was twofold: the one of the sport club Arciscampia, where all the boys of the area train and formed themselves (the same brothers of the players or other family members) and the one of the associative context, the Dream Team, reference for the community of women and for other associations of the area.

Combining so different and heterogeneous work realities has required a constant and monitored work on external and internal perceptions, and the acceptance of the idea of a female team.

For this purpose, the Dream Team Association has become an institution, as a guarantor of the sports and training experience, physical and psychic place to start the process of birth and the founding constitution of the team. This absolved that psychic function of container / content, theorized by Bion in his "Learning from Experience" (1972), which dates back to early mother-child relationship and refers to the mother's capacity to accommodate and contain the anguish that the child grows inside, as perceived as intolerable and unmanageable.

Through such above mechanism, she is able to return to her child these same contents, meaningful, enabling the comprehension of all those already lived and the development of thinking ability, learning by experiences. This configuration represents the basic mechanism of thinking and it can be extended to the institutions and groups working methods.

In Bion words (1973):

If the function of the group is producing a genius, the function of the institution is collecting and absorbing the consequences so that the group will not be destroyed.

The institution / association has represented and currently represents a container, intrinsically emotional, able to accept the request of helping, to stifle any anxiety, to understand issues and to be the place where to develop the ability of thinking within a sufficiently good relationship.

The structuring of the container, is based and is made possible by forming a frame, of a setting. It organizes the experience of individuals who are part of the group in space and time and also delimits the boundaries between interior and exterior.

### *3. Why a psychological group for a women's soccer team?*

The psychological management of the group is important, but it's pushed right into the background compared to the consideration enjoyed by technical and tactical skills of athletes and coaches. Despite valid attitudes and psychological notions, persists a certain cultural resistance to approach these ones, and this due to environmental factors rather than direct coaches' responsibilities.

It is still very widespread the opinion that coaches always know how to be good mentors and that they also know how to face other types of difficulties that adolescents encounter. On the other hand, the coach is the figure that pervades and attends the whole athlete's sports life: he becomes, often, the main reference figure. The coach is the one who guides and helps along the way which leads to the realization of a performance/features goal, which gives a purpose whose achievement generates satisfaction for success.

At a young age this figure is doubly important; often it settles very deep ties, sometimes positive and genuine, other times distorted and addicted. Following this perspective, it appears as sports teams do not need a further role than the one of a coach; however, in the very recent years, it is increasing the attendance of a sports psychologist in some amateur and professional sports associations.

When you think about an expert who carries on and accompanies the work of a team, it is obviously related to a sports psychologist, as that specific role who does not replace the coach but he works side by side to him, offering his point of view on the dynamics that take place on the field, using his skills to improve communication, relationships, to resolve problems, emotional blocks.

Our work proposition, on the other hand, neither did provide a professional role involved in the competitive and agonistic issues neither that the emotional aspects could be elaborated in a one-to-one connexion, through specific assistances. The need of thinking, in our experience, about a psychological group for a soccer team may appear unusual for those who focus their attention over the size of the competition, on the

challenge and the professional growth of the athletes and, in a wider perspective, of the community, and it is even more difficult to conceive.

Does a team set itself as a group? Is the coach the one already responsible for this task? Why do girls have to be accompanied by a psychologist?

These are the questions posted by the external environment - the sports association - as well as by the internal one – the team. Furthermore, this choice seems to confirm and emphasize a difficulty in this group of girls, however, it is the knowledge of the context of belonging of the involved adolescents that led us to a different consideration and, therefore, to the offering of a space for preventing adolescent uneasiness but, above all, psychosocial.

Teenagers weren't supposed to approach football only because they loved it, they needed to offer them an experience of consistency, welcome, network, support. Certain of this vision and the goals of our work, we decided to create a space group rather than making the choice to limit our action and design at the sports moment.

Therefore, the required conditions for a work group, periodically scanned with a 15 days frequency, are many. They live in the different ages of the girls who adhered to the project and often different evolutionary levels although all of them placed in the adolescent range: there were those who were preparing to go to high school 2<sup>nd</sup> level, who, on the other hand, had to face the graduation exam or the first university exam and who still was preparing to leave school or who had already decided to join the work market.

Moreover, a complex family dimension, but also an unknown sexual value compared to heterosexual and homosexual relationships - many questions, doubts have been thought out in a space, like the one of the group, compared to how it relates and lives in a body continuously in evolution and exposure.

While we were reflecting and planning the psychological intervention, we could not avoid thinking back to these words:

Teenagers build a sense of themselves and delimit their identities - different from their mothers, from their fathers, their grandparents, their brothers and so on, and by doing this they pursue their own diversity, their own personal integrity, their own sense of self that makes sense for themselves (Di Ceglie, 2003).

In particular, it was necessary a reflection about dynamic and affective implications due to the new representation of the body, both for the teenager and for his objects (Marchese and others, 2001). Inside the body exists the crisis of the teenager and his related representations and the internal struggle he lives is essentially circumscribed between the desire to be equal and to be different. The group, in this sense, became the container of undeveloped experiences, depository of raw features, unexplainable compared to their sexuality.

The analysis of the adolescent dimension, the complexity of the evolutive challenges that teenagers have to face, all the regressive drives, pressures towards a structuring of a mature Ego and, in contrast, a familiar unorganized Ego, disrupted and empty container, as well as an intricate territory in its organization made us think about the idea of a group which did not stand for these girls as a support, but as a moment to reflect, a space where, together and not alone, initiate a process of knowledge of their thinking apparatus and of a sexual body which evolves.

The birth of the psychological group has often been subjected to attacks, insinuating the doubt that it was based on a weakness inherent in the female gender, forgetting that the context where the girls live needs a space where the unrests could be seen, assumed and elaborated. Everything is necessary in a neighbourhood where the collusion between psychic and real aspects is strong and the psychic dimension is excluded by a real fact that hangs over and dictates fate as a clutch, a crypt (Abraham and Torok, 1978)<sup>2</sup> where negation is the psychic mechanism for the survival.

*a) The first meetings*

The German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of *heimlich* and *heimisch* [homely, familiar, native], that is the opposite of what is habitual, so we would tend to suppose that a "disturbing" thing scares in order not to be known and expected (Freud, page 247, year 1913)

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<sup>2</sup> Research on psychic transmission, starting with those of Abraham and Torok in the 1970s, emphasized on the defects of the broadcast, highlighting the role of blame, secret, non-symbolization. These lasts have begun to search for psychic influences, through their writings on the ghost, mourning and crypt. The two authors point out a clear distinction between intergenerational and trans-generational influences. The first occurs between near generations in direct relationship situations, the second ones occur among subsequent generations. In this way it is possible that the psychic contents of the descendants are influenced, marked, by the psychic functioning of the grandparents or ascenders who have never known but left a mark on the parents' psychological life.



Freud's quote immediately puts us in the atmosphere of the first group meeting.

Who was the person waiting for them around a circular table, but especially why did she want so much to know the young girls of Dream Team Arciscampia?

There was an air of distrust towards the stranger waiting in silence that the emotions, thoughts running fast, would have found shape in a familiar dialectical language that stopped as soon as the glances crossed and then resumed.

Stop or, rather, contain the emotional flow of thirteen individualities without frightening: this was the initial task. Receive.

The difficulty of talking about herself marked the first meeting as well as the first months of work. Talking about themselves, for these girls, meant allowing individual members of the group to join specific aspects of their own personal life, familiar, intimate, close.

Their body, their behaviours, their voice tone, their anxious glances - scared and curious at the same time - were in place of thought, of language. Act rather than think, show rather than talk.

They appeared, they especially revealed in their way of dressing up, some of them appearing glamorous in the makeup, in clothing; someone else seemed shy and silent, hidden by great sweaters: they were all united by the expression of hardness and mistrust towards the other, the unknown, ready to test the reliability and credibility of the adult person stand in front of them asking to tell.

Why was it so important to tell and try to express their thoughts? Besides, they were there to play football. Does not a team coincide with being a group?

These and many other questions filled their minds, finding verbal expression, often in dialect; it was needed to give wide time to those queries. Understand the reason why they met a psychologist interested in their life stories, process the fear these same stories could leap out, without being exposed to judgment, condemnation, complaints ...marked the first meeting and, in general, the first semester of work.

Confusion, concern and uncertainty were the emotional states young teenagers were living in the first group meetings; common feelings, projected as a beam of light. Psychological games, written tests, icebreaking activities were the mediators used by psychologist in order to overcome the initial distrust towards her role, as well as still unknown stranger team mates.



A mistrust, a resistance rooted in the way of thinking the relationship with each other; one approach transmitted from mother to daughter, from family to family, and which finds expression in the assumption that the stranger may injure because he is not known. The statement and the conviction that the psychologist takes care of mental distress has constituted, among other things, an obstacle in starting the path of knowledge for some members of the group and their families. The stereotype of the mental disease has invested the psychologist and has required a process of gradual and mutual knowledge.

From here, the choice of not sharing loudly the material collected during the first meeting, so as in the following dates; it was necessary to keep in mind their stories, without disclosing any details; it was necessary to assimilate immediately their names; it was necessary to establish conditions for the existence of the group: time and space, exterior and interior. The spatial dimension of protection, through everything is said in the group remains within the boundaries of it, is what allowed and guaranteed the launch of the work and made possible other meetings.

Put stable conditions in time and space, has marked the possibility to structure the thinking apparatus, a container where to find space, both in physical and psychic sense. The start of the setting job (same day and time) has set the emotional conditions to effect the passage from independent individuals to group.

*b) Toward the job year*

When two personalities meet each other, an emotional storm is created. If they make enough contact to be aware each other, or maybe not, from the conjunction of these two individuals an emotional state is produced (Bion 1979).

Being a still, stable, pleasant object and resist to the disorganized strengths coming from the outside has allowed to build a dimension of mutual trust that has given start to a good meeting. It has allowed the members of the group to accept some rules and norms to follow, some essential conditions which included: the social inclusion, fighting the scholastic dispersion, acquiring an appropriate language, having formative or working experiences, reporting scholastic results.

These are the main purposes that brought Dream Team Association to create a network with the schools of the territory and with associations that could offer suitable learning processes.

So, young teen-agers have been able to live a different experience, a dimension that we

could define trans-individual, in which the group space becomes the place, otherwise absent in their daily routine, where to deposit thoughts, shakes, worry and desires. Tolerating and welcoming the violence and the untold lived, returning the no sense, the confusion, is what Bion defines as function of reverie<sup>3</sup>.

The every 15 days meeting with the psychologist has become, during time, a regular appointment in which you cannot miss the moment in which you can think about to your own body changes, sexual desires, family worries, school, sport, to what means being a young woman in a masculine context, that is often discriminating. Sharing those aspects hasn't been deprived of violent conflicts. Every member of the group was bearer of an own way of thinking, an own vision about facing difficulties, but also of a shared confidence or a personal experience that brings to the abandonment. Get used to a such formality, to a scholastic abandonment, to the family abandonment, to the one of friends, to the failure of parents relationship, the teen-agers have worked on the possibility to survive to differences, t clashes, separations, helped by the group and through the group. Supported and oriented in learning how agitations can turn into forms of thought, the girls have begun a course of knowledge and awareness in the respect of the differences and their own resources, abilities and limit. They have been helped and support in their scholastic or working runs, as well as in the difficult relationships with their own parents. The affirmation of the way of thinking that represents the group, as the constitution of a membrane / skin that defines their sense of affiliation and defends them from outside and inside intrusions, has been an hard run and devoid of abandonments from some members. The group began speaking of itself through the representation of its skin (Anzieu, 1985) so the one of the Dream Team Arciscampia.

### *c) Conclusion*

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<sup>3</sup> The maternal reverie, or also daydream, is the mother ability to bathe herself, empathize her child's life, through a pre-conceptual kind of thought, empathetic. The mother feels in her body what her child feels and all of this happens through a visceral form of communication, pre-symbolic among the two. Through the maternal reverie, factor of the alpha function, the child becomes able to bear first the not-thing, the unknown thing, source of anguish, and then to know it. The mother, so, promotes the introjection of a good object and also the structures formation and mental functions, putting herself as a container of beta elements, accepting them, and returning them in a changed way in the form of contents, used for the thinking activity.

After the first work year, the group survived to separations, to new entries and changes of direction from the trainers; so a new year has began, where girls have been directed in the choice of their own attitudes and abilities. Some members of the team have chosen to begin an experience of volunteering near the Dream Team Association, some others followed a formation course as infancy operators and others have been selected as volunteers in a formative course for infancy and adolescence.

Considering Bion's job about key assumptions and emotional states that the group faced, we could say that in the process, in progress for two years, it has crossed ways of operating such as the attachment-escaping, addiction and coupling, succeeding in finding a proper order. It's hard and exciting sharing the experience of growth of these girls because the history of the Dream Team Arciscampia is for us, an history of "rebel children": an history that wins over prejudices and the stereotypes of the masculine world, an history of network and association, an history that survives despite the low attention that the institutions give to female football and to the ones who work in the social suburb areas.

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