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**A RITE OF PASSAGE FOR MID-LIFE WOMEN:  
DRAMATHERAPY WITH TOTEM POLE AND  
PUPPET THEATER**

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

The increase in life expectancy in the western world entails additional stages of development at the mid-life stage. Hence the personal and public need arises to offer solutions to the possible developments of adults in their personal and their community life (Carasso, 2001).

The mid-life period is noted in the professional literature as a meaningful developmental stage in everything pertaining to the future of the adult person. This study focuses on women and their coping with this period that occurs at the ages of 45-55 approximately. It is known as the mid-life stage - that between the first and second halves of life. Optimal coping with this period offers women the opportunity for renewed choice that brings with it personal and social development (Goldstein, 2007).

Changes in all areas of life occur amongst women at the mid-life stage. The hormonal changes in the physiological domain result in the cessation of the possibility of becoming pregnant and giving birth. Similarly, there are changes in the external appearance and a decline in diverse functions such as aerobic ability, vision and memory. In the social and domestic domains there are changes in relationships. Children's adulthood results in the decreased dominance of the domestic realm. Grandparents age and need help and support. Couplehood is affected by these changes (Northrup, 2001).

The main 'eternally young' value in western culture affects women at the mid-life stage. It generates a turn for the worse in their status and affects their behavior, while many attempt to appear young and exploit the consumer culture in everything pertaining to anti-aging. In the psychological domain awareness of death and the finality of life gives birth to the need for reassessing life. Similarly, there is a rise in emotional maturity and in the ability to better understand complex life situations, but these changes are barely recognized and validated by the environment (Sheehy, 1995).

The changes that occur amongst women at the mid-life phase create a normative crisis which is typical of the transitional stage in life and is, in essence, a period in which a turn for the better or the worse can occur (Erikson, 1985).

As a woman at the mid-life stage who experienced significant change that affects many areas in my life, this researcher faced many questions and deliberations. To what extent am I passive and an object of the impact of age, society and culture? To what extent do I validate and afford meaning to this period? What developmental changes I would like? How can these changes be realized?

As a dramatherapist I was exposed to the distress of women at the mid-life stage. Some of them told me about their difficulties recognizing their maturity. They claimed that such recognition entails a decline in the appreciation of them by society at large.

They added that they encounter stereotypical perceptions from the surroundings regarding women of their age that arouse anger and much thought. Questions arise regarding their perception of themselves and their femininity. The attitude of the surroundings and their deliberations led them to think about taboo, the limitations and prohibitions connected to culture and education, to what is unacceptable for girls and women and who they are forbidden to be. They claimed that these elements create complications and embarrassment and awaken the need to find a solution and egress.

Some of them mentioned their interest, their reading professional literature on the topic of the mid-life phase which they discuss with their close friends. They claimed they find comfort but this does not advance them and they feel that they are spinning in a closed circle. They added that they need a group framework of women of their age in which it would be possible to find deep understanding, an encouraging attitude and sharing, and perhaps even positive meaning to this period of their lives. They emphasized their need to experiment that is not informative and not based on words. They expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of experimental frameworks intended for women at the mid-life stage and claimed that the public frameworks offer mainly medical help or emotional therapy in extreme cases.

This researcher realized the need of women of this age for a group framework in which they would be able to process the changes in their lives and find a solution to their deliberations - a framework that would enable them to make time for introspection and serve as a place for processing the transition between two periods of life. Women's ponderings focused on the questions of personal and social identity and the transitions between who they were and wanted to be.

In the absence of a suitable framework and the need for solutions to which she was exposed, she decided to take the reins in her own hands and initiate an experimental framework for women at the mid-life stage. Dramatherapy is a therapeutic-educational method in which she is practiced and skilled and which she found suitable for this need. Its uniqueness lies in creating a space for the dramatic reality, characterized by symbolic expression that occurs through creative processes. The absence of a work model intended for transitional periods of mid-life for women led her to seek an experiential community structure that would meet this goal. She focused on transitions, on components of identity and on taboo that are the three main concepts typical of this need for women at this stage to cope. She found her wish in archaic community patterns that accompany people throughout history. These are transitional rituals, totem pole and puppet theater.

Transitional rituals, known as rites of passage, are group experiences intended for a group of equals at a period that affords the transitional stage in the life cycle. This experience provides recognition of a transitional period and validates and offers meaning to the changes occurring therein. Similarly, it focuses on reexamining the relationship between the psychological needs of the individual and the needs of society, and enables the development of internal and social roles according to the changing identities of the participants in the ritual. Transitional rituals continue, usually, for a period of time and usually include diverse stages accompanied by activities and assignments and liminal experiences that enable release from social codes. They symbolize the ritual and the symbolism, the metaphorical death of the old and birth of the new (Bauman, 2002).

The totem pole is a term for a pole made of a carved wood trunk that is designed with human, animal and sometimes vegetable elements and forces of nature carved one above the other. This term is given to poles of considerable height (sometimes twenty meters) erected horizontally or vertically in public spaces, in passages between various spaces and in prominent places visible to all. They were discovered by Europeans who came to study unfamiliar cultures in North America, Australia, Africa, East India, the Polynesian islands and Melanesia in the Pacific Ocean. It is not known when the phenomenon began but it is attributed to primitive cultures (Halpin, 1981).

The totem pole represents the community identity and the cultural array that includes attachment to values, license and taboo prohibitions. It fulfills social, spiritual-psychological and ritual rite roles that are

connected to the community survival (Halpin, 1981). In the modern era, certain sites, including sanctified and public sites where there is a central statue, fulfill the totem pole function for the community. In the modern era the shape of the totem pole changes and varies according to the community and its use in therapy (Siano, 2000).

Puppet shows is a dramatic artistic medium, in which the main characters are puppets that appear before an audience. A puppet can be any object into which the puppeteer breathes life using techniques of operation and play. The puppet theater is made of diverse plastic materials and can be of varying dimensions. Notably, they are finger puppets, glove puppets, stick puppets, marionettes, shadow puppets and giant puppets. In addition to objects that are termed puppets, this art also includes characters represented through useful objects and additional objects that are designed in a way that facilitates their operation on the stage (Astell-burt, 2002).

This medium can take part in the educational and therapeutic work (Weiss, 1998). Work in the domain can contribute to the personality development and help in developing a cohesive identity in everything pertaining to expanding the repertoire of internal roles for coping with the taboo connected to them.

The researcher decided to develop a plan of action intended for women at the mid-life stage, in the framework of a group dramatherapy workshop. The plan of action is structured as a transitional ritual (or rite of passage) and is based on creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a puppet theater. She assumed that such a process would be able to awaken resources for coping with the changes imposed on women at the mid-life stage and to generate processes of change and development for them through this study.

These patterns of expression and creativity are not foreign to her. A landmark that is involved in altering a component of identity concerned me at the personal level when my sons reached the age of thirteen, known as Bar Mizva in Jewish religion, denoting a transition from childhood to manhood in a religious ceremony. My friends and I reached the conclusion that our sons need a group secular ritual that we conducted on our own initiative. With hindsight, this ritual had the attributes of a rite of passage.

As a dramatherapist she discovered the power embedded in the structure of the ritual that she used in the therapeutic process, and its impact on clients. In the professional realm she have been working with puppet theater arts for many years. As a therapist she realized the impact of this medium on both the creators and on the audience as regards the development process in general and to coping with the components of identity in particular. Furthermore, she was exposed to artistic work that was reminiscent of shape and attributes of the totem pole created by clients in the clinic and its welcome impact on the therapeutic process.

This study is an attempt to offer a solution to the needs of women at the mid-life stage. It bears the hope of progress and understanding of women of this age and to encourage the development of resources in the public sector intended for coping by women with this period. In addition, it is, for her, a professional intermediary summary of my attempt at cognitive conceptualization of the internal processes that are motivated by the creative processes. It is part of her personal coping with the transitional mid-life stage.

This study includes some chapters. The next is the second chapter that presents the review of the literature that includes several areas of knowledge connected with it, such as aspects of the mid-life stage amongst women, the traditional ritual – the rite of passage - as a method of coping with this transitional period, dramatherapy as an educational-therapeutic method structured as a rite of passage, processes of creativity that serve as transitional phenomena, the totem pole that affords a group transitional object and puppet theater that affords a personal transitional object.

Chapter three presents the research methodology and chapter four the research findings, the analysis and discussion of the study according to the group and the personal processes of change.

The conclusions, research contributions and recommendations for the application of this study are offered in the fifth chapter.

## **Chapter Two**

### **A Review of the Literature**

*"The riddle of life and death, the hidden secret of nature, occupied humanity for generations. The involvement in it is manifested in all walks of human life – in literature, art, science and philosophy".*

(Carasso 2001:15)

#### **2.1 Adulthood**

Life expectancy and the human life cycle have extended in the western world (Carasso, 2001). Considerable resources are directed to improving the quality of life for adults. Adult educational frameworks offer courses and workshops on the subject of coping with adulthood and exploiting the opportunities for development during that period of life. The current study also deals with this topic.

Adulthood was previously considered a period characterized by physical and emotional loss. Nowadays, people tend to relate to several periods in adulthood that can be exploited for personal development (Nardi, 1991). Most researchers agree on four stages of development in adult life: Early adolescence, mid-life, late adulthood and old age. Some researchers see the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a period of accelerated change that affects human attitudes to themselves and their age. Thus some assume that the number of periods of development will increase and their length will shorten (Carasso, 2001).

The empirical study of adult development began in the 1930s with the study by Buhler (1935). These studies, that offered a psychological analysis of biographies, concluded in general that the dimensions of psychological life are slower than the biological dimensions. It was similarly found that life experiences unfold along two axes: One parallel to biological expansion and contraction, and the other a reflection of achieving life objectives.

Jung (1937) asserts that the personality never ceases developing. He saw the need for self-realization as a human motivating force. The purpose of life is to attain uniqueness and personal development, blending all the components of personality. He avers that, during the first half of life, people develop a healthy ego so they can function satisfactorily in the world around themselves. The behavioral motives during this period are mainly biological. During the second half of life, people are available for

introspection, to discover the inner and deeper layers within themselves. This process is influenced by spiritual and cultural values.

Neugarten (1963) compares longitudinal studies on the stages of adulthood and reaches the following conclusions:

- Changes in personality appear throughout the long period known as adulthood
- Inter-psychological and intra-psychological processes occur during adulthood

These processes generate change in the external appearance, in social life, in personal areas, in the perception of the role, in cognitive processes, in emotional process and in self-esteem.

McClusky (1963) sees the concept of a biological growth curve and decline in human life as stereotypical reinforcement that distorts the realistic essence of adult life. He maintains that the equation of 'strength and burden' is dynamic during adolescence: The less the external burden, the greater the adults' emotional strength to cope with crises. The reduced time may be perceived by the adult as a symbol not only of termination but as a lever for realizing aspirations that were previously repressed.

Erikson (1956, 1985) believes that the personality develops throughout life. He describes the stages of development from their physiological, psychological and their social perspectives. He notes eight stages of development in the life cycle, the last three of which he attributes to the stage of adolescence:

- Early adulthood (from 19-35), with the typical intimacy *versus* isolation conflict, whose basic strengths are affiliation and love
- Middle adulthood – for those aged 35-50, wherein the typical conflict is generativity *versus* self-absorption or stagnation whose basic strengths are production and care
- Late adulthood – of those older than 50, typified by integrity *versus* despair, whose basic strength is wisdom

Sheehy (1995) conducted 500 personal interviews with males and females aged 20-70 from lower to middle class employees in America who can allow themselves to choose. Her conclusions indicate significant change in the individual's attitudes to the life cycle, which, she claims, is no longer standard. Ever more people adapt themselves the stages in the adult life cycle according to their needs.



Carasso (2001), an expert in adulthood, contends that the attitudes to stages in the adult life cycle are changing at both the social-cultural level and the personal level. Adults do not meet uniform criteria of age, as they were usually defined until now. This situation creates complications and embarrassment in everything connected to the social attitude towards the individual, often contradicting the previous perception of age.

Recent years have seen a change in attitude towards developmental aspects of human nature. The impact of the past, that held a key position in observing adulthood, becomes secondary. The attitude to the present, to the internal–emotional reality and to the external–social reality of the individual, play a key role. The prominent emphases are on the adult's ability to create meaningful change in his/her life in everything connected to personal growth, realization and flourishing together with awareness of the changes that occur with age, physical limitations and emotional insights (Goldstein, 2007).

Many theoreticians and researchers refer to the significant differences between the first half of life and the second, contributing to recognizing the mid-life period as a separate development stage.

### **2.1.1 The mid-life stage**

Most researchers agree that mid-life starts after early adulthood. This is a normal developmental stage occurring between the ages of 45-55 approximately. Physiological and social changes begin due to the decline in the hormonal level and incur emotional change (Carasso, 2001). Buhler (1935) finds that around the age of 45, biological needs make way for ideals in both the personal and the social realms.

Kuhlen (1955) refers to the urge to expand in order to describe a human development process. He maintains that, in the second half of life, expansion is manifested not only in terms of adaptation, but in personal maturity. This is attained by self–observation, reassessment of life and finding 'oneself'. He claims that the cause for tension, rigidity and anxiety during this period originates in the fear of loss more than the loss itself.

Erikson (1956) relates to the mid-life period as a stage of middle adulthood located between early adulthood and late adulthood, occurring between the ages of 35-50. He defines the conflict characterizing coping at this stage as generativity *versus* stagnation. He sees the focus during this period on giving birth, caring and concern for the next generation, while the parents forgo some of their needs and desires and learn to give

of themselves. Adults create a framework that facilitates their children's positive development. He sees the positive result of coping with the conflict as an achievement of fertility. The negative result, he believes, is stagnation manifested as boredom, lack of satisfaction, the lack of interest in committing to a variety of assignments, the lack of interest in giving birth to, and caring for, children, and in ambivalence regarding the obligations of children. He believes this stagnation is typical of the mid-life crisis.

Jacques (1965) employs the term mid-life crisis. He asserts that the main issue of this crisis is coping with the awareness of death. He founds his hypothesis on the biographical study of 310 artists and argues that the mid-life crisis is a repeat processing of the depressive position. He maintains that the concept of coping with the notion of death can be translated into coping with everything symbolized by loss and deprivation, such as illness, death and limitation.

Neugarten (1964) describes personality change that occurs towards the second half of life. She relates in particular to the integrative process of the perceptions regarding the self, to awareness of time and death, to the increased tendency for self-examination and for introspection. At this stage, she claims, the ability expands to adapt the self to the surroundings manifested in choice, in regulating and integrating behavior, in control, and in the awareness of the self and its impact on attaining objectives. The feeling of a personal impact on the surroundings deepens. She believes these phenomena should be considered as redirection, as change and intensification and not as a decline and restriction. These are developmental changes, sometimes appearing prior to physical signs of aging, and are not only a reaction to loss.

Jung (1969:158) was convinced that an accelerated developmental process occurs of developing uniqueness, termed individuation, in the second half of life. Males and females have the tendency at this age, to change while expanding areas of the other gender. Amongst women the masculine side, the *animus* archetype, is aroused (Jung 1969:117). This is manifested in rationalism, competitiveness and the investment in objectives outside the family circle. The men connect with their feminine facets, to the *anima* archetype, manifested in emotions, intuitiveness, and developing intimacy in interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, men and women are more aware of repressed attributes that are connected, he believes, to the *shadow* archetype (Jung 1969:140). They include personality qualities that are experienced as undesirable,

unethical and should be punished. The integration of aspects of 'shadow' within the 'self' will lead to development. Success attained in coping with these life tasks will result in individuation, to the cohesion of uniqueness, to the balanced psychological organization of all the contrasts and conflicts in the human soul. The unique personality is, he believes, a psychological entity that combines all the contrasting components of the personality without emphasizing one at the expense of the other. He terms this entity the 'self' that, he believes, affords uniformity to personality, balance and stability. Jung (1969:130) claims that the 'self' influence is noticeable in the middle of life.

Vaillant (1977) conducted a study amongst college graduates for a period of 35 years. He was impressed that 40-year old participants perceived this period of life as an opportunity to fracture the chains of the norms of early adolescence. Furthermore, the inter-generational aspect of the mid-life of the participants was stressed. They find themselves positioned between their adolescent children and their aging parents. The complicated family relationships arouse ideals, values and drives that apparently were deserted or repressed, together with coping with the reality of sickness, aging and finality.

Levinson (1978) surveys four groups of men from various socio-economic groups who are in transition to the second half of their lives. Concluding his study, he believes that this period of life is characterized by negotiations with the concept of death and finality, with the transition to mid-life involving several main tasks: Reviewing life during early adolescence, its reassessment, and taking the first steps towards the second half of life. He focuses the main aspects of coping at this latter stage around four polar pairs: Young-old, destruction-creativity, male-female, and togetherness-separateness. He asserts that in the first half of life these poles are less integrated, since the split during this period aids better functioning. Awareness of the conflicts that these poles arouse is part of the development towards the second half of life, together with the recognition of the absence of a solution offered by these dilemmas.

Development during adolescence according to groups of diverse age cross-sections is explored by Gould (1978). The findings are formulated as misconceptions, typical of each age group. These misconceptions are challenged and unfounded at every stage of life. As regards the mid-life period, the common misconceptions are that the illusion of eternity will last for ever, that death will not touch me or those dear to me, there is no other life beyond that which I live and, especially for women, that there is no existence without receiving protection and refuge.

Sheehy (1995:133) terms mid-life as the age of control. She avers that the mid-life change is expressed in a more stable psychological situation in this regard. Instead of reacting to what the world reflects towards us, as in the first half of life, we are in a state of control and can influence our lives and our surroundings.

It is claimed, when coping with the mid-life phase, that this period can be one of change. The changes in self-perception determine, to a considerable extent, what a person will do with his abilities and skills. All these contribute to the adult's personal development and to new choices in his/her life (Neugarten, 1964). This is a suitable period for realizing dreams previously prevented by an intensive lifestyle, to start a second career, or to take the first further, to concentrate on the enjoyable aspects of life, to devote oneself to hobbies, to develop new social contacts and to find satisfaction and pleasure in family life. The correct state of awareness, calm and quiet is that which enables feeling happiness and pleasure and contributes to general well-being. Developing the awareness and its change in the degree of need contribute to emotional resilience can help when coping with the external reality. Instead of feeling a victim, a feeling of control and acceptance can be aroused. Developing such awareness contributes to developing the ability to react, do and realize one's personal potential (Carasso, 2001).

Barak (2006) believes that when moving towards mid-life, finality becomes a personal and intimate issue, as a result of which there is a new search for the meaning of being, conflicting with questions of liberty and responsibility with an accompanying, painful feeling of loneliness. He claims that the four topics of the existential debate – death, loneliness, freedom and meaning – are the subjects relevant for coping with this period.

Thus the attitude towards adulthood and the potential for personal development during this period expanded with the rise in life expectancy. The mid-life stage, termed by some researchers as menopause, is located in the transition between the first and the second halves of life and is perceived as a period of accelerated physical and emotional change. The attributes of this period are physiological changes, the appearance of signs of aging, coping with loss, awareness of time and death, a tendency towards introspection, the need for reevaluating life, the search for meaning and in their wake, the need for change. Coping well and developing awareness can contribute to personal integration, to emotional

strength and to realizing possibilities for choice in diverse areas of life (Goldstein, 2007).

This study will focus only on the female mid-life stage. The average life expectancy of women is 78-84 years of age hence it is logical to expect that women will live for some 30 years after menopause. Coping well with this age sometimes involves changes essential for adapting to a new period of the second half of their lives, increasing the chances of living a full life accompanied by further development (Northrup, 2001).

The current study examines the way processes of change and development occur amongst women at the mid-life phase in the framework of a group drama therapy workshop. The following section will present the diverse approaches to this stage.

## **2.2 Female mid-life**

The transition from the first half of life to the second is a developmental stage in the life cycle of western women that has been termed variously menopause and the mid-life period. In the female context this period also enjoys unique names of its own: Menopause, climacterium, non-menstruation and mid-life. Apparently, these terms have universal meaning and are accepted by professionals. In fact, there is no clear and agreed definition; there are also differences of opinion regarding the definition of the concepts and their meaning (Flesher, 1998). The diverse terms reflect differing perspectives on this period of the woman's life. Some of the linguistic terms have a negative connotation, some refer to physiological changes and some infer this period is a developmental stage.

This researcher has chosen the term mid-life to denote this period in female life. This term lacks any negative or other bias; it enables seeing women as a whole and therefore can include diverse aspects typical of the period of time. The term menopause appears in this study when used by other researchers.

The mid-life phase, agree most western researchers, is a period characterized as a time of change in various domains: At the physiological level, at the social level and at the psychological level (Northrup, 2001). Some researchers, such as Benedek (1970), emphasize the emotional and the social aspects and claim that change at these levels can also occur without the physiological changes. Others, such as

McQuaide (1998) and Nolelovitz (1978) stress the physiological aspect that includes hormonal change beginning prior to this stage.

Researchers who represent differing domains conducted studies and formulated attitudes regarding this period, amongst which one can identify the bio-medical approach, the cultural approach, the social approach and the psychological approach.

### **2.2.1 The bio-medical approach**

This approach focuses on the physiological aspects of mid-life and the attitude of the medical world to them. It views this period as one in which physical changes occur caused by hormonal changes and the transition from a fertile to an infertile period. Similarly, signs of aging appear with an increase in the frequency of emotional and psychosomatic illnesses (Cumming and Henry, 1959).

#### 2.2.1.1 Attributes

Two concepts are common that reflect this approach: The climacterium and menopause, the latter also coming from the Greek, meaning the end of the moon cycle, i.e., the end of the menstrual cycle.

The end of menstruation occurs due to a drop in the quantity of hormones produced by the ovaries. Some researchers define this period as that following two years during which there has been no menstruation (Rogers, 1963). Others claim one year only. Some researchers see menopause as a name for the complete process. Others divide this period into two: Pre-menopause and post-menopause, while some divide it into three sub-periods: Pre-menopause, (menopausal transition), menopause and post-menopause. The proposed division is sometimes incompatible with the intensity of the symptoms – some women suffer as severely from pre- and post-menopausal symptoms as they do during the menopausal period itself (Speroff, Glass and Kase, 1994).

In the past, researchers considered female depression to be a main characteristic of menopause, diagnosed as an emotional disturbance. The American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (D.S.M.) includes it under the heading "Involutional melancholia", but in 1980 the term was erased from books on psychiatry (in Sheehy, 1995:158).

Three agreed symptoms are mentioned in the medical literature as typical of this period: Changes in menstruation, a decline in the lubrication of the vagina and hot flashes. Additional symptoms are often added despite the absence of proof of a connection between them and hormonal change, including depression, nervousness, anxiety, aggression, restlessness, disturbances in concentration, memory disturbance, lack of logic, insomnia, headaches, sensitive skin, weak muscles, drop in libido, loss of calcium – osteoporosis, sweating, rapid heart beat and lack of energy (Ekstein, 2004).

Goodman, Stewart and Gilbert, (1977) conducted a study in which females aged 35-60 coming to a medical clinic for periodic medical checkup participated. None of them came due to problems associated with the cessation of menstruation. They were divided into two groups, one of women who had not menstruated for at least a year and the other of women who menstruated regularly. The medical files were compared according to 35 variables that included, amongst other things, stomach aches, levels of blood sugar, level of calcium in the blood, hot flushes etc. in order to examine which variables were found to be compatible with the symptoms of the cessation of menstruation. The results were surprising – only 28% of the white women and 24% of the Japanese women who were in the first group reported classical symptoms of the cessation of menstruation, such as hot flushes and sweating. 16% of the white women from the second group (a control group) and 10% of the Japanese women also reported these symptoms. In other words, 75% of the menopausal women did not report any symptoms usually connected to this period. Other studies also supported these findings (Kahana, 1980).

#### 2.2.1.2 Social-cultural impacts

The social-cultural perceptions of the status of women also influence researchers and professionals from the medical world. The assumption of medical science, that links female nature and her emotional condition to the organs of fertility, was discovered in the last century and its implications are still clear now (Ehrenreich and English, 1973).

The term 'hysteria' indicating a physical situation caused by emotional impacts, is borrowed from the Greek word 'hyster' meaning womb (Greer, 1991). The approach that views female anatomy as a means for giving birth only is manifested in language that describes the cessation of menstruation in medical literature. It is described as a pathological reaction, as failure in fertility and in the role of giving birth (Martin,

1987). According to this approach some doctors, even now, tend to recommend to women who have ceased menstruating and encountered medical problems on this background, to remove the womb and ovaries, since they consider them superfluous. In most cases, claim critics such as Payer (1987), the operations are not essential.

Medicine views women during mid-life as suffering from an illness of absence, or, as the gynecological literature defines it as ovarian failure (Ekstein, 2004). Since there is a decline in the ovaries' ability to produce hormones, medicine relates to this phenomenon as to a lack of any other hormone in the body that is in need of treatment, the most common being hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Wilson (1966) presents this approach in his book, "Feminine for ever". The book aroused excitement and afforded one of the revolutionary breakthroughs in medicine. He notes that all women should be seen after menopause as castrated (Zita, 1993). He suggests that menopausal women receive estrogen treatment to continue being women for ever (Dolev, 2004). In 1981 the World Health Organization defined the cessation of menstruation as a hormone deficiency disease, reinforcing the tendency to see mid-life as a medical problem, as an illness whose treatment is hormonal (McQuaide, 1998).

In 1989, in an extensive epidemiological study conducted by McKinlay, McKinlay and Davis (1989), 2500 women aged 45-50 were chosen at random. They reported experiencing disturbing symptoms such as hot flushes, sweating and an irregular monthly cycle. Most of them (75%) reported that the cessation of menstruation was not a major issue; they spoke of relief or of not having to feeling anything special following the cessation of menstruation. 15% of the women reported depression for some of the time. No connection was found amongst these women, between the cessation of menstruation and depression, but a high correlation was found between depression and environmental and psychological variables, such as a lack of social support systems, pressure at work, partner's illness, parents' illness, history of depression and self-assessment based mainly on their external appearance and sexual attraction.

### 2.2.1.3 Current changes

In a study conducted as part of a series of studies in the USA, known as the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), an attempt was made to examine the impact of a particular type of alternative hormonal treatment on the health of menopausal women. Women who did not suffer from such phenomena as hot flushes were examined in order to explore whether



they would benefit if they received long-term hormonal treatment. This study was stopped in June 2002 as the treatment was not found to reduce cardio-vascular disease, and a higher rate of sickness was even observed (Dolev, 2004).

But the medical discussion of alternative hormonal treatment awoke again, raising the conflicts regarding menopausal age. Some claimed that this was a natural physiological period in which one should not interfere and some supported treatment to prevent suffering and a decline in the physical condition (Ekstein, 2004). Although women's medical centers have opened in recent years the hegemony is still held by the males, such as the Israeli Society for Menopause, founded at the end of 1993, whose Board of Governors includes 11 males and the academic committee includes one female.

In parallel, viewing mid-life as a disease that needs medical intervention has been common till now amongst doctors who still use menopausal definitions in scientific advertisements and in terminology with a negative content bias, such as the menopause syndrome (Stumpf and Trolice, 1994). Change is appearing in the medical world regarding women in general and mid-life in particular, manifested in the transition from a collective approach to a subjective approach. The instructions given the doctors include involving the women in all possible treatments, explaining their dangers should there be such. Similarly, the existence of symptoms, their intensity and the degree to which they interfere with daily life on the one hand and the perception of the woman's world regarding herself and this period of life should be considered on the other (Dolev, 2004; Ekstein, 2004).

Specialization in anti-aging medicine developed in the last decade in the medical world inhibiting the aging processes. This branch developed in reaction to the values of western society expressed in the striving for 'eternal youth' (Granville, 2000). The pharmacology industry, and with it media advertising, were flooded with a broad variety of preparations and medications recently available to all. These promise improvement in the physical and the emotional condition of mid-life women. The manufacturers and advertisers make commercial use of the medical knowledge and consequently damage the credibility of the medical realm recruited to the money industry (Carasso, 2001).

Thus to summarize, the bio-medical approach towards female menopause refers to the physiological aspects and the attitude of the medical world towards them. The characteristics of this period are hormonal changes

that indicate the end of the period of fertility, mental changes, the beginning of aging, and a rise in the frequency of emotional and psychosomatic illnesses. The attitude towards this stage is defined pathologically as ovarian failure. In view of recent studies, comprehensive treatment using hormones has been halted. Change is appearing in the medical world manifested in a subjective approach to each woman and her involvement in the possible treatments and their necessity. The legitimacy for different opinions and approaches to menopausal women has increased. The possibilities for treatment and preventing the symptoms have expanded through a healthy life style including proper nutrition, a variety of treatments accepted in complementary medicine and involvement in sporting activities.

The above approach is based on the assumption that scientific-medical knowledge is objective and is not affected by social-value considerations (Flesher, 1998). This review indicates that these areas of life are interwoven, affect and are affected by each other. Below are various approaches towards mid-life that will include aspects from other areas of life. The following section will discuss the cultural approach to the female mid-life stage.

### **2.2.2 The cultural approach**

The basic assumption of this approach determines that women at the mid-life period are influenced mainly by the cultural background and the status of women. This period is shaped not by biological change but by the importance and interpretation afforded it. These stem from each woman's cultural background.

The attitude to menopausal women in many cultures affects their reactions and coping (Barbre, 1993; Dickson, 1993). Comparative studies support this approach. Despite the universalism of the phenomenon of aging, differences have been found in the experiences of menopausal women. Mayan women, for example, welcome this stage and find symbols of freedom in it (Avis, 1996). This is also true for Celtic cultures, wherein the young woman was compared to a flower, the mother to a fruit and the older woman to a seed. The seed is the part that incorporates the knowledge and the strength embraced by all the other parts. The role of the mature woman, after the cessation of menstruation, is the return to sow the kernel of truth and understanding in the community (Dolev, 2004).

Bart (1971), a sociologist, analyses anthropological reports of 36 cultures that examine the reactions of women to the cessation of menstruation, and finds that in all of them the role of the woman alters thereafter. Female depression at this phase is the result of the loss of important roles, followed by a decline in self-image caused not only by hormonal changes. In societies in which the women's status rises with age, such depression is not found. Indian women from the Rajput caste do not complain of depression or of other psychological symptoms. Following the cessation of menstruation, they are released from the anonymity of the Ra'ala and are entitled to sit and joke with the men.

In many cultures, women enjoy a greater degree of freedom after the cessation of menstruation than that allowed them during their years of fertility. In some traditional societies such as Iran, women enjoy social status only after their sons have grown up. Grown sons come to visit them, bring them flowers and update them on the news. Similarly, 66% of Japanese women perceive this stage as an age lacking events. There is not even a word to describe hot flushes in Japanese, although a frozen shoulder, known in Japan to be a typical symptom of the cessation of menstruation, is unknown in other cultures (Lock, 1994). In China, where old age is respected, psychological symptoms of the cessation of menstruation are very rarely reported. In some eastern languages, there are no terms for this stage of life.

Findings presented at the Sixth International Conference on Menopause held in Bangkok at the end of 1990 confirm that women in far eastern countries report symptoms connected to mid-life less than do western women. Similarly, the symptoms they present are less severe than those presented in the west (Sheehy, 1992).

Sixty Arab women were interviewed in the Israeli study, 20 of whom were aged 20-40, 20 were aged 45-55 and 20 were aged 60-80. The findings testify to the increase in the power of Arab women in mid-life (Friedman and Pines, 1992). Flint (1975) concludes that the symptoms of mid-life are lesser or do not exist in societies in which older women enjoy a stable social status. In societies in which women's traditional role is to give birth, the loss of this ability erodes the self-image unless they receive a status compensation for this. In western cultures the status of women declines with age. Cultural values pertaining to the perception of the meaning of femininity and the status of the mature woman influence the difficulties arising amongst women reaching mid-life status.

Deutsch (1949) asserts that menopausal women lose that which they received during the period of their sexual maturity. The end of the role of the sex organs as a means of pregnancy are, for them, a first sign of aging and a threat to femininity. The woman's attitude towards her own sexuality influences her reactions to the threat of menopause.

Notman and Nodelson (1978) aver that many menopausal symptoms can be the result of fear of the loss of youthful attractiveness, the start of aging, and a feeling of the loss of control of the body and of life in general. The concepts, 'Young forever', 'The world belongs to the young' common in western culture, express adoration of youth. They affect men and women alike, despite a young girl also being interested in mature men, while the opposite hardly exists (Sheehy, 1995).

The linguistic culture in Israel is also influenced by the attitude to female menopause. The language dictates the rules of logic and the ways of thought that include permission and prohibition of cultures (Fromm, 1951). Menopause is a term that refers only to women during this period of life although it is not gender-biased linguistically. Such derogatory terms as 'a worn-out old woman behind the times' are not used regarding males.

Culture affects the ways women cope with the mid-life stage. In cultures in which the status of women rises then, the changes are welcomed and the physical symptoms are experienced as marginal or non-existent. In western culture, in which the adoration of youth and the perception of the meaning of a woman pertain to her sexual attractiveness, difficulties arise in coping with this age. The cultural attitude to the feminine essence dictates the status of women and their social roles at the diverse stages of their life cycle.

The next section will discuss the social attitude towards the female mid-life period in the western world.

### **2.2.3 The social approach**

The social approach refers to the changes in social functioning at mid-life and their impacts on the way women cope with this phase. The influences of the social movements and streams, and the development of computerized communications on the female mid-life stage, are also noticeable.

### 2.2.3.1 The traditional roles and the 'empty nest'

Guttman (1965) maintains that men and women differ in their perception of the relationships with the environment and with the world in general. The male motivation is characterized by the need to enforce a personal agenda on an unstable, impersonal and unpredictable world. The women focus on the domestic, familiar and permanent space. Women transfer personal responsibility and initiative from the 'self' to the group agreement and to the lifecycles.

Many researchers examine the impact of the loss of social roles on women in the domestic space, who took part in the first half of their adult life. Neugarten and Crains (1965) studied women aged 13-64, and find that a group of menopausal women suffer from psychological and social tension far more than any other age group. Among this group the tension was connected to the threat of the loss of ability to give birth and to the 'empty nest' phenomenon.

Bart (1971) refers to the term the 'empty nest' as a sociological explanation for the mid-life crisis. She believes that depression at this age, when the children leave the parental home, is directly proportional to the centrality of children in the woman's life. One of the issues she explores in her study is women's reactions to mid-life, and finds that the woman's role changes then. Female depression at that period is not due only to hormonal changes but also to the loss of role leading to a decline in her self-image. In cultures such as the Israeli and American cultures, in which the status of women declines with age, the reactions to the cessation of menstruation are severe, mainly as this period in life symbolizes for them the loss of a meaningful role.

She further studied healthy women and women hospitalized for neurotic or psychotic depression aged 40-52. Using an epidemiological index she examined whether female depression is a consequence of the hormonal change they experience. Using interviews and tests she also investigated whether the depression that appeared amongst women after the cessation of menstruation is connected to the loss of the maternal role as a role central in their lives. She finds that women who receive over-support and are over-involved in their children's lives tended more to suffer from depression when that role ended than others. The loss of the maternal role, when it is so central and important, can result in the loss of self-esteem and a feeling of lack of use. Motherhood provided these women

with a feeling of existential significance; when the children leave home their role ends, life loses its meaning for them resulting in depression.

Keep and Kellerhols (1975) conducted a study intended to examine the impact of age, menstruation, marital relations and the relationship to their surroundings on women's health. They explore how these variables are affected by the socio-economic status and functional alternatives to the maternal role. The research finds that menopausal women discover a decline in their cultural activity, in their connection with the surroundings, in sexual relations with their partners and in their self-esteem. Similarly, they find that women whose children left home when they were pre-menopausal exhibited more symptoms. The researchers conclude that women can be expected to exhibit more symptoms during menopause, will be typical housewives with little interest in what occurs outside the family circle, and that which is the source of her pride is the home and the family.

Tinsley, Sullivan and Meguire (1984) find a connection between the degree of acceptance of the traditional female role and depression during menopause. They conclude that the more women identify with the characteristics of the traditional female role seeing themselves mainly as passive, dependent and helpless, the more vulnerable were they to depression during this period.

Some studies find the impact of the empty nest phenomenon to be the opposite. Rubin (1979) studies the mid-life stage, and notes that after concluding the weighty parenting roles, this is the first period when the woman can devote herself to her needs and to her development as an independent woman in her own right. She relates to the feelings of menopausal women – feelings of freedom from the previous burden, creating new opportunities and the experience of the beginning of a path.

The cessation of menstruation and the children leaving home are sometimes liberating experiences for women for whom motherhood is only one channel to feeling significant. Research conducted in Israel explored the reactions of five groups of Israeli menopausal women of different religions and origins (Dowty, 1972). Analysis of those findings testifies that these women differed greatly in their reactions. The reactions of European women was extremely positive. They welcomed the cessation of menstruation and saw an improvement in their married lives. Arab women ranked below the European women, who accepted the physical changes connected to menopause as natural changes, saw an improvement in their emotional health and expected a rise in their social

status. The most negative reactions typified women from traditional groups, who fulfilled a traditional role connected to the domestic space, such as giving birth, raising children and running the household.

Bart (1971) finds in her studies that women who are housewives reacted to the end of their maternal role at menopause, and tended more to suffer from depression than working women. Another study (Zita, 1993) finds that professional women experience menopause better than salaried workers. This finding can demonstrate that fewer menopausal symptoms are the result of more possibilities for choice facing women from a high socio-economic status.

William and Best (1990) believe that the traditional division of labor between men and women can be seen from the survival perspective - protecting women and leaving the exposure to danger to men in order to assure the continuity of fertility and birthing. Hence women after menopause are freer and liberated from social pressures.

Neugarten (1968) finds that women tend to define the stages of development in terms of family events, such as the grown children leaving home, while men relate more to changes in their professional lives. Nevertheless, her surveys find that the mid-life stage is also perceived as improving life for women. This is the stage at which female confidence peaks, feeling control and mastery of their drives and surroundings. Similarly, the ability increases to make use of life experience and life wisdom that developed over the years.

### 2.2.3.2 The role of the partnership relationship

Another change occurring during menopause is in the relationships with the partner. This change is a result of the end of the parenting role. Since the children have grown up and left home, and the partners are often established financially, there is time to think and to reassess married life. This results in the emergence of diverse problems between the partners that were solved or repressed while raising the children. Sometimes this process generates problems of communications and a decline in the interpersonal relationships, and sometimes can contribute a new dimension with meaning that strengthens the relationship between the couple. A woman satisfied with her married life is the one to feel there is mutuality and equality in the relationship between herself and her partner, support, understanding and communications between them over problems in their relationships, and satisfactory sex life (Northrup, 2001).

Essex, Klein, Lohr and Benjamin (1985) investigate the impact of diverse attributes of intimate relationships on depression amongst menopausal and aging women. Their findings show that certain attributes in intimate relationships described by the women, such as unfriendly and non-reciprocal, unstable and unpredictable relationships, with the little time for shared enjoyment, can predict depression during menopause and aging.

In Israel there are women whose informal responsibility towards members of their family actually expands. In addition to the care and sometimes caring needed by their parents or their partner, the responsibility for the adult children has not yet ceased. Sociologists term this steamroller of pressures the 'sandwich generation'. Due to the security and economic problems, menopausal women find themselves worrying and caring for their soldier children. The cost of living often forces the young adults to live in the parental home. This situation revives the role of maintaining the home full time. For some women this situation is burdensome, others welcome it, since the continuity of their family role delays their coping with the 'emptying nest' and with the impact of this phenomenon on the partnership (Flesher, 1998).

### 2.2.3.3 Social role androgyny

Gutman (1977), Neugarten (1968) and Sinnot (1982) assert that the traditional role is desirable when raising children. But androgynous behavior at the end of this period will result in greater adaptation than the traditional female role. They claim that the process of change from role differentiation to androgyny is a normal developmental and adaptive process that facilitates the woman's surviving the menopausal period. Guttman (1977) explains that the differentiation between the roles is important for creating an atmosphere suitable to raising children. But when the children have grown each partner should express attributes hidden in him/herself connected to the opposite gender, such as assertiveness and independence amongst women and dependence and emotional expression amongst men.

The change occurring in society from both the economic and the domestic perspectives resulted in many women choosing a career in addition to motherhood. These women are expected to adapt to the demands in two realms – family and work. Career women are characterized as sociologically androgynous since they fulfill both roles considered masculine and those considered feminine (Sexton, 1979; Yohalem, 1979). Liebllich (1986) finds that career women at the mid-life



period, do not view the departure of their children from home as a crisis-generating factor. Similarly, she finds that they realize their sociologically androgynous professional role in the first half of their lives already. Psychological androgyny was not proven, but she hypothesizes that this process is the result of the ongoing development apparently realized only in the second half of life.

#### 2.2.3.4 Feminist and post-modern movements

Changes in the social status of women during mid-life, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were affected by the publicist and political steps of the feminist movement, the second wave of which began in the 1960s and 1970s in the western world. It affected the attitude of women towards their menopause, and the social perspective regarding menopausal women (Kamir, 2002). The movement objected to the scientific and medical approaches. It claimed that the objectivity of scientific research was questionable, and that it is the reflection of the cultural norms from which it draws and that it reinforces (Barbre, 1993). Feminists believe that science also suffers from discrimination on a gender basis when it confirms the weakness of women, and therefore also the need to protect them (Ehrenreich and English, 1973). Similarly, the attitude towards menopause as an illness is influenced by the perception of the female essence as a tool for giving birth and as a sexual object that must preserve its attractiveness. There are those in Israel who claim that social revolutions have difficulty flourishing in a shaky security situation wherein the decision-makers and those setting the tone are predominantly male (Flesher, 1998).

The feminist approach strives for menopause to be treated according to objective research that will examine how many women see menopause as a real nuisance necessitating medical intervention. Opponents to this approach claim that the physiological symptoms of this stage or the social-cultural influences on women at this age should not be ignored (Dickson, 1993). This period should be seen as a process experienced by all women in the middle of their lives, but with differing degrees between, and even within, diverse groups.

The social and cultural changes that are still occurring in the world as of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century concern philosophers, researchers and people in general. This period is known as the post-modern period. Women at the mid-life stage are also influenced by the attributes of this period and some even influence them.

Feminism and post-modernism are two types of discourse that try to give the right of speech to the silenced and silent parts in our subjectivity (Gurevitz, 1997). They strive to be a counterweight to the phallogocentric way of thought. They claim the right for self-representation of women, not *via* attitude, treatment, reference, relationship or dependence on another system. Specifically, not the patriarchal that is manifested in the male look, in male judgment and in the power-structured determination of the real regime. Feminism and post-modernism represent a striving for symbolic expansion of the readiness to examine the cultural patterns and the stigmas attached to female and male biology. Similarly, they reject the dichotomy between the male and the female (Kristeva, 1986). Both have pluralistic observations, multiplicities and particularity that affect the attitude to femininity as composed of a series of differences.

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the information highway developed through the expansion of higher technology and the Internet involving computerized communications accompanied by the increased use of computers for interpersonal communications and the expansion of knowledge pools (Rutin, 1997). Women could use the Internet for interpersonal communications. Such reciprocal social relationships were not only restrictive, but were even more varied. The space seems to be an arena bringing people closer, creating virtual communities and new digital domains for meetings, for befriending and for friendship, and also enables increasing civil involvement, for varying entertainment in leisure hours (Hecht, 2006). Knowledge of all walks of life has become accessible and is not the property solely of professionals. Woman can obtain information on menopause, be exposed to the different approaches and to the varied possibilities of ways of coping. At the same time, difficulties arise in the processing of information by the individual due to the flooding with knowledge and the reliability of the sources of knowledge published on the Internet (Stoll, 1995).

The model that represents motherhood amongst menopausal women is not suitable to this period of accelerated change. Mothers must recreate the perception of their world relative to their mid-life. Sheehy (1995) asserts that women today, who focus now in their fifties, totally alter the entire perception of mid-life. Those who focus on public life overturn the old stereotype – from decline to power.

Thus the social approach views female menopause as characterized by changes in the social roles connected to family belonging and the status of women. The parenting style changes according to the children's ages.

The role of couplehood alters as a result of the change in parenting style. The transition of women from the status of the parent's child is sometimes exchanged for parental responsibility for parents. And thus the woman's ability develops as her own parent (Sheehy, 1995). The change in roles in the domestic space is experienced by some of the women as a loss and amongst others as liberation, an opportunity for change and development. Adaptive coping is recognized amongst women who develop sociological androgyny.

Western society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is influenced by the mood of the feminist movement, by the post-modern approach and by the knowledge highway on the Internet. Science and technology are perceived as representing a male world view. Femininity tries to free itself from its patriarchal center both pragmatically and philosophically. Exposure to heterogeneous channels of knowledge and diverse opinions arouses suspicion regarding the 'truth' and the 'historic facts' (Gurevitz, 1997).

Prejudice regarding the age of menopause in society are waning and women of this age are free to shape this period according to their needs. These changes are affected by intra-personal processes occurring amongst women at this stage and affect them. The following section will deal with the psychological approach and with emotional processes occurring amongst women at mid-life.

#### **2.2.4 The psychological approach**

The psychological approach to female menopause relates to internal, emotional processes that occur amongst women during the mid-life period. Researchers link these processes to several factors (Ussher, 1992):

1. They are the result of physiological changes occurring at this age.
2. They are the result of social changes manifested in role changes in the domestic setting.
3. They are affected by the cultural values that dictate the social attitude to the menopausal woman.
4. They are a manifestation of the psychological needs that awaken in the transition between early and later adulthood.

##### **2.2.4.1 Loss, change and development**

Menopause is experienced as a stage of loss that can include the loss of fertility, the loss of youth, the loss of the physical and mental abilities,

the loss of sexual ability, loss following the death of friends and parents, loss of roles and of values that held a positive and meaningful place during a woman's life till now (Back, 1971; Bart, 1971; Benedek, 1970; MacQuaide, 1998). Sometimes, not the loss itself but the fear of loss intensifies (Sheehy, 1995). Deutsch (1949) adds that there is narcissistic damage that is hard to overcome, since the woman, during menopause, loses everything she received during her maturation. Coping with separation and loss can cause a feeling of shortage of time, and a reduction in the opportunities life offers. Neugarten (1964) believes these are some of the sources of tension, anxiety and depression at this phase.

Viorst (1986) maintains that women in the second half of their lives mourn the loss of their self-image that relied on the self-definition as it was formulated and adapted to the first half of their lives. Sheehy (1995) avers that from the psychological perspective something must die before a new self can be born. She sees this as coping with the minor death of women's first adulthood.

Researchers from the world of developmental psychology refer to menopause as an opportunity for psychological growth after a mourning process that enables processing the changes and losses. They believe that the loss of roles connected to the family circle, or reduction in the dosage and intensity, can also be a source of relief and an opportunity for positive change amongst women. The emotional reactions comprise feelings of relief together with sadness (Downing, 1987; Sidi, 1993; Viorst, 1998).

#### 2.2.4.2 Introspection and reassessing life

Some researchers view the urge for change and expansion as motivating the accelerated emotional processes during the transitional period to the second half of life. They claim that the transition is defined through the inner world (Kuhlen, 1955). People are available for inner observation in order to discover inner and deep layers within themselves (Jung, 1971). This process is defined as change in people's focus from the outside inwards (Gutman, 1965). Neugarten's work (1964, 1968) describes changes in personality occurring amongst men and women towards the second half of their lives, and notes the increase in the tendency for self-examination and for introspection.

Introspection is the process of self-reflection and of cognitive assessment that is likely to lead to significant change in people's perception of themselves and their surroundings (Tamir, 1982). This process is a

manifestation of the need for re-assessing life at mid-life, accompanied by observation of the past and consideration of the future - observation of the achievements of the past as regards family, career and society, and of everything connected to self-realization and the search for new options for the future. Following the changes in women's diverse areas of life the need arises to find new sources for satisfaction and meaning, to develop new and unknown areas of the self, and the desire to realize wishes that have been suppressed (Dior, 1990; Livson, 1981; Rubin, 1979). Introspection and the process of assessing life can create tension, anxiety and depression during menopause. In parallel, they can contribute to growth and discovering new meaning, and thereafter also to change in the professional domain and in additional areas (Neugarten, 1968; Northrup, 2001).

The process of assessing life for menopausal women arouses again the attitude to the dimension of time, sexual identity, personal development, self-esteem and self-realization (Eyal, 1997).

#### 2.2.4.3 The dimension of time

At mid-life time has a psychological meaning. Attitudes to time change, the focus on time expands to several areas of time of past, present and future, awareness rises of the personal experience regarding the feeling of time and its use.

Time receives meaning following change involving loss: Parent's and friends' death and illness, physical changes testifying to aging and the maturing of the children. Menopausal women become aware of the subject of death (Cumming and Henry, 1959; Wilk and Kirk, 1995). Awareness of the finality of life is honed and the feeling of the urgency of time intensifies. The desire to control and use time intelligently increases at this phase (Neugarten, 1979).

Fisher (1989) is convinced that the main source of tension for mature women is the need for recruitment, for courage, to take time for themselves. The difficulty arises after years of investing and caring for others and the expectations of those around them to continue. Taking time for themselves is interpreted by many women as denying this time to others.

The time allocated previously by external constraints is measured and used according to inner needs at the mid-life period - time that was

formerly divided with the social web is now dedicated to personal issues and quality changes from the infinite to the finite (Eyal, 1997).

#### 2.2.4.4 Sexual identity

Menopausal women must cope with the renewed definition of their sexual identity. The psychoanalytical approach refers to the process of sexual development. Researchers and theoreticians support diverse explanations for the reasons lying in childhood that led to the development of inferiority and dependency as characterizing the woman's sexual identity.

Theoreticians classify the diverse psychoanalytical explanations for the development of sexual identity into two main streams. The phallogocentric approach that claims male superiority and female inferiority, and the gynocentric approach that claims that the original orientation of men and women is in fact mainly female, originates in the primary identification with the mother (Stockard and Johnson, 1980).

Freud (1961) ascribes this to penis envy. Horney (1966) asserts that sexual identity develops according to the limitations that society sets. Thompson (1964) avers that human attributes are more a cultural than a sexual product.

Learning theory assumes that sexual identity is acquired, similar other to social behaviors. The process is characterized, in addition to cultural influences, through providing reinforcement, observation and imitation (Bandura, 1969). Cognitive theory emphasizes the role of the little girl as a key component in acquiring sexual identity. Cognitive schemes are constructed during childhood that help children to organize their world by adapting behaviors, attitudes and values to their self-perception (Kolberg, 1966).

The parental attitude towards their children influences their sexual identity, maintains Chodorow (1978). Parents encourage their sons to be independent and the girls to a pattern of relationships and independence defined by others. The mother sees her daughter as an extension of herself, and therefore encourages identification and lack of separateness, the opposite of the attitude to her son. The son identifies with the male image that is usually absent, by rejecting the mother and rejecting the female qualities at the psychological and the social-cultural levels.

Dinnerstein (1976) maintains that girls do not need to define themselves as different, since they are identified with the mother. At the same time, the mother serves as an object for her hostile attitudes and the father as an object for her love. Children turn to the father, to the male, to patriarchy in general as to a solution for the feelings of hostility towards the mothers, towards women.

During menopause, the sexual identity needs to be reprocessed. A feeling of sexual identity in later adulthood is connected to the way of coping with the oedipal complex in childhood (Ogden, 2001). This reprocessing enables increasing creativity and a feeling of emotional satisfaction at this time. Deutsch (1949) sees the increased activity during post-menopause as a struggle to preserve femininity, sexual attractiveness and fertility.

The woman's attitude towards her own sexuality affects her reactions to the threat of menopause. Motherhood represents a psycho-sexual developmental stage in the woman's personality, which is a component in the manifestation of femininity. Pregnancy is an expression of the libidinal feelings of the woman through physiological processes. A woman who remembers a satisfactory feminine past, who allowed herself to be loved and have her physiological needs met, will be sure of her femininity and be able to be flexible and to direct that energy to new targets. Sublimation and the ability to love, attained through the maternal experience and sexual experience, will help women to cope with this stage (Bemesderfer, 1996; Benedek, 1950). For a woman who was confident in her sexual identity, the feeling of loss discovered with the cessation of menstruation can be accompanied by positive feelings that she returns to herself and her development, excited and enthusiastic about facing the future (Notman and Nodelson, 1978).

Block (1973), and Hafner, Rebecca and Oleshansky (1975) discuss the last stage in the development of sexual identity as a transcendental stage, in which people cease functioning according to stereotypical gender attributes only. Block (1973) relates to this stage as to a process of integration of male and female elements in the 'self'. The latter researchers claim that a person's ability to cope with complicated situations increases with this development. They restrict the ability for the integration of male and female attributes only to the part of the population that exhibits such ability.

#### 2.2.4.5 Psychological role androgyny

The need for change encourages women to examine their psychological roles, to empower or to reduce the extent of some of them and to find new characteristics in order to adapt themselves to this period and to find new sources of satisfaction. They must construct new 'selves' that will be suited to the new structure of their lives (Livson, 1981).

Neugarten (1968) notes the need for integrating perceptions regarding the 'self'. Striving for balanced psychological organization of all the contrasts and contradictions in a person's personality is that which motivates him/her to an accelerated developmental process in the second half of life, claims Jung (1937). This process, accompanied by the development of psychological androgyny, enjoys individuation (Jung, 1968), matching traits (Bakan, 1966; Guttman, 1965), a complementary process (Gilligan, 1983), and the inverted hexagon (Sheehy, 1992).

The process of individuation (according to Jung, 1969) is typified by the personality development and the 'self' as the result of the combination of attributes characterized as *shadow* and those ascribed to the other gender, the *anima* or the *animus* (Robertson, 2004). The *shadow* is an archetype that includes the personal attributes denied and suppressed by the individual. *Anima*, the soul in Latin, is the archetype that expresses the female aspect of the male unconscious. The *animus*, the spirit in Latin, is the archetype that expresses the male aspect of the female unconscious. The 'self' is a psychological entity that combines all the contrasting components that Jung sees as an archetype unto itself representing wholeness and the sublime (Storr, 1982). This process of formulating uniqueness will lead to unity in the contradictions that afford personality its uniformity, balance and stability (Harding, 1965). This process sometimes involves extreme emotional fluctuations - feelings of previous knowledge revealed later as the realization in the external reality, meaningful dreams as well as the awakening of a person's energy (Netzer, 2004).

Bakan (1966), in his theory of matching traits, claims that the main purpose of the individual is to merge two styles manifested in the attitude to the world. The one is ascribed to the male approach and is characterized by a task-oriented approach and in 'separation', described as 'agency', in which the individual is the entirety facing the world. This approach is manifested in the individual's need to protect him/herself, to insist on his/her right to impose his/her opinion on the surroundings. The



second is ascribed to the female approach and is characterized by cooperation, by 'uniting with' and by 'communion', in which the individual is part of the whole. This approach is expressed in the need to belong to the other and to be close to him/her. This process develops gradually while moderating the dominant style to the point of balance and integration between two styles.

Guttman (1975) notes a process of matching the attributes of both genders at mid-life. He claims that in this period the sharp differences between the genders are blurred and androgynous characteristics develop amongst both males and females. The older the children, the less available and intensive are the parents. Time and energy are released that can be manifested in realizing areas of personality that were suppressed in the first half of life. A process of softening and passivity occurs amongst males, and of empowerment amongst females, characterized by assertiveness and activity. Block (1973) refers to the most superior development of the male as a merger between assertiveness and consideration of the other, and amongst women as a merger and combination of the psyche towards harmonious relationships with the expression of power.

Later studies, such as Bem (1974) and Erdwins, Tyler and Mellinger (1983), that employ direct tests of gender identity, show no support for the concept of matching traits.

Gilligan (1983) sees complementary behavior as a key attribute of maturity in mid-life. Women switch from a female to a male approach. The female approach is characterized by the attitude to reality as to a network of relationships, maintained by contacts and connections of emotional giving and receiving. The male approach is characterized by hierarchic observation of the world, in placing emphasis on personal achievement and in defining identity in an ongoing process of separation and individuation.

Gilligan (1983) sees complementary behavior as a key attribute of the transition to the second half of life, with the development of stereotypical male attributes and a masculine approach to reality amongst women.

In the transition to the second half of life, women move from intimacy to an independent identity and men do the opposite, each being more balanced. The first half of life is characterized by functional stereotypes that encourage stereotypical attributes. The stereotypical perception of personality attributes for males finds traits characterized by

instrumentalism in ability and implementation, while women relate attributes of emotional expressiveness connected to warmth and the ability to express feelings (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz, 1972; Smith and Midlarsky, 1985; Spence and Sawin, 1985).

Lieblich (1986) reveals that there is no uniform development track that characterizes women. Women in the first half of their lives, develop female attributes in addition to a career, and will tend to strengthen the male traits in the second half and *vice versa*.

Sheehy (1995) relates to the development of the difference and the similarity between femininity and masculinity *via* the new geometry of the sexual rhombus. She avers that in the first ten years males and females are similar, and with their sexual maturation they become extremely different: In the 30s the contrasts peak, and in the 50s they begin to develop attributes of the other gender. During mid-life, the directives of what it is to be a man or a woman lose their intensity, and the rigid division of roles blurs. The change in life tasks cause the desertion of old patterns and the development of new ones.

Both genders tend, in mid-life, to come closer to a better balance between the drive that seeks personal assertiveness, the drive to blend and for a mutual connection. Males and females reach this point from contrasting directions. Sheehy (1995) notes that there are experts who connect the personality changes to changes in the brain structure caused by hormonal changes.

In the second half of life, women are empirically observed as starting to be more focused, more assertive and independent, interested in tasks and achievement and less in caring for others. The men become more expressive and react with greater sensitivity; they show greater interest in caring for others and in their desire to be cared for.

This period of life can embrace changes that are not coordinated between the partners and result in a crisis for them, such as the conflict on the background of the arousal sexual and lust amongst women while the male sex drive is waning. These changes occur as part of the developmental process and not due to external causes in differing cultures, although the sexual identity as a man or woman is maintained (Sheehy, 1995).

Several studies find a connection between psychological androgyny and mental health (Bem, 1974; Kaplan, 1976; Liblich, 1986). Bart (1971) finds that women who work outside the home, who had achievements and meaning outside the home, were less vulnerable and coped better during menopause than housewives who accept their traditional female role and develop a feeling of self-worth that is dependent on others meaningful to them.

Liblich (1986) finds that the double role that career women take upon themselves in balancing their work with rich personal lives is not just a source of pressure and burnout, but on the contrary, it creates an opportunity for integrating two patterns – the male and the female. This reduces the chances for severe crises when aging and enables better adaptation to changes that occur with age.

Sinnot (1982) compares androgynous adults and adults who functioned according to the traditional sexual roles, discovering that the connection between successful androgyny and aging is part of the broader process of increasing and decreasing the sexual role in certain periods of the life cycle. Such change shows that the sexual roles are not central to identity, and people who adapt are people who are capable of changing sexual roles according to need. Flexibility between roles facilitates a better synthesis between the conflictive roles and thus lead to a long life of high quality.

Mental health, according to Bem (1974) is not attained by acquiring a stereotypical gender role, as traditional approaches previously asserted, but by acquiring masculine and feminine attributes together.

There is no one and unique model of the gender role that leads to adaptation in the menopausal period, believes Livson (1981). He tracked the development of women in different periods of life till menopause and identifies two different types of successful functioning at this time. There were women whose personality was suited to the female and traditional mothering role, satisfied with nurturing their surroundings and close interpersonal relationships prior to, and after, their period of motherhood. And there were women with an orientation to advance intellectually and less to nurture social relationships, who preferred to realize the intellectual ambitions during mid-life. These women preferred to deal with things defined as masculine, or in which the traditional feminine role was limiting. His conclusion is that the key to good functioning at this time is the adaptation between the woman's personality and the social roles they choose.

Feminists and post-feminists claim that the changes in the pattern of thought at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century demand restructuring of the concept of femininity. The binary differences have been blurred and female society has the task of freeing itself from the dichotomous view of the masculine and the feminine, the temperament that is related to women *versus* the awareness ascribed to males, emotionality *versus* rationality, the contained *versus* the container (Gurevitz, 1997).

Irigaray (in Rozmarin, 2003), the feminist psychoanalyst and philosopher, avers that the inter-sexual difference is basic and cannot be erased. It is embedded in the sensual and physical experience of each person. Femininity does not rely on uniformity but on the shared striving for a culture that allows recognizing difference. This is a challenge to the accepted approach based on forgetting that which is different on the one hand, and its conversion to its contrast on the other. She calls for creating freedom for women to determine their lives.

#### 2.2.4.6 Self-perception and meaning

During the mid-life of women, the perception of the 'self', that was formulated during first stage of adolescence, is undermined. The processes of change during mid-life affect the perception of self, the self-value, self-confidence, self-actualization and the discovery of personal meaning.

The personal process that includes self-assessment, evaluation and re-evaluation of past achievements and future goals, can lead to an increase in self-confidence, greater feeling of control of the drives and of life. Furthermore, a process can occur of revelation and reliance in everything pertaining to the experience that accumulated in the first half of life and of the life wisdom (Neugarten, 1968).

Bart (1971) claims that role and self-perception are interconnected. A person's role changes when he moves from one stage in life to another; the people with whom he interacts change and consequently his self-perception must also change. She believes that a woman whose identity stems more from her role as a mother than from her role as a wife or from work, will find it harder to change her role and self-perception than a woman who has additional involvements with which she identifies.

Bardwich (1971) states that a feeling of greater self-worth will develop amongst women who live according to the female model only, or who combine other roles than a woman who does not realize her female aspects. Only after a woman has attained a feeling of self-worth as a woman can she direct her resources also to other areas.

Dinnerstein (1976) asserts that following the renewed definition of self, the self-perception at menopause should alter and be adapted to the period. Women should include tempering from her young image in favor of the richness in judgment and of applying the mature forces that lead to self-realization. Mostly, separating from the young image and from youth involves a struggle which for many is never concluded.

Ussher (1992) claims that personality split between the woman and herself characterizes certain stages in the development of female identity in the journey through life. Women, during menopause, are divided as a result of the interpretations regarding their bodies and sexuality.

The split is sometimes between the self-image of the young woman and the physiological changes that testify to her being a mature woman; between the feelings of lack of usefulness as a result of change in meaningful roles whose extent declined, and life experience and maturity of those with the potential to realize them; between an inner feeling of attractiveness and the social image of uselessness. In the first half of life, split was a means to cope with tension and contradictions that made it difficult to implement life tasks. In mid-life, women needed a process of personal development and integration in order to allow themselves to realize their abilities in the second half of their lives.

Proper coping with the renewed formulation of the self-perception involves contesting consciousness and rejecting denial. This process can lead to physical and psychical energetic arousal that will help self-actualization and discovering new meaning to life (Sheehy, 1995). Jung (in Netzer, 2004) sees self-fulfillment as a force motivating people. Positive self-esteem and self-realization affect each other.

A feeling of positive value amongst women regarding themselves and their lives will alleviate the transition to the second half of life. Many women perceive this period as a suitable time to examine future possibilities for achievement and change, such that will lead to greater independence and self-realization (Defey, Storch, Cardozo and Diaz, 1996).

During this period with its significant changes, the possibility for female development and growth exist. This is a period in which the search for new meanings to life is necessary (Jones, 1997; Wilk and Kirk, 1995).

Thus, psychological approach to female mid-life thus emphasizes the psychological processes involved in the mourning for losses that typify this period and the potential for the development embedded therein. The need arises amongst mid-life women for introspection and the need for reassessing life. This process can lead to personality development, to expanding the repertoire of the psychological roles, to change in the attitude to the dimension of time, to redefining the sexual identity and self-perception. These changes can result in realization and self-actualization adapted to the needs of the woman and the discovery of the new meaning to her life (Defey et al., 1996; Jones, 1997; Wilk and Kirk, 1995)

To summarize, the female mid-life stage in the western world varies between the ages of 45-55 approximately. This period is characterized by changes in diverse areas – at the physiological level, the social level and the psychological level (Northrup, 2001). Diverse approaches to menopause stress different aspects of this mid-life period.

The biological-medical approach refers to the physiological aspects and the attitude of the medical world to them. The physiological attributes of this period are hormonal changes that indicate the end of the fertile period, mental changes, the beginning of aging, an increase in the frequency of mental and psychosomatic illness. Change regarding menopausal women and symptoms that begin during this period is occurring in the medical world. It is manifested in the transition from the hegemony of professionals and an arbitrary and generalized attitude, to a subjective attitude towards all women, manifested in their involvement in the possibilities of therapy and its necessity (Dolev, 2004).

The cultural approach asserts that the culture to which women belong affects their coping with mid-life. In cultures in which the status of women rises, the changes are welcomed or experienced as marginal. In the west, the worship of youth negatively affects the perception of the mature woman, whether by society or by the woman herself (Granville, 2000).

The social approach refers to changes in the social roles that occur during this period and to coping with them. They can be manifested in role

androgynicity and to being connected to family belonging, to parenthood, couplehood and to society in general (Sheehy, 1995).

The psychological approach refers to the unique needs that arise during this period amongst women: The reevaluation of life, introspection, the relevant meaning of life, expanding the repertoire of internal roles as a way of redefining identity to name but a few. The attitude towards these needs can contribute to development, freedom of choice and self-realization (Jones, 1997; Wilk and Kirk, 1995).

The current study views personality development as useful to women at the mid-life phase, where it is adapted to her choice regarding her individual needs. The assumption is that the mid-life phase of a woman's life is an opportunity for mental 'time out', time to recreate oneself. This study tries to discover and understand processes of change and development amongst women during mid-life through a group dramatherapy workshop and how they can serve as a lever for coping well with this stage. The next section will deal with the components of the period that affords a developmental stage in the lifecycle.

### **2.3 Mid-life as a transitional stage in a woman's life**

Nowadays, most researchers see menopause as a developmental stage in the woman's life cycle, as a transitional stage between the first and the second halves of their lives, in expectation of additional stages in maturity that are added over time (Nardi, 1991).

The period of menopause in the female life cycle formerly belonged to old age. Until recently, almost all of American society denied this period in the life of women; doctors, scientists, members of the media recoiled from it. Women feared that if they recognized it they would be rejected, would be considered powerless, 'past it', denied gender and value. Recently, this stage has enjoyed a separate definition, recognition, for study by professionals and social awareness (Sheehy, 1992).

This period enjoyed a new term – the mid-life stage. Several factors influenced attitudes regarding the female life cycle. With time, life expectancy rose and fertility gradually became only part of the definition of the female identity. The feminist revolution opened additional options for women, afforded validity to her unique experiences, contributed to recognizing women as a value unto themselves and enabled them to integrate in the world of employment outside the home (Nardi, 1991; Orbach and Eichenbaum, 1983).

### 2.3.1 The transitional stage in the life cycle

Transition, in Latin, *transitus*, means a process. Transition is a complex process that assigns the individual demands that force change (Chiriboga, 1989). The term 'transitional stage' refers to a period in life in which change occurs in the person's life cycle, which can sometimes last several years. Researchers and theoreticians divide the life cycle into stages, wherein each has its unique physical, social, and psychological attributes. The transitional stage denotes the period in which these changes occur and connects the past to the future in a person's life. Every stage signifies a period with an identity that appears to have its own internal cohesion, and affords part of the broader process spread over a person's lifetime.

The concepts of crisis and turning point are often related to the transitional stage, or sometimes as to a period that entails stressful situations. These concepts, in the context of the transitional period, enjoy greater descriptive validity than the validity of an emotional disturbance (Nardi, 1991).

The word 'crisis' stems from the Greek word for 'turning point' - a diversion during the events, a sudden improvement or sudden deterioration. It represents a sudden disturbance in the normal life process or a person or a society that forces people to reassess their *modus operandi* and thought. This general meaning of loss of the normal foundations of daily activity is the dominant meaning of crisis, created as a result of the turning point in life. A crisis is something that cannot be controlled and must be allowed to run its course (Reber, 1985).

The Chinese recognize the dual nature structured into every crisis. They note the term in a word that combines two meanings, danger and opportunity, that afford the two aspects of the crisis. In this sense, one can see the middle of life as a crisis that is expressed in swinging between a feeling of danger and of loss, and between hope, change and new opportunities (Nardi, 1991).

Erikson (1985) claims that every transitional stage is accompanied by crisis. Crisis expresses a critical turning point, in which there are developments for better or for worse, a decision between progress and withdrawal. The crisis is created on the background of biological, social, and psychological development, and of increasing demands from family and society. A successful solution to the crisis is attaining the correct relationship – that which tends to the positive side of the conflict



characteristic of the stage. A successful solution is accompanied by realizing a virtue, a certain positive trait that is part of human development.

Some see the transitional stage as a period of stress that develops as a result of the interaction between man and his surroundings. Lazarus (1999) uses the term similarly to Erikson, as a turning point. He defines stress as the result of an event, with external demands that can include physical and social changes, or internal demands that can include needs,

drives and desires, creating a burden on the resources necessary for human adaptation.

Under stress, psychological processes occur in humans that affect their reactions and functioning. The emotional, physiological and cognitive processes that develop under stress differ from one person to the next who react vulnerably, emotionally, recruit resources and provide differing interpretation to similar events.

### **2.3.2 Mid-life as a turning point amongst women**

Disagreement exists over the dilemma of whether menopause is a period of stress and crisis for women. A study that reviewed women during this period in different cultures, finds a significant difference in the menopausal experiences within every society and between women in different societies. The symptoms associated with menopause were assumed to be caused by a combination of factors that included physical change, cultural impacts and independent perceptions and expectations of the self (Barber, 1993; Bart, 1971; Dickson, 1993).

Some researchers claim that the changes that occur during this period of a woman's life are expected and therefore they do not arouse stress and distress. This approach sees menopause as a normal mental stage, as part of the female life cycle, like any other stage in life (Stewart and Robinson, 1997). Menopause is a natural transitional period that entails a natural process experienced by most women relatively easily (Dickson, 1993).

Slaven and Lee (1998) investigated the symptoms and psychological pressure connected to menopause and find that this period is not particularly stressful for normal women. Another study by McQuaide (1998) finds that 72.5% of the menopausal participants described themselves as happy or very happy.

Some claim that this period entails many changes some of which bring relief and others that arouse pressure and distress. This period should not be seen as a crisis since the end of the fertile period brings with it relief and freedom from the fear of unwanted pregnancy; however, there is pressure and distress stemming from social, cultural and psychological conditions, such changes in the family unit caused by children leaving home. The negative meaning of menopause in western culture, such as the loss of youth, should not be ignored since the loss of femininity,

sexuality and attractiveness can result in a crisis, stress and distress (McQuaide, 1998; Ussher, 1992).

Some researchers view menopause unequivocally as a stressful and crisis-laden period. They claim that menopausal women cope with complex and demanding tasks of a personal and a social nature (Benedek, 1970; Neugarten, 1964), coping from the psychological perspective and with the decline in physiological aspects as one of the tough tasks for women. Deutsch (1949) and Notman and Nodelson (1978) similarly aver that many symptoms during menopause may be part of the psychological reactions of women to change occurring in their lives.

Bemesderfer (1996) believes that this period is accompanied by reactive depression, linking the physiological changes manifested in the drop in the production of estrogen and changes in hormonal stability as main factors for psychological pressure and distress.

Woods and Mitchell (1997) find that changes partially explain a depressive mood amongst women and in order to understand the causes for this the broader impacts, beyond the menopause changes, should be clarified.

Lieblich (1986) observes that a third of the participants in her study reported the lack of a crisis, a third reported contemplation and concern regarding the mid-life period and a third reported a crisis. Women who experienced a strengthening of their femininity tended not to feel a mid-life crisis, while those who experienced the opposite process were in a crisis situation. The researcher assumes that the development of the male view is connected to a rise in social status. Such a change entails a struggle and demands for change in the relationships or division of tasks in the domestic and social environment. Therefore, the severity of the struggle and the emotional process leave their mark on the crisis experience. The opposite process is a drop in social status and a return to

the traditional feminine role and therefore is accepted without a struggle and without a feeling of crisis.

This study adopts the approach that views mid-life as a natural transitional stage in the female life cycle. Like any transition stage, this period, too, is accompanied by a crisis, characterized as a turning point in life. Accordingly, women need to psychologically process the changes they experience at the mid-life transitional stage. The transitional rite, termed 'rite of passage' by Van Gennep (1960:11) (and the term used hereinafter in this study), can afford an experiential framework for women at the mid-life stage, wherein they will be able to process the transition and the changes involved in this period. Similarly, women will be able, in this framework, to create conditions for their development, to create changes that will lead to the fabrication of new roles and to reshape the components of their personalities, as well as to discover meaning for their lives that will help them in the choice of a future path. The following section will discuss the meaning and the attributes of the rites of passage.

#### **2.4 The rite of passage as a way of coping with the transitional stage**

Transitional stages in life are accompanied by rituals that help individuals and the community to cope with them. They are recognized, validated and meaning is afforded the change entailed. Many transitions are landmarks connected to change in the identity of the individual, such as birth, adolescence, marriage and death. The transitions are accompanied by a set of customs that develop over time and by founding events, in which the individual and the community participate (Bauman, 2002).

The rites of passage are part of diverse cultures throughout human history, and are part of the tradition of a specific culture (Hacham, 1990). The ceremonies are connected to the system of values of the society and of the culture in which they exist, manifesting them and at the same time sanctifying and preserving them. Researchers claim that ceremony and the ritual are a basic need of mankind and are connected to the need for providing validity and reaching social arrangements and agreements. The ritual is a way of communicating between the participants therein, and is based on the participants being familiar with the set of underlying norms. It includes symbolic and non-verbal acts, the meaning of the former being a language understood by the participants (Schechner and Shuman, 1976).

The origins of the rituals lie in ancient, tribal, non-industrialized societies that lived according to the biological order of life and the cyclicity of nature. The goal of the rituals in primitive society, as in modern society, is, amongst other things, to train the individual to accept his social roles and his changing identity according to his age and period of life. These are transitional rites intended to re-examine the relationship between the psychological needs of the individual and the needs of society (Douglas, 1975).

Rites of passage are ceremonies with a meaning in which there is a sublime connection between the order of the ceremony and the experience that touches our souls (Bauman, 2002). They alleviate crossing boundaries between categories that are defined by the culture. They afford a mediating bridge between what was and what will be, between what is and what is not, such as ceremonies associated with the transition between life and death, birth ceremonies in the transition from what is not to life. Rites of passage also include those connected to the transition between diverse stages in the human life cycle that are involved in the change in identity, in the loss manifested in the transition from metaphoric death of who I was to the birth of who I will be, such as marriage ceremonies and mentoring rites intended for the transition from childhood to adolescence (Speiser, 1998).

Modern society, in contrast to primitive and traditional society, does not prepare us for loss. Our era affords modern man the feeling that he has great control of his life space, that he is almost omnipotent. Modern man meets loss with few tools for coping. The lack of customs and tradition entails ceremonies and rituals for coping with loss, making it very difficult for the individual (Armstrong, 2005; Granot, 1994).

The value of achievement and the intellectual level enjoy superior meaning in western society, while feelings and their inclusion are sometimes scorned and lack purpose. The development of communications *via* computers and other media created virtual communities and diverse information sites. They may be employed in everything connected to gathering information and change in attitudes, but it is very hard to exploit them in order to experience an ongoing emotional process. The development of medicine prevents us from improving the ability to cope with physical and mental pain. The distance from nature does not enable us to experience the cyclicity in nature and the stages of development of life, and to accept our cyclicity as part of it (Kubler-Ross, 1978). The absence of rituals in western society creates a vacuum in the spiritual domain making it difficult for

the individual and society to cope with meaningful events such as the rites of passage (Bauman, 2002).

Apprenticeship rites are rites of passage from childhood to adulthood, that denote a process of maturation and usually continue for a period of time. They mostly include different stages that are accompanied by activities and tasks, as part of the training and preparation for change in the social status of youth in society. The apprenticeship rites of passage

symbolize the ritual and the symbolism, the metaphoric death of childhood and the metaphoric birth of the maturity (Brent, 2003).

There are very few established apprenticeship rituals in secular society that are connected to diverse stages in the life cycle. But there are also times in life in which people feel change that is manifested in feeling confused, uncertain, and seek a path. Some term this stage crisis, a word that entails the meaning of the death of the old, making room for the new (Hacham, 1990).

People seek 'areas of play' to mitigate tension and to express more superior needs. They seek a sacred area, a defined place of significance, to which they can return and create contact and an experience with lost, forgotten and developing parts of the self-participation in the rite of passage (Bauman, 2002). This has always enabled mankind to maintain a balance between contradictions in his personality, to survive change, to develop and to discover higher meaning to life. These qualities occurred thanks to mankind's ability to be at an experiential ritual, to pass a liminal threshold (Turner, 1969).

The anthropologist, Van Gennep (1960:11), who coined the term 'rite of passage' defines it as a ritual that accompanies change in social status, age, place or stage in the life cycle, such as birth, sexual maturity, marriage or death.

Turner (1969:88) later defines the phenomenon of such a ritual as a liminal phenomenon, a threshold experience, of transitional space, an in-between stage, a crack located between realities that enables experiencing a process of change in values and perceptions. This, he believes, is an eccentric process in which the movement of the individual who participates in the ritual is from the heart of society to its margins. This is an expression of the movement from the cosmos to the chaos, from the center of social order to the margins, to disorder or to an unknown order. Modern ceremonies, such as carnivals, are related by him, to 'liminoidal'

situations, as he terms them. These are intermediate situations underlying which are the situations of choice made by the public. Turner (1969) relates to ceremony as to a rite of passage, and, like Van Gennep (1960), further identifies three main phases that comprise the rite of passage:

1. Separation: The stage of separating from the past or from familiar rules. It is accompanied by the ceremonial distancing of the individual from society, from his role therein and from daily activity. The separation can be symbolic, physical or emotional
2. Transition: The stage involving transformation and transition – a liminal phase. It involves the transition from reality with specific rules to another situation characterized by the inversion of the existing laws. The individual is isolated to an in-between area, of not belonging to society and its norms. It is a transition through a liminal situation to a ceremonial world, distant from the daily concepts of space and time, in which framework the daily structures of life enjoy development and a challenge. Drama occurs at this liminal stage that pertains invasively to norms. The participants can experience symbolic death and birth manifested through symbolic means.
3. Reincorporation: This stage involves assimilation and unification. It is the stage of incorporation, assimilating the renewed identity towards reunification of the individual with society and his integration in it with a new status. This stage is sometimes accompanied by a celebration that includes a performance by the public, music, dance and a display of artistic products. The event, that includes the family and friends, enables those present to recognize the achievements and the new skills of the participants at the ritual (Binkley, Decarbo and Mullen-Kreamer, 2002)

Van Gennep (1960) maintains that participants in a ritual are at a threshold situation. They are outside the social norms due to their very sanctity, a situation that allows them freedom over which society has no control. Turner (1969, 1974) defines the liminal stage as being betwixt and between - between the previous role and the future status. He defines the situation of a person who is at a rite of passage, free of social norms and ethical codes, as one of 'pure possibilities' and examination of the taboo.

A rite of passage is a process of change, of formation, of progress towards the new role. This period represents challenges, negotiations with the cultural norms and developing new skills necessary for the new role and for renewed integration in society (Turner and Bruner, 1986).

Turner (1969:88) refers to the communality that is created in a ritual and defines the concept of *communitas* as a situation of communality with potency. The ritual creates a strong and direct connection, a feeling of conviviality, partnership and equality between the participants.

One of the conditions of *communitas* is spontaneity that extracts honesty and openness from the individual, a community characterized by inclusiveness, i.e., the desire to make the public part of the community.

Additional attributes of a ritual are:

- Repetitiveness – that occurs in activities within the ritual
- Cyclicity - of the ritual in society or amongst people
- Structurality – that is part in the activities occurring in the ritual, in the structuring of non-activity, and in roles of the guide and of the participants
- Emotional style - that holds a dominant place and alongside it the logic and the intellectual aspects. All types of feelings, elation, desolation, identification and alienation, entertainment and enjoyment are some of the components of a ritual (Schechner, 1988; Schechner and Shuman, 1976)
- Expressing meaning through symbols accompanies the ritual - these symbols can be manifested in special food, in words and in metaphorical stories, in movement, drawing, objects, puppets, masks, music and drama. People participate in rites of passage when society decides their time is ripe. In some of the cultures participation is determined according to age and in some participation depends on the readiness of the individual to conduct role changes in his/her life. The rite of passage is a psychological and cultural process of change in the domain of the roles of a person and in his areas of responsibility (Van Gennep, 1960)

Rites of passage connected to adolescence are usually based on group activities intended to help and to take part in personal development, in nurturing creative behavior, and in developing friendly relationships with the participants to the ritual (Binkley et al., 2002).

The rite of passage is part of coping by the individual with the transitional stage in the lifecycle, within which the ego is sacrificed for the sake of the self and for its light and dark parts. Entry to this area leads to change and the expansion of the self, to acceptance and to a more whole feeling of self (Bauman, 2002). Processing occurs in the ritual of the transition of the identity that sometimes occurs through representation of metaphorical death and birth. Opportunity is afforded to develop new skills that strengthen the coping resources and expand the ways of contending with the transitional stage. Similarly, experiencing the rite of passage can help to develop the ability to readapt in society, to expand the individual's repertoire of psychological roles that facilitate the choice of diverse social roles (Jennings, 1991).

The following section discusses the need of women at the mid-life stage for a rite of passage between the first and the second halves of their lives that affords a basis for coping with the change in their lives at this point.

#### **2.4.1 The absence of rites of passage for mid-life women**

The additional maturation process in the female life cycle that occurs mid-life has not enjoyed a transitional rite. Primitive cultures in which rites of passage were part of community life, offer no evidence of such a ritual intended for women of this age. The reason for this may be the short life expectancy and the continuation of the traditional domestic roles of the women even at that age. During this period, women instructed their daughters who became mothers, cared for their grandchildren and ran the house.

Life expectancy rose in western society. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century women are expected to be post-menopausal for a third of their lives (Anderson, Hamburger, Liu and Reber, 1987). In western society, in which sexual attractiveness and being young are dominant values that enjoy positive meaning and appreciation, women denied menopause, that is a maturation stage from the first period of adulthood to the second. Menopause was a taboo topic until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century approximately. Nowadays, in view of the impacts of the women's protest movement, a cultural-social discourse takes place that creates public, social and personal awareness of the subject (Sheehy, 1992).

Recently, with recognition of this period as a transitional stage that needs consideration, public clinics opened that deal with the subject and offer women medical assistance. Most research and professional literature relates usually to menopause from the bio-medical perspective and



emphasizes symptoms and illnesses that pertain to this period (Rostosky and Travis, 1996). At the same time, women feel a lack of social emotional support (Flesher, 1998). Families usually lack the ability to provide support, since frequently their partners are also at a transitional stage, parents are already old and some of the children are at their own adolescent period. A lack of social and community support is also noticeable in the absence of a framework that will enable women a concrete and mental period of time to express and process the changes in their lives at this period (Sheehy, 1992).

Granville (2000) notes the need for a supportive framework in which women will be able to emotionally process the changes and loss connected to this period, and to develop in such a way that will assure a good quality of life thereafter. To this end, women need, during this period, a rite of passage that will afford part of the support system and also answer their psychological needs and the meaning of this period for the rest of their lives (Matthews, 1992).

Menopausal women are at a normative, mid-life transition stage (Huffman and Myers, 1999). In the western world today there is no known rite of passage for women at this age that is part of the culture despite its being influential as regards female coping with this period and as having importance for the rest of their lives. It can be effective in choosing new roles and in coping with change in social status of women at this age (Mercer, 1999).

The transitional rite helps individuals and the community to cope with the developmental stage in the life cycle, by recognizing it and by validating it and giving meaning to the changes it involves. Transitional rituals are intended to re-examine the relationship between the psychological needs of the individual and those of society (Douglas, 1975).

Educators began to show interest in applying rites of passage as a method of teaching adolescents, especially in complementary education outside the school confines (Brent, 2003). In western literature women call on women to create such a ritual for themselves especially around periods of difficulty and distress (Meyerhoff, 1982).

Nowadays, women at the mid-life transitional stage begin to distance themselves from the description of this period of life as an experience with bio-medical symptoms. They try increasingly to define it through

artistic expression that includes creating healing ceremonies and a rite of passage (Coulbrooke, 2002).

The purpose of the current study is to discover and understand how processes of change and development amongst women at the mid-life stage develop, based on participant in group dramatherapy. For this study the researcher developed a plan of action for group dramtherapy workshop, in which a group totem pole and personal puppet theater take part. The following section will discuss the dramatherapy method, selected by the researcher as a framework for the transitional rite for women at the mid-life stage.

## **2.5 Group dramatherapy as a framework for the rite of passage**

Dramatherapy is a therapeutic approach known also as therapy through drama. It is based on dramatic and theatrical creative processes. Drama and theater developed from the archaic activities of human beings and are connected to ceremony and to ritual (Jones, 1996; Landy, 1986; Pitruzzella, 2004).

### **2.5.1 What is dramatherapy**

Dramatherapy belongs to the cluster of professions that use therapy through the arts named expressive art therapy. This is a young profession that began to develop its definitions and professional concepts in an eclectic manner. Its theoretical origins are drama and theater, psychology and psychotherapy, anthropology, sociology and the developmental processes of a group (Courtney, 1981; Jennings, 1998; Landy, 1986).

Dramatherapy is a healing therapeutic method that employs the theater arts in the clinical, rehabilitational and community frameworks. It is intended for the entire population, starting from those suffering from functioning difficulties or mental health disabilities through to those in need and interested in frameworks that encourage development that enables enriching the personality resources (Lahad, 2005).

It can be applied in individual meetings, diads, and family or group sessions. Dramatherapy facilitates alleviating and releasing symptoms, bringing closer the balance between the emotional, physical and cognitive aspects, to attain personality integration. It encourages personal growth together with intra-personal and interpersonal connection of the individual (Emunah, 1994).

Dramatherapy makes intentional use of the dramatic process in accordance with the therapeutic objective. It nurtures symbolic expression through creative structures that enable verbal expression in writing, song and acting, and non-verbal expression in dramatic activity, use of masks, puppet theater, movement, music, color, and materials. A diversity of techniques for expression can be used in therapy, such as improvisation, theater games, story telling, dramatization, acting, movement, use of music and plastic materials.

It combines art with the theories of individual and group development so that the individual can cope with life roles in the personal and social domains (Lahad, 2005).

Group processes are manifested through diverse stages of development that occur during the group work. Many researchers see these stages in a similar light despite the differences in their number and names (Ziv and Bahrav, 2001). In their developmental model for brief group therapy Mackenzie and Livesley (1983) refer to these stages.

The stages of group development are as follows:

1. Engagement - that includes the development of patterns of communications characterized in the address to the universal and to the common denominator between the participants. Personal primary exposure and group cohesion develop.
2. Differentiation - that includes coping with the difference between the participants, and development and recognition of the diverse roles that the participants in the group begin to take on. Conflicts arise around accepting social expectations composed of the dilemma of belonging *versus* individuality, assessment and acceptance of difference. These lead to intensifying the cohesiveness and to a feeling of one group entity.
3. Individuation - that includes the development of personal exposure that makes room for uniqueness and deeper assessment of the emotional complexity of each. A process of self-examination occurs through discovering unknown aspects and identifying internal personality situations, and their relationship with each other. A warm and supportive atmosphere and a feeling of it being a working group develops.
4. Intimacy – that includes closeness and further exposure leading to personal understanding and understanding of others in a more complex way. Deep meaningful interaction develops and the participants accept themselves as having the ability for closeness and as meaningful to someone else. Issues that arose at previous stages are reopened.

5. Mutuality – that includes the development of mutual commitment and furthering the uniqueness of each participant. Old knowledge is illuminated from a new angle due to the interaction in the meaning added to it. The participants take responsibility for their interaction with others.
6. Closure - that includes termination with assimilating the group experience as a positive constructive experience, reconstructing the group history and events that occurred to the participants and comparing the group reality with the daily reality and parting.

The dramatherapy group is the empty stage that facilitates presenting images and characters at different levels. Presenting the images can be through different modes of expression and through which life is recreated and presented symbolically. All the occurrences symbolize the group life, the individual life in a group and the scenario of life itself. Human beings have always had a part in the group and the dialectic tension between individualism and collectivism is also part of human life. Our reciprocal activities with other people enable learning in greater depth about ourselves by ourselves (Jennings, 1987, 1994).

### **2.5.2 Basic principles in dramatherapy**

The therapeutic process in dramatherapy is based on several principles: Dramatic metaphor, distancing, and two realities – the daily reality and the dramatic reality.

- The dramatic metaphor: Dramatherapy makes use of the metaphor and focuses on the expressing and realizing symbols through dramatic actions. The use of metaphor in therapy is termed the healing metaphor (Lahad, 2006:83). It mediates between the contradictions that arouse contradictory emotions, contains the tensions between the known and the familiar and the internal pressures lacking mapping, and thereby serves as a bridge between the inner and the external reality (Ayalon, 1996). It is a bridge between logic and awareness and emotional experiences and unconscious processes. The metaphor raises inner content to the consciousness and thereby helps to bypass stereotypical roles and reveals a covert dimension that touches on the inner truth (Lahad, 2006). In dramatherapy, the individual researches the essence of his/her real life through examination of the metaphorical imaginary and acting experience that is manifested in the artistic-dramatic process (Jennings, 1998).

- **Dramatic distance:** The dramatic distance itself usually enables an intensified therapeutic internal and inter-personal process of investigation. It offers a structure for action, in which, paradoxically, the distance brings the patients closer to themselves. This is possible through the dramatic–theatrical structure and through the echo of the dramatic symbols, the metaphors and the images. The image is more than a role; it is a totality, it is completeness, it is a container of roles (Jennings, 1990). The power of the symbols and the metaphors that also create distance, facilitate inner experience and change without destroying the defense system (Cox and Theilgaard, 1987). Distancing enables relating to a significant subject or an individual who is 'not me', and thereby the encounter with parts of the 'me', loaded with emotional force, occurs in a contained manner (Pendzik, 2003)
- **Daily reality and dramatic reality:** The dramatherapeutic process includes structuring the two separate realities - the daily and the drama reality (Jennings, 1998) - known also as the fantastic space (Lahad, 2006). The component of the dramatic reality is unique to the dramatherapy method (Pendzik, 2006). In the dramatic reality, the drama, the 'as if' play, occurs, in which the metaphors benefit from dramatic artistic expression. The artistic expression in the dramatic reality enables other faces of ourselves to be revealed through expression, expressing emotions and their cognitive processing. After a while and after experiencing the dramatic reality, the transition to the daily reality in a contained and balanced way is possible. This enables examination of the patient's life situations, in which these content are active, according to need.

The dramatic reality is created and occurs in several ways: The use of dramatic distancing through metaphor, the symbol and the role; defining the space of the dramatic reality and experiencing it; the use of distancing techniques such as puppet theater; and the use of myths (Pendzik, 2006).

### **2.5.3 Models and approaches in dramatherapy**

Theoreticians from the realm of dramatherapy have developed several approaches and modes of work and assessment including:

- Role theory, based on role playing that helps to expand the repertory of roles (Landy, 1993, 2000, 2001)
- Esthetic distance, that refers to emotional ways of relating to things (Scheff, 1979)

- Developmental transformation, based on improvisation and role playing (Johnson, 2000)
- Self-revelatory theater based on creating scenes and dramatization of personal stories (Emunah, 1994)
- Plays, stories and myths (Gersie, 1997; Jenkyns, 1996)
- Dramatic development, EPR (Embodiment, Projection, Role) – based on senso-motory methods of expression, projection and role playing (Jennings, 1995a, 1998, 1999)
- Ritual and risk, based on motivations of role and action (Jennings, 1999)
- Structure of the mind: The Mandala, based on personality structure (Jennings, 1998)

This study employs dramatic elements based on these approaches. The plan of action of the group dramatherapy workshop (developed by this writer for this study) is founded on creative processes that include improvisation, role playing, creating group myths and the dramatization of personal stories. The focus is on role theory and the aesthetic distance model.

#### **2.5.4 Role theory**

Landy (1993, 2000, 2001) developed the role theory as a practical dramatherapy framework. He refers to the many faces of the personality, each role being another facet of the personality and the role system that represent the entire personality, characterized by reciprocal relations between the roles that provide a feeling of meaning, order and the organization, and purpose. This is a system with connections to the professional and social roles and to the internalized psychological roles.

The basic assumption is that mental health depends on a person's ability to cope with a complex set of roles, with internal contradictions, that is constantly changing and to use them according to their functioning. Similarly, people have the ability to create new roles, to alter the old ones and even to exchange them. Role theory deals with the practical application of this approach.

The role has four components:

- Role attribution

- Role qualities (as manifested in the physical, cognitive, emotional, ethical, social, spiritual and creative levels)
- Role functions
- Role style

These components play a part in creating dramatic roles. A role is termed the central role, characterized as the protagonist – the main hero. Counter role is that of the antagonist that manifests another, and sometimes contradictory, role to the main role. Guide is the role of the instructor who generates the process, mediates between the other roles and enjoys integrative qualities and is thus created at the stage of maturity that allows this.

### **2.5.5 Esthetic distance**

Esthetic distance is a concept that refers to the style of emotional attitude of a person and a group. The attitude towards the degree of distance is based on distance theory (Scheff, 1979), according to which the individual or the group are on an emotional-intellectual, identification-alienation axis between themselves and the specific content that occurs at the intra-psychic and the inter-psychic levels.

In a situation of over-distancing, the individual or the group find themselves in mental alienation, avoid identification and carefully maintain the boundaries between the individuals, and between themselves and the subject under discussion.

In a situation of under-distancing the individual or the group identify fully while losing the boundary between themselves and the other, and with emotional flooding that cannot be contained in an encounter with the subject under discussion.

In a situation of esthetic distancing, the individual or the group are balanced between the two poles; the boundaries are flexible and have the ability to change; the emotion and the cognition are balanced.

Catharsis can occur in a situation of esthetic distance. Catharsis is emotional venting and insight, that contributes to emotional mitigation and group and personality development. This situation hints at the ability to identify contrasts, to understand how conflictual, emotional and conceptual aspects, that are part of human soul and in social life, can exist simultaneously. This cathartic phenomenon can be seen as identifying the psychological paradox (Landy, 1993).

### **2.5.6 Structure of group dramatherapy as a rite of passage**

Transitions in the life of the individual, that are connected to changes in the social status and identity, are necessary for language and the structure of ritual, in order to afford them emotional and psychological expression. Dramatherapy offers the opportunity to create such rituals that are absent in the individual's daily life (Jones, 1996). Through dramatic ritual that is composed of symbolic repetitive acts, the individual's status is validated. Similarly, permission is given for the shared connection between members of the group and the feeling of protection from danger (Landy, 1986).

Dramatherapy makes use of the ritual structure (Grainger, 1990; Jennings, 1994; Mitchel, 1994; Snow, 2000). Jones (1996) claims that dramatherapy is not a ritual but entails practical connections, such as:

- Processing the social or the religious ritual that were part of the individual's life and afforded an incomplete experience, or such that caused distress. The recreation of a ritual is feasible in dramatherapy that will lead to an affirmative experience, similar to the reprocessing of mourning through creating a ritual of mourning through which the individual or the group discover meaningful connections and a feeling of strength.
- The use of ritual shapes in order to create dramas that express issues arising in therapy. This step can include ritual language in order to denote events in the individual's life that have been ignored, beginnings and endings of periods in a person's life etc.
- A ritual work framework can serve in group work when the group creates its own rituals in order to meet its needs. Between them rituals of opening and closing the session can be created.

The language of ritual is comprised of movement, voice, accessories, words and interaction, of symbolic meaning (Jones, 1996). Dramatherapy makes use of the language of ritual, in addition to the esthetic value that is manifested in the style of expression and the design of the artistic vessel. The structure serves as a container for the potent emotions that accompany the issue of ritual and the creative process (Grotowski, 1968). In creating a dramatic ritual reciprocal relations exist between shape and emotion, between the esthetic values, the style and the design and the content they represent.



Jennings (1995b) claims that all therapy can generally be seen as a rite of passage, and dramatherapy in particular. The rite of passage is a group procedure of individuals with a common denominator manifested, for example, in the age and time of life that are connected to the essence of the ritual. Group dramatherapy and a transitional rite have a framework composed of three stages as depicted by Van Gennep (1960) and expanded on by Turner (1969). The first stage is separation and disconnection, the second is transition to a liminal situation and the third is assimilation and internalization, unification and reincorporation. The three phases that comprise the dramatherapeutic structure enjoy a definition by Pitruzzella (2004:117): Foundation, creation and sharing.

The first phase includes the conditions, the setting of the sessions. Dramatherapy occurs in a space separated from daily life, defined in a structured framework that repeats itself. The experiential space is divided by physical or metaphorical definitions into two realities – the daily and the dramatic reality. Every meeting starts in the daily reality in which the ceremonial distancing of the individual and the group from daily life occur. The participants can express themselves in a special way of sitting, such as in a circle, in defining the conditions and in agreeing to the experience. This part also includes certain activity that is usually expressed in the physical experience connected to the body and contributes to establishing the dramatic language (Pitruzzella. 2004).

The second phase in the dramatherapy session is the creative act (Pitruzzella, 2004). This experience occurs in the dramatic reality that affords the central part of the session. It includes dramatic creative processes, role playing and symbolic activities that are connected to the substance of the group and its members (Schechner, 1988). These processes are characterized in release from rules and social norms and from ethical orders and therefore enable free expression of taboo substance. The creative processes include the use of diverse symbolic means, and diverse modes of expression, while developing artistic esthetics and personal style of the individual and of the group. In the dramatic reality that includes creative processes, transformational processes are feasible on the emotional and the psychological levels and the discovery of meaning (Grainger and Duggan, 1997). This stage is parallel to the second stage of the rite of passage according to Van Gennep (1960) that occurs in the liminal situation. At this stage, the drama occurs that challenges the existing social structures, during which the participants can experience death and birth that are manifested through symbolic means of expression.

The third phase in the rite of passage, according to Van Gennep (1960), entails assimilation and internalization, unification and reincorporation. It is sometimes accompanied by a celebration with family members and in the presentation of products that validate the achievements of the ritual participants. This is the sharing (Pitruzzella, 2004) that occurs in dramatherapy in the space of the dramatic reality, in which some of the participants appear and others are the audience. The second part is the completion of the dramatherapeutic session that occurs in daily reality, where, usually, there is consideration of the way of resocialization of the group and of its members with the community.

At the end of the entire process and at the end of each session, emphasis is placed on the return to the patients' daily environment. At this stage, the ways that can help the individual to maintain the achievements and changes that occurred during the therapy, and even to develop them during their social integration, are studied.

The dramatherapeutic process in general has attributes that are similar to the rite of passage. Structure and repetition of the artistic constructs developed during and by the group process are explored. Rituals can be identified that afford structured vessels created by the individual or by the group that are restored during the sessions as a way of processing relevant content and establishing a feeling of confidence, emotional expression and amity amongst the participants (Landy, 1994).

Experimentation in the dramatic reality has an emotional content and symbolic expression. In the dramatic reality members of the group express themselves dramatically, through verbal plastic images, movements etc, to which they afford meaning. The return to the daily reality is characterized by rational and logical observation of the dramatic reality and on life in general.

### **2.5.7 Summary**

Dramatherapy is a therapeutic approach for individuals and groups using models that relate to diverse aspects linked to expanding the personal or group repertoire - the dramatization of life events, processing the painful experiences through drama, spontaneous imaginary activities and preparation for expected events through role playing (Gersie, 1995).

The dramatherapeutic process is based on dramatic and theatrical creativity that employ dramatic metaphor, distancing and creating a

separate space between the daily reality and the dramatic reality. Dramatherapy has attributes similar to those of the ritual (Jones, 1996). The developmental structure of that process is mostly parallel to the stages of the rite of passage (Jennings, 1995b; Pitruzzella, 2004) as defined by Van Gennep (1960:11) and expanded on by Turner (1969:88).

The transitional stage sets a challenge for negotiations by the individual with the cultural and social norms, and also offers an opportunity for developing new skills necessary for new roles and the re-integration of the individual in society (Turner and Bruner, 1986). Group dramatherapy facilitates processing the transition in identity. This process includes expanding the repertoire of the individual's psychological internal roles that enable the choice of diverse social roles (Jennings, 1994).

(Jennings 1995b) maintains that we need to develop more healing rituals that are part of the rites of passage and accompany developmental stages in the lifecycle. People need landmarks when they cope with important changes in status, relationships and identity, in life crises and sickness. The rituals help develop an orientation relative to themselves and their environment and supply boundaries for the journey of the individual's and the group's dramatic imagination.

In western society, mid-life, despite being a transitional stage in the female life cycle, lacks ceremonies. This researcher developed a plan of action for workshops intended for women at the mid-life period. To this end the method selected is group dramatherapy that is similar in essence to the attributes of a rite of passage. The group can offer a source of belonging for the participants during this transition period, in which women can feel lonely in view of the lack of support and recognition of the processes they experience. In addition, belonging to a group helps women who tend to define themselves relative to their connection with the others (Gilligan, 1983). The reciprocal activity with other people enables deeper learning by the individual of him/herself, since the dramas of other people's lives are also part to our lives, and the drama of the group life is also the drama of life itself (Jennings, 1994). Dramatherapy is essentially a group phenomenon (Anderson-Warren and Grainger, 2000).

At the transition stage the tension between the external reality, family and society and the inner intra-psychic reality intensifies, and the need arises to rediscover the meaning of life. The transitional phenomenon is one that accompanies human life from the dawn of civilization. It answers the individual's emotional needs in everything concerning transitions and

serves as a bridge between inner experience and the external reality, also providing an enabling space for discovering meaning. Dramatherapeutic experience is based on dramatic creative processes that are transitional phenomena.

The next section will refer to the creative processes occurring in the 'dramatic reality' that affords the unique and main component in the dramatherapeutic sessions, as to a 'transitional phenomenon' (Winnicott 1971:1).

## **2.6 Dramatic creative processes and the transitional phenomenon**

Dramatic creative processes are based on activity developed from the encounter of characters or forces. These encounters create a plot that is the dramatic story. Aristotle (1977), in *Poetics*, refers to the plot and emphasizes the necessary structure that must include the beginning, middle and end (Archer, 1960).

Dramaturgists and theater people developed in the course of history a multi-stage structure of dramatic development used in plays, theatrical events, and dramatic events known as the classical structure of dramatic development. Most of them perceive dramatic development as an event that develops, peaks and then declines towards the end, known as Freytag's pyramid (Thompson, 1976:101). They refer to several stages of dramatic development, sometimes using different names – start, sometime termed introduction or clarification, conflict, complication, climax, tying the knot that sometimes termed resolution, and close or ending.

The classical structure of dramatic development is as follows:

1. Exposition - that sometimes describes the events prior to the start of the drama, presenting the main characters and their motives, from which the content and the future conflicts will stem.
2. Conflict – events stemming from the conflict of the contradictory forces that can issue from the intrapersonal contradictory motives of the individual and from the objection of others.
3. Complication – empowering the conflict by the intervention of additional forces.
4. Climax - an event characterized as the climax of emotion and power that affords a turning point, after which something good or bad can occur that will be solved when untying the knot.
5. Release - an event resulting from the solving a turning point that existed at a previous stage.

6. Close - an event characterized by a drop in tension and closing the events.

Researchers sometimes include one part in another, as, for example, the conflict that is included in the exposition or conclusion that is swallowed in untying the knot. The length of the stages is not fixed and, in modern drama, sometimes all appear in a different order (Boulton, 1960).

The dramatic creative processes are part of the imaginary space embodied on the dramatic reality of dramatherapy.

### **2.6.1 Dramatic reality and potential space**

Pendzik (2003, 2006) notes several names given to this unique reality, including dramatic reality (Jennings, 1987, 1998), play space (Johnson, 1991), fantastic reality (Lahad, 2006), functional presence (Cattanach, 1994; Courtney, 1981), the liminal field (Blatner, 1988) and aesthetic space (Boal, 1995).

This study will use the term dramatic reality, a space defined as a metaphoric place that is sometimes also a physical place such as the stage. It is the space of personifying the imagination, where the 'as if' becomes real, an island of revelation of the imagination in life (Stanislavski, 1936). It is a world within a world (Boal, 1995). The existence of the dramatic reality can be seen between the realistic life and the imaginary life, where both take part in the creative processes embodied symbolically. The dramatic reality provides a safe space in which man is free to conduct experiments (Grainger and Duggan, 1997).

The dramatic reality is a private instance of the potential space (Pendzik, 2006). The creative processes (Winnicott, 1971) are a private case of the transitional phenomenon; he further adds that the potential space is also known as the bridging area or the intermediate area – the space where the subjective experience occurs. This term is connected to the development of the dialectic process between the world of fantasy and the world of reality (Ogden, 1993). It is a virtual space between fantasy and reality and affords a bridge between them, a paradoxical space that does not exist in either but belongs to both. People live in these dimensions temporarily at three realities: The subjective internal, the objective external and the transition space that we would now term inter-subjective (Palgi-Hecker, 2005).

### **2.6.2 Creative processes as the transitional phenomena**

The 'potential space' with its 'transitional phenomena' and the creative processes facilitate the transition between the internal fantastic world and the realistic external world. The transitional phenomena and the creative processes are occurrences formed in the potential space, wherein the transition between objects and object representation occurs. They belong to creating the illusion without which man has no meaning to his life. Winnicott's (1971) revolutionary approach centers the constant process of creating life and the world by man (Palgi-Hecker, 2005). The transitional phenomena have a dialectic structure of uniformity and separatism, reality and fantasy, me and not me that coexist. Each of them creates, preserves and negates the other. Only in the space between reality and conscious fantasy, created in such a way, can personal meaning, creating symbols and the power of imagination survive (Ogden, 2001). In this process the paradoxical experience exists in which the participants devote themselves to the illusion as a way of coping with the limitations of reality. The Winnicottian man, according to Kulka (1995) is both an eminent and a transformational entity, both a final and an infinite creature.

The origin of these terms lies in describing the developmental process of a baby and its separation from its mother. This is the stage at which the baby's perception of the world begins to be constructed, as comprising the internal and the external reality. At this stage, where the baby begins to differentiate between me and not me, does play begin. Playing is the transition from omnipotence to the encounter with the social reality, the recognition of the boundaries of the 'self' and the creativeness of 'myself' (Winnicott, 1971).

### **2.6.3 Creative processes and play**

Huizinga (1976) studied basic concepts in the history of culture and deals with the need of people to play. He claims that play is more than a biological action, and that it is involved with direction and discovering meaning. Play offers an opportunity for experience lacking shape and creative, motor and sensory drives to be manifested. Man's entire experiential existence is constructed on the basis of play.

Children experience control of this play reality that does not exist within the inner world, or even in the external world, but within the intermediate realm of the experience. This experience helps people to cope with their fears in view of the coping with the reality. Similarly, children become

creative. When playing they feel that they express themselves. According to Winnicott (1971) this feeling is significant for mental health. Self-expression gives people the feeling of 'real life'. Therefore he warmly recommends a creative lifestyle that can also be expressed in small activities that are not necessarily considered artistic creations. He believes that people who do not have the opportunity to be creative will live with a feeling that their lives are not important or of value.

Play helps growth, and accordingly contributes to health. Play is activity accompanied by enjoyment that can lead to group relationships and can be a type of communications in psychotherapy. Psychotherapy developed as a sophisticated type of playing, at the service of people in their communications with themselves and with others. Playing is the place where people can be, live, grow from and within (Matri. 2002).

The transitional phenomena start in a baby's life and develop through the child's playing to the broad area of the entire cultural field that includes religion and arts (Kulka, 1995). Winnicott (1971) assumes that acceptance of the reality never ceases. A person's life, from infancy to adulthood, is accompanied by tension, involved in the search for connections between the internal and the external reality. The transition phenomena occur in the potential space which is an intermediate domain and a person's subjective experience that supplies meaning on the one hand and a respite in tension on the other. He also believes that playing is more than an individual developmental stage. He describes a general, human developmental phenomenon. Play is the basis for creating culture, art, music, philosophy and religion that are a type of variation on playing. These structures are an essential illusion of man and society, in everything pertaining to giving meaning to life phenomena. Awakening from the illusion is the basis for the development of a more sophisticated and mature illusion. This is the need for an omnipotent experience as a basis for a creative life experiences.

Accumulating the experiences created in the framework of trust through creative activity creates the basis for a feeling of self. Creative work and creating art are types of transitional phenomena through which the connection with the subjective part, with the true self, with creative images, is preserved. We are not judged in art according to standards of the objective reality, through which we are free to express the internal content even if it is a social taboo.

Many contradictions can exist in dramatherapy. It establishes two virtual spaces – one is the daily reality and the other, the dramatic reality, where

creative processes occur. A person who creates in the dramatic reality devotes himself to the process of his own volition, waives awareness and operates therein as if it occurs in his life's daily reality. When he is in the daily reality he relates to the creative processes that occurred in the dramatic reality as if to real occurrences. In the creative processes, the chaos and the creation, the order and the disorder combine to a whole with esthetic shape and values (Perroni, 2002). Thus in the creative processes, an experience occurs with attributes of playing in which pleasure and control, that are the essence of the esthetic experience, occur simultaneously (Kris, 1952).

#### **2.6.4 Creative processes and development**

Play and the creative process help to bridge the external and the internal worlds, through processing content, in leisure, in relaxation, in giving meaning, in developing creativity, in control, awareness and developing the identity. Winnicott (1971:1) includes artistic activity and the need to participate in artistic experiences as a transitional phenomenon. Creating something starts from a type of playing, that is somewhat similar to children's acting imagination. Play is intuitive, *en route* to artistic creation; there is room for reflecting the substance and the materials that arise. The next stage is the cohesion of the material and the substance to a communications creation with esthetic values of attributes and structure, from which both the creator and the audience can understand and derive meaning. The creative processes develop the ability to move from one to another behavioral pattern, from the quality of the experience as rest, of being, to the quality of doing, and so on. In the creative process, the shapeless quality flows towards the acceptance of the artistic shapes that can develop and change at any given moment (Matri, 2005).

McNiff (1993) claims that the basis for the connection between creation and health lies in involving the others who are in our physical and emotional surroundings. The creative processes in the group dramatherapy environment occur in an empathic framework, wherein feedback from members of the group can be obtained. The creative processes in dramatherapy enable externalization and reorganization of the internal attributes in a symbolic manner, providing them with an esthetic form. He further believes it is essential to see the artistic products as a separate and enriching reality. They should be treated as having their own story and not only as relating the story of their creator.

Jung (in Chodorow, 1997) examines to the active imagination that participates in the creative processes. He avers that attention should be



paid on the one hand to giving too great weight to the esthetic embodiment of the experience and thereby to blur the content and miss the opportunity to develop. On the other hand, interpretation and over-analysis should be avoided, which cause the loss of the power to change embraced by the symbol. The balance between striving for esthetics and the need to understand must be maintained.

### **2.6.5 The symbol, conscious and unconscious**

The dramatic creative processes in psychotherapy embody symbols in the active language of role playing. The uniqueness of the dramatic work is in manipulation that creates transformation, which in the creative process occurs by reaching insights and awareness. This crucial development occurs when unconscious foundations become conscious, which we term insight, with the cognitive development that we term consciousness. Thus the creative process contributes to the developmental process (Mittlepunkt, 1995).

Freud (in Friedman and Shustak, 2006) approaches the creative processes in the context of displacement and sublimation. The defense mechanism, that facilitates indirect expression of drives, is a displacement mechanism, transferring a drive from one object to another, from a forbidden to a permitted object, from objects forbidden in a particular culture and society to accepted and appreciated activities. Displacing the libido energies – the energy of the life drive - to refined and more accepted activities is termed sublimation. He saw artistic work as a type of sublimation. Art exploits multi-expression language, in which the symbols are the stepping stones and the taboo, the prohibitions, whatever they may be, are not part of them. It creates a process of sublimation for those unacceptable, forbidden parts in society by the censorious metaphor. This creates distance and thereby enables people cognitive freedom that leads to the authentic self-development and the uniqueness of mankind.

The creative processes arouse experiences in which the vitality, the feeling of capability, the feelings and the thoughts take part. Rogers (1961) refers to the existential experience as to a subjective experience, stemming from occurrences in the world around us that we interpret. This experience includes everything that reaches our consciousness – perception, and to the unconscious – the subception. He claims that at the unconscious level we know more clearly what is good and what is bad for us, and therefore he saw in it supreme authority, sometimes more as wisdom than as intellect.

Rogers (1961) believed that in order for the particular experience to enjoy representation in the consciousness, it must undergo symbolization *via* processes that are manifested in giving the experience a name and in classifying it into a particular category. Not all the experiences undergo symbolization; some of them undergo distorted symbolization. Therefore, a conflict sometimes arises between the 'orgasmic experience' and the consciousness of which it is part. The most important component within the conscious part of the 'orgasmic experience' is the way in which people perceive themselves. This is the self, that includes everything a person sees in himself as a unique entity separate from others and the surroundings. This is an organized, consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of the self attributes, of the relationships between the self and others and diverse aspects of life, together with the values attributed to these perceptions. There can be a lack of compatibility between the concept of self and the orgasmic experience, originating in the human need for receiving positive appreciation from the surroundings and from him/herself, which have implications for the mental health of human beings.

Symbols are used in dramatherapy creative processes (Landy, 1996). The word symbol originates in the Greek word, 'to put together', blending the unique with the general representation of several meanings. The symbol can be a mark, a picture, object, type of thought and so on. Every such type embraces ideas and meanings beyond the item it represents. The symbol is a means of expressing contradictory values, conflicting opposites, and it thereby affords a container for ambivalence to conflicts and paradoxes. The soul cannot be perceived and is manifested in symbols. The symbol is a means of bridging the understood and the non-understood, between that which is perceived and the unknown (Jung, 1964).

The conscious and the unconscious combine to the creative process. In a situation of creativity, people pay attention to the unconscious based on expectation and intent. This situation brings with it energy and awareness of materials that arise from the unconscious (Jung, 1967). In dramatherapy, people create a shape that is the container for these materials, to the point at which the artistic product is obtained. Sometimes, the artistic product is woven using a selected given form into which people introduce their attributes that escape from the unconscious. The creative processes in dramatherapy enjoy phenomenological consideration by members of the group at the level of a phenomenon regarding anything that is seen, heard, expressed and said. The meaning

of the creative phenomenon and its components is provided by its creator (McNiff, 1993).

The conscious and the unconscious are interchangeable within the creative process. Scharfstein (2006), the recipient of the Israel prize for philosophy, believes that acting and creativity fascinate people since when they are intensive they annul the awareness of time and individuality, and arouse a feeling of total spontaneity. Paradoxically, we feel most ourselves when we do something very intensively to the point of forgetting ourselves.

Art is a means of communication in which the parts that broadcast, absorb the message participate, and thus it serves our knowledge (Kris, 1952). The language of art is a type of communications that uses primary signs that are part of the preliminary thought processes, expressing the emotion and the experience, as well as secondary signs that are part of the secondary cognitive processes that are rational and convey information. In parallel, the key characterization of art as a language is preserved, intended to address the experience and enrich it with emotions and subjective impressions. One of the roles of art is to provide language and other secondary communications systems that deal with agreed signs for their presentation, signs that have lost their primary meaning – the necessary pool of signs. To this end complementary cognitive activity is needed that deals with the meanings and primary associative contents of those signs and ways in which they are expressed, that can be prepared for use in secondary communications (Noy, 1999).

Noy (1999) proposes not referring further to Freud's division of the cognitive processes to primary and secondary as if they represent development from a primitive approach to a more adult one. He suggests seeing in them two ways of thought, each of which has an independent development track, and both continue to serve thought throughout life. As a result of progress in cognitive psychology and brain science, all agree to this conclusion.

### **2.6.6 Shape and content**

Creative processes comprise shape and content, contained and container. The container is constructed from those same components that it contains, that are the result of processes occurring within. The structure is created by the content. The process is a continuum of changes while the structure is a cross-section in time and place of the process. Structures are the result of the process and time contained; they also afford an

epistemological obstacle to its development. The structure is not dynamic but the process is, thus the development is contained in structures that change according to the process. The creation is in need of structures in order to be contained as its essence - to destroy them and create new structures (Mittlepunkt, 1995).

Bion (1970:58) also refers to two foundations existing side by side in a dialectic relationship – the container and the content. He terms the container the 'instrument for thinking thoughts'. The first shape is manifested in the mother-baby relationship. The mother contains, in the psychological meaning, the baby's feelings, desires and fears.

The content is contained in two organizational conditions: The first is a bizarre situation that cannot be digested by thought – this is a situation of 'sticking the pieces', of experiences, feelings and thoughts that have yet to be organized. The second is organizing feelings and experiences into assimilated feelings and thoughts. These foundations will construct the container.

### **2.6.7 Spontaneity**

Creative processes develop spontaneously. Fromm (1941) claims that spontaneous activity is a free activity, as in the meaning of the Latin word 'spont' – of one's own free will. This is a characteristic, the quality of a creative activity at the emotional, insightful and sensual level of the individual. Spontaneous activity is feasible when there is no separation between sagacity and feeling, but when they blend. People whose thoughts, feelings and deeds are an expression of their selves are people who can express themselves spontaneously.

Spontaneous activity reinforces the self and provides a basis for its wholeness by facilitating expression of the true self and affording pride and happiness. The very activity is important and not the result. In western culture the result is usually that which is important and not the process. There is only one meaning to life: To live life. Spontaneity affords people confidence that is acquired every moment anew, and not at the cost of losing oneself. This is confidence that only freedom can provide (Fromm, 1941).

Morenu (in Djuric, Veljkovic and Tomic 2006), the founder of psychodrama, saw spontaneity as the power operating in the present and generating a suitable reaction to a new situation, or alternatively, a new reaction to an old situation. Spontaneity, he believes, is part of the joy of

life and is manifested in the desire and readiness for action. The creativity that can be expressed in all areas of life stems from spontaneity, which itself is part of the attributes of creativity.

### **2.6.8 Creativity**

Creative development involves developing the feeling of existence that does not rely on enforced morality and external taboo prohibitions. Such development is a challenge to people in everything connected to constituting the authentic experience in the developmental process (May, 1975). Jung (in Netzer, 2004) sees the development of creativity as part of the process of furthering the uniqueness that climaxes in the second half of life. Artistic and creative activity results in the discovery and expression of the individual at its best. Creativity in art is characterized by coping and experiencing the new and the unknown. The individual attains the highest levels of functioning and the most complete realization of his powers, while trying to absorb, understand, react and solve problems creatively. This process occurs when a person manages to deviate from the familiar ways of acting and reacting and dares to seek new solutions (Noy, 1999).

### **2.6.9 Summary**

Creativity has accompanied people from the dawn of civilization, beginning in playing in childhood and continuing through art and culture that accompany adults. It exists in the potential space that is the threshold setting for the occurrence of transitional phenomena. Creativity processes are a transitional phenomenon, involving symbolic expression through diverse artistic mediums. Dramatic creative processes participate in the dramatic reality, which is the heart of dramatherapy (Pendzik, 2006) itself like a transitional ritual. The dramatic reality in dramatherapy with the creative processes occurring therein, and the potential space with the transitional phenomena, answer a person's basic need. People have always tried to understand the world, as it is expressed in the diverse phenomena whether natural or cultural. Since the dawn of civilization, history and the beginning of life, babies, children and adults try to give the world order and maintain a dual set of influencer and influenced (Jennings, 1998).

A metaphorical bridging and mediating space is part of the potential space in the transitional ritual and in the dramatic reality of dramatherapy. This space is characterized and as a liminal intermediate threshold area, separate from the daily space, in which the transitional

phenomena occur. These are symbolic activities, playing and creating, free of the limitations of the personal and social taboo. This space facilitates a reexamination of the relationship between the psychological needs of the individual and the needs of society, between the development of personal identity and the social roles. Both play and the creative processes that are a variation of transitional phenomena, protect from sadness, are a means of expression, a way of coping with loss, comfort, venting; a means of control and of remembering, a means of self-discovery, a channel for interpersonal communications and a way of creating a separation between the me and the not me (Perroni, 2002). Processes of creation serve as a means of communications between people and themselves, and between man and his surroundings. They involve symbolic expression, integrating shape and content, the mobility between conscious and unconscious and *vice versa*. They contribute to the development of a person, to creativity and to spontaneity.

This study was conducted in the framework of a group dramatherapy workshop, in which creativity is employed in the transitional phenomena. In this workshop they focus on constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater as a variation on a transitional object (Winnicott 1971:1).

The next section will discuss the group totem pole.

## **2.7 The totem pole and a group transitional object**

The totem pole is a term given to the pole made of a carved wooden trunk that is shaped in human, animal, and sometimes plant forms and forces of nature, carved one above the other. This term is given to the poles placed vertical to the ground outdoors, and rising to a great height, sometimes tens of meters. The totem pole was placed in passages between diverse spaces, in a prominent place, easily seen by all (Halpin, 1981).

Totem poles were discovered by the Europeans who came to explore unfamiliar cultures in North America, Australia, Africa, East India, the Polynesian islands and Melanesia in the Pacific Ocean (Halpin, 1981). Based on studies on the Australian natives Tylor (1899) assumes that the totem belief is founded on the animist approach, originating in the early wild social cultures.

A study on the native Canadian Indians and their rights assumes that the totem identity affords an essential link in tribal dynasty and its

perpetuation, from its start till now. Members of this culture ascribe their survival to an ancient non-human father, as a way of defining their identity. This study attempts to connect the clans, the social units and the geography as a sanctified landscape, paving a way to understand the totem identity and its projection on the claims for particular territory of that community (Johnston, 2003).

The totem pole is the artistic product that belongs to a community and its cultural array. It affords a means of illustrating the community identity for whom it represents their connection to nature, to their perception of the world and to their attitudes towards their origins. These participate in the sanctions and prohibitions of the taboo connected to daily life (Levi-Strauss, 2003), thus bridging the community's inner spiritual reality and the daily external reality, bridging creatures of the imagination and the tangible ones. The totem pole is a variation on the transitional object, according to Winnicott's (1971:1) definition of the term.

The transitional object is discovered by the baby and is experienced as his/her own creation at the preliminary stage of separation from his mother. The baby adopts the external object, such as a corner of the blanket or a furry bear, and imparts it with imaginary meaning of the comforting presence of his mother. This is the first acquisition made by a human being that expresses the developmental stage that includes the perception of the me and the not me.

The transitional object is created in a potential space, in a virtual intermediate space between the external and the internal reality, between the objective and the subjective, between imagination and reality, on the border that separates the object from the representative of the object, in which the transitional phenomenon exists (Granek, 1987). The baby's invention and discovery of transitional objects is a means of coping, bridging and mediating between his inner worlds and the limitations of the external reality.

Variations of a transitional object can be seen in the significant objects that participate in the transitional phenomena, such as play and creativity. These objects are real, concrete and can be a toy, object, picture, artistic article, and so on (Winnicott, 1971).

Transitional objects, as belonging to the intermediary area of the me and the not me, are connected to components of identity. Babies experience them as part of themselves, and simultaneously as items from the external reality. They express their attitudes towards the significant other, with his

mother and the attitude towards their primary acquisition. The toy that participates in playing expresses, for a child, his identification with the representation of that toy, that serves as the object. For the observers, the meaningful artistic product arouses emotions and thoughts; it is an object for identification and alienation towards substance of a personal and universal character (Eliade, 1959).

A transitional object and a totem pole are linked to the components of identity, proprietorship and existence. A transitional object is ascribed to an individual while a totem pole is ascribed to a community and its cultural array. It is a group transitional object, an artistic product, a means of illustration for representing the community belonging. For members of the community it represents their connection to nature, to their perception of the world and to their attitudes towards their origins. These are part of the permissions and taboo prohibitions connected to daily life (Levi-Stauss, 2003). It thus serves as a bridge between the internal reality, community spirituality and the external and daily reality, between the imaginary and the tangible. The totem pole is a variation of the transitional object according to the definition of this term by Winnicott (1971:1).

### **2.7.1 The totem pole and community identity**

The totem pole is an artistic product of cultural meaning for the community. It represents the group identity with its diverse tiers. The areas of life that influenced the culture from which totem poles emerged are wealth and ownership, family, mythology, rites and artistic esthetic values (Halpin, 1981)

Long, a merchant and English translator, who returned from trips in North America at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, coined the term totem to noted the name 'clan', the social unit amongst the Canadian Indians tribes.

Researchers term the cultures in which totem poles were found as totemic cultures and tried to explore totemism as a method, as the differentiation and identification of blood relationships that were part of the classification of families and human communities. Modern ethnologists tend to agree with both definitions. One sees totemism as a social foundation connected to territorial groups and kinsmanship. From the functional perspective, it is used to arrange marriage and ownership relationships between people. The second sees totemism as a ceremonial foundation connected to ceremonies and manifestations of religion and culture. The role of ceremonial totemism is to preserve and reconstruct



the perception regarding the shared origin of the particular group, preserving the tribal customs and increasing the totem animal and vegetation pertaining to it (Levi-Strauss, 2003).

### **2.7.2 The totem pole and the continuum of existence**

A study that explored the creation of totem poles amongst the Nisga tribe (on the North West Canadian coast) as a way of defining personal and group identity claims that a modern totem pole is intended to express cultural values and as a way of noting the survival of a different social group. A totem pole expresses the political struggle and relationships with the country and nation. It gives shape to the attitude regarding the connection between a people and its land at a time when the ownership of the land is questioned (Berthiaume, 1996).

A totem pole is a symbolic representation of community belonging, with special magical significance for people and the community in everything connected to genetic, gender, social and psychological identity. The roles of the totem were intended to provide the physical and emotional needs of the tribe in everything for establishing and expanding the survival ability of the community (Glucklice, 2002). The totem pole fills a social, spiritual-psychological and a ritual-ceremonial role, interwoven in the taboo that is embodied in the essence of the totem (Halpin, 1981).

- The social role of the totem pole includes assuring continuity of the dynasty by organizing the social order that embraces belonging according to genetic origin, attribution to primeval fathers, gender identity as well as arranging marriages according to the principle of marrying out - exogamy. If desired, it even preserves the balance in nature by limiting hunting of certain animals.
- The spiritual-psychological role of the totem pole includes preserving the connection of members of the tribe to its spiritual ownership. The elements that are carved into the totem pole participate in the myth of that social group. They arouse the primeval memory and keep it alive, so that the spiritual, psychological power is preserved and passes from one generation to the next. Members of the tribe identify with the representations on the totem pole, and relate to them superhuman powers and special qualities, thus affording it validity as a source of power and security.
- The ritual-ceremonial role of the totem pole includes the representation of the elements that decorate the totem pole in rites conducted in the sacred space. This space is sometimes

defined as the original place of the totem, in which live the souls of the dead. Sometimes, raising a totem pole prepared and carved in advance is a central part of the ritual. The totem pole establishes the past as the present, while the masks, the dress and the puppets took part in the return of the dancers and the community from the present to the primeval past and beginning. Some of the rituals accompanied events from the past such as birth, death and the transition from childhood to adolescence. Festivals were held in this period in which economic activity declined, known amongst the Indians of North Pacific as winter festivals.

The connections of the community with the totem pole and with the formational process were emphasized in the winter festivities. These events strengthened the legitimacy and the privileges of the community relative to the material and spiritual wealth. The totem representations afford the spiritual assets of the community, while the material assets are manifested in sacrificing food and valuable articles to the ancient fathers during the ritual. These served as catalysts of the dramatization process that occurred at tribal assemblies (Halpin, 1981).

In tribal communities, festival events included singing, dancing, and dramatic scenes accompanied by masks and sometimes by puppets, recreating the encounter with the ancient fathers. The participants altered their shape and portrayed the spirits, the animals and the forces of nature that afforded power and skills to the ancient fathers who bequeathed them to their descendents. These ritual scenes were part of the tradition; they honed the human memory as regards the inter-generational connection of their communities and to the start of its development. In this they created a feeling of continuity that was intended to strengthen the spirit of the members of the tribe through a feeling of belonging, of togetherness, comfort and support, healing pains, overcoming the forces of nature, releasing tension and pressure (Hershman, 1995).

These ceremonies, that were part of the festivities and carnivals, created a liminal setting and protected space in which it was possible to express drives, the permitted and the prohibited in a legitimate way. Infringing these rules and role reversal were intended to create an island of disorder between the old and the new order (Kleinberg, 1995). The carnival is an expression of the conflict existing in every person between natural instinctive needs and the social and cultural needs. It is an expression of the conflict existing in every person between the natural instinctive needs and the social and cultural needs. It affords temporary legitimacy for

crossing the boundaries through which freedom is afforded to expressing the irrational and chaotic existing in the depths of a person's psyche and in the unconscious obscurity of the entire community's collective soul. This is a return to the sources of life, to the powers of the drive where the forces of creativity and the knowledge of the processes of development lie. They bear with them the potential for the development and realization of the entire community. The sub-human and the super-human are embodied in the carnival, fulfilling a therapeutic role for the participants, the observers and the entire society. This is a collective catharsis that combines the needs for individual venting with the demands for norms of the society and culture (Ankori, 1995).

These are done through the use of totem representations such as masks made of the skin of the totem animal, and sometimes puppets that took part in the event. These elements helped both the community and the actors to enter the trance process, to undergo transformation and to exit on the conclusion of the event, strengthened and relaxed (Glucklice, 2002).

The totem pole is a cultural artistic product that participates in the community coping with the continuum of existence. It can be seen as part of the community's biological, social and psychological survival mechanism. This mechanism includes prohibitions of taboo that are represented in a covert manner, in the significance of the representations of the totem pole such as the prohibition of marriage within the family, the prohibition to revolt against the fathers and tribal leaders, and the prohibition of making the totem animals extinct.

### **2.7.3 Totem and taboo**

The Polynesian word taboo means marked, irregular, untouchable. Objects, deeds, people and spiritual entities are forbidden to regular touch due to the danger involved in them to the individual and to society. In ethnology and the science of religions taboo is considered a system of prohibitions connected to the concept of holiness, whose infringement is believed to have serious results. Freud (1940), in his article 'Totem and Taboo', avers that a connection exists between the two. They represent opposites that are connected. Both arouse awe in people: While the totem is sacred and sanctified, the taboo is dangerous, forbidden and impure.

Freud (1940) represents the psychoanalytical perception according to which the choice of the first sexual concept by people is that of incest. It is directed towards forbidden objects and arouses a connection to the

parents with the craving for incest dominant. He saw in this the nuclear complex of neurosis. The taboo is a primeval prohibition imposed on man from without. It is directed towards the boldness in the person's unconscious passions. It is a barrier to temptation. The way to atone for infringing the taboo is waiving the something desired, an asset or freedom such as expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Forbidden yearnings are copied unconsciously to other objects. The role of the ritual lies in replicating these desires to the symbolic reality, in contrast to pathological ceremonies of obsessive nuisance, for example, through the psyche punishing infringement of the taboo. An Oedipus complex that includes the son's unconscious lust to kill his father, and the arousal of the need for revolt of the youth in the community against their customs, is copied in the framework of the ritual, to the alternative of the primeval father of the community, to the totem (Siano, 2000).

In the framework of the ritual intended for this, members of the totem community are freed of the taboo and hunt the totem animal, concluded by a totem meal, inebriation and random sexual relationships. Thereafter a rite of purification is conducted and a return to the daily reality that is organized in social codes and norms that are represented through the totem pole.

#### **2.7.4 The totem pole as a mediating bridge**

Analysis of the findings from the start of the Christian era gathered in the clans in Kerala, India, (Lemercinier, 1979) finds the development of the perception of the totem as a type of mediator between the community's social life and the close relationships between them, and the religious symbolism that is manifested in the meaning of life and the presence of divine entities. The totem is an expression of community cohesion. It enjoys mediating quality, in which the cosmic meaning dictates and navigates the social relationships into the religious world that includes the ritual.

The perception of the totem pole as a bridging and mediating element is also manifested in its physical location. Totem poles were usually erected in places of passage, between the house and the outside, that can symbolize the transition from the private to the public, between the sea and the continent. They can symbolize the transition from home to a journey, between the daily space and the burial setting that can signify the transition between life and death, and between the daily and the

sacred space where the rituals are held, between the concrete and the symbolic, between the profane and the sacred.

The artistic styles of the totem poles expressed, apparently, the perception and world view of communities to which they belong. The design of the totem pole and the composition of the elements are based on complex rules that are hard even for experts to track. At the same time, it is known that the tiers that are expressed artistically in the totem poles found on the Northern Pacific coast belong to the past tradition of Indian cultures that included social, economic, mythological, religious and esthetic aspects. It is possible to relate to the totem pole through artistic values of line and area, proportions, color. Their significance to the communities in which the totem poles are found is not known and all that remains to modern man is to look at them and raise hypotheses (Ames, 1981).

### **2.7.5 Totem poles today**

In the modern era, certain phenomena can be seen as variations on the totem pole. Amongst them were found sites belonging to culture, diverse groups with totemic qualities and diverse objects created or marked as such in educational and therapeutic frameworks. The attitude towards them is as to a totem pole, as an archetypical symbol (Jung, 1964). A totem pole is a shared symbol for a community that represents the collective identity uniting its members. This shared entity is based on the historic development, moral values, the world perception, myths and psychological force.

Swearingen (1997) explores how religious processes of integration, totemism and sacred space help to establish a connection of the group to the space and create a feeling of community in Austin, Texas. He claims that at the local level, religious processes are connected to environmental attributes of that city and are conditional on the political connections that accompanied its growth. Political rituals, rhetorical appearances and diverse activities of the civilian groups sanctified a special space as a totem space of the expanded community in order to define alternative meaning for the city. The relevance of these processes for our times must be taken into consideration in everything connected to planning and to the urban development.

Eliade (1959), a historian and theologian, avers that the division of places and times into sacred and profane helps man to organize his personal and social life. In place and time defined as sacred creative forces of renewal

and change come to bear on a person. The sanctified space facilitates the revelation of symbolism and meaning. In ancient times and today, communities and their people note places, buildings, elements from nature and elements that they created that symbolize the sacred for them. These places are, for them, the space for the awakening of feelings, memories and myths.

Beyond the liminal threshold whose purpose is entry to the area of the experience, identification with the fathers, forces of creation and creativity occur today too. A particular and special sacred place are such settings that facilitate intense and meaningful experiences (Turner, 1969). In modern times, one can ascribe the significance of a totem pole to certain objects located in the collective public and communal space. They represent collective identity and serve as an intermediate space between the profane and the sacred, between the daily and the ritual, between the concrete and the spiritual. They include cultural objects such as the obelisk, sites of religious meaning such as the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, and the Kaba'a stone in Mecca, religious objects such as the *Mezuzah* parchment affixed to the doorposts in most Jewish homes, artistic artifacts such as the totem pole, the product of the work of artists whose heritage is the totem culture, the Statue of Liberty and sculptures of local artists that decorate the city square.

These objects have totemic quality and indicate social belonging based on the spiritual world of its members and sometimes on shared genetic origin. The belonging is sometimes based on a particular religion, on folklore and on the perception of the world manifested in myths of that society. Similarly, on shared history, on shared aspiration and on spiritual intensity stemming from identification with collective representation. These modern totem poles, or at least some of them, are now foci of ritual and a place for ceremonies of the members of the community. The ceremonies entail a pilgrimage to the place where the totem monument is located that was in the sacred space of the site. Participation in the ritual comprises the community meeting for a shared purpose, speeches, a show, communal singing and sometimes prayers for attaining the ritual's declared objective, leading to emotional arousal - anxiety, pain, mercy and empathy amongst the participants (Bauman, 2002).

A study on road shrines partially designed as totem poles finds that this was the way local people struggled with their cultural identity. It was conducted in Lithuania that was annexed by the Soviets in the WWII and therefore exhibitions of religion and customs were forbidden. The residents built road shrines that combined carving in the totem style in

order to connect the religious and secular images that were part of the local religion and culture (Richardson, 2003).

Bradd (1996) claims that American society uses the computer as a conceptual model designed like the human brain. Computers are machines mediating between people and the surroundings, and are therefore part of the social establishment. They represent the totem for American society. It is a non-human shape representing some of the culture as regards relationships, production, transformation, identity and identification. The techno-totem has become the cultural model of the human brain that provides thought and interaction pertaining to industry, mass marketing and governance.

Mergy (1996) adopts Durkheim's (1965) theory of group symbolism and maintains that there is an analogy between totemism in Aboriginal societies and the flag in modern society. The totem represents the transformation of collective values through their definition by objects. The national flag represents transformation of group emotion and a feeling of belonging through physical shape. Social, national or community organization are based on politics, on collective abstract values and on sanctified values that are manifested in a tangible manner, whether in the totem or in the flag. How the members of the organization create meaning in daily life through ritual behavior and the use of language is explored in human resource management. The findings of Kamoche's (1995) analysis of interviews with managers, clerks and employees of a firm indicate that the staff is a type of totemic group created by its members in the daily reality. The totem quality is generated and established through changes in the language expressed in the transition from ornate language to simple language, and through the administration that employs the staff totem in order to create, validate and justify the pattern of aspiration for power and social relationships.

#### **2.7.6 The totem in the educational and therapeutic framework**

A study that explored emotional arousal and creating significance amongst adults through revealing icons and totems originating in early cultures finds that these are connected to the collective unconscious psychological perspective, to archetypes in connection to cultures, mythology and history. The participants enjoyed a close connection to objects, a deep connection between them and meaning connected to their lives (Forbes-Seeley, 2003).

Zoliger (in Siano, 2000), a teacher, psychologist and anthropologist, claims that modern people experience a totem stage in their development that is usually suppressed and forgotten. She claims that totem phenomena appear spontaneously in children's behavior and in adult overt and covert play. She sees them as similar to totemistic customs of primitive peoples in which the totem serves for social cohesion, as an alternative to expressing drives and urges in a legitimate manner and the ritual as a way of purification of guilt and embarrassment on the one hand, and for inspiration and a source of psychological power on the other. She believes that these influence thought.

Siano (2000:76), an art therapist, integrates a creative process of the totem pole in her therapeutic work with adults. She defines her patients' totem creations as a tangible symbol for a safe place and its reflection - the safe place that enjoys other names such as 'emotional oasis', 'security net', created from the quality of the therapeutic connection, trust, and the patient's feeling of security. She sees adolescence as a transitional stage, an intermediary phase in which play becomes work while in art therapy the work is based on play. She claims that the topics that comprise the transition period of adolescence such as sexuality, formulating identity, identification with heroes, group belonging and mourning are usually of contradictory tendencies. They create pressure and storms and arouse irrational behavior originating in drives. These conflictual subjects create complications that have no place in the spoken word, but find expression and containment in the creative processes and in the artistic product that affords a protected place, a 'safe place' that she calls a totem.

Research based on a case study of art therapy with a 79-year old cancer patient dealt with her life memories. The basic assumption is that memories are a powerful tool that helps adults process and integrate their life events and thereby improve their emotional condition. The therapeutic processes included creating a sculpture made of cardboard boxes placed one above the other to a height of two meters and designed as a totem, on which was a review of life pictures through the patients' drawings. The findings show that the use made of it increased access to verbal memories and reduced the patient's level of anxiety (Disabato, 1995).

### **2.7.7 Summary**

For the community the totem pole serves as a variation of the transitional object. The transitional object according to Winnicott (1971) relates to the baby's, child's and adult's developmental mechanism as regards the



transition between the internal and the external reality. The transitional object, paradoxically, is both found and created by the baby as a way of coping and developing at times when the real mother is absent. A transitional object for the baby and for the community, like the totem pole, is the result of the survival mechanism that affords a means of maintaining life continuum.

The totem pole represents the genetic and psychological connections of members of the community, and thereby is a mediating bridge between the community's daily objective reality and the subjective spiritual reality. It is located physically in the transitional area; it has a paradoxical value as a still life artistic product and simultaneously, has spiritual significance and magical power for the community. The totem pole represents the components of the community identity and fulfills a social, psychological and ceremonial function. It represents the social order and marital relationships, it preserves the link to the founding fathers and to the community myth. The elements that comprise it are embodied dramatically therein.

The totem pole is a symbol that represents ideas and meanings that are beyond sculpture, shape and material itself. It is a type of guide to the commandments of 'do' and contains thereby the taboo that indicates the commandments of 'do not do'. It comprises paradoxes in both its shape and content. It is tangible, created of material, by humans and has a superhuman power and spiritual meaning. It affords uniqueness to the individual on the one hand, and on the other unites them with the community. It is rooted in the soil but strives for heaven. It affords a unification of contradictory poles – feeds and extinguishes (the taboo), tempts and prohibits, sacred and impure, human, bestial and divine. It is permanent, non-temporal, but represented the dynamics of time – past present and future.

In the modern era, the significance of the totem pole continues to certain sites in the public space and to objects such as the afore-mentioned flag and the computer. Totemistic qualities can be found in groups in sports and in organizations. Use of the totem pole and its representation is made in educational and therapeutic frameworks.

Constructing a group totem pole is a central part of the creative processes in a dramatherapy workshop that affords the current research field, in which mid-life women participated. Physiological, social and psychological changes in the lives of women occur at this period. These are confused components in their identity. A large disparity is created

between society's perception and the demands by women in this period, and the women's perception of themselves. Women during this period, cope with diverse types of taboo *en route* to the redefinition of themselves and their development. Constructing a group totem pole enables processing these traits and serves as a group transitional object. It is a group container for a personal journey, that will be conducted in the workshop using puppet theater, to be discussed in the next section.

## **2.8 Puppet theater and a personal transitional object**

Theater puppets are part of the creative process in the dramatherapy workshop that serves as the research field for this study. They are part of the metaphoric personal journey of mid-life menopausal women. The creative process includes constructing a group totem pole that is a variation on the group transitional object, and the use of puppets as a variation on Winnicott's (1971:1) personal transitional object. The creative process includes constructing a personal puppet and the use of ready-made puppets that participate in the role playing, in locating a personal central topic and in a personal puppet show, prior to the social establishment of the group that serves as an audience.

A puppet can be any object into which the puppeteer breathes life through operational and acting techniques. The puppet is made of diverse plastic materials and can have varying dimensions. The main types are finger puppets, glove puppets, stick puppets, marionettes, shadow puppets, and giant puppets. In addition to objects termed puppets, this art also includes images embodied in various useful objects, and additional objects that are designed in a way that will enable their use on the stage (Astell-burt, 2002).

Puppet theater is an answer to human needs. It is a source of entertainment and pleasure, a means of expression, emotional release and catharsis, and a way of understanding the mysteries of life. The puppets create life and afford them a unique point of view, typified usually in the complexity of innocence and the grotesque, and in distortion combined with authenticity. Yorkovski (1988), a theoretician and historian of puppet theater, sees puppets as universal signs of living creatures. They exist on the border of the magical transcendental world in the ritual and the universe rich in imagination of imaginary theater art.

A puppet is a variation of the transitional object – a term coined by Winnicott (1971:1) in the context of child development. In a period in which babies develop the ability to be alone, transitional phenomena

appear. This is a stage of internalizing the psychological platform that affords the baby's significant person (Ogden, 2003). The transitional phenomena create a bridge between the internal and the external worlds. A transitional object bridges the subjective reality and the shared reality that are perceived objectively. The baby adopts an object that protects it from anxiety and affords his first acquisition that he is not prepared to share with the surroundings (Phillips, 1999). A transitional object that represents the primary relationships, advances perception and explores the reality; during its use the baby will shift from magical omnipotent control to manipulative control.

A puppet that is a variation of the transitional object has meaning for its operator, similar to the meaning that a baby affords the transitional object. A puppet and transitional object are semi-autonomous entities that are both the me and the non-me simultaneously. Both bridge the inner and outer world, the self and the persona, the known and the unknown (Olson, 1998). Both serve to calm, as a means of containment of the inner content, and as protection from the threat of the self-disintegration entities in view of the demands of reality. Both take part in preserving the separateness between the internal and the external reality, while maintaining the reciprocal relations between them (Astell-burt, 2002).

A transitional object and puppets are transitional phenomena with a manipulative character in their way of use. They arouse identification and serve people when examining the components of their identity. They are means that facilitate expression, creativity, transformation and the development of parts of the self. A transitional object and its variations, to which the puppet also belongs, pertain to the realm of illusion that is the basis for the start of experiential experimentation. At the next stage, after the transitional phenomenon has become a defined transitional object, immersion in the object expands and becomes the world of acting. Play is part of the adult world as a quality accompanied by diverse areas of life. The culture and the participation in the process of creating in art are the continuation of transitional phenomena in the life of adults (Winnicott, 1986).

### **2.8.1 The puppet and the self object**

Creators, whether children or adults, use themselves, their inner worlds, their emotions and thoughts in the creative process. They give tangible expression to the conscious or unconscious inner representations, to emotional substance and to their inner chaos. In the creative process and while improvising and using their skills and talents, creators seek artistic

shapes that express their unique style and serve the substance of the work. The artistic result represents the creators or part of themselves, and simultaneously an entity outside of them, to which they can relate in alienation or in identification. The artistic results are expressions of the creators' identities and at the same time, also components that participate in the development of their identity (Storr, 1972).

The creation and use of a puppet can arouse the subjective experience the individual has of the external object that fulfills internal functions for him (Osterweil, 1995). Thus according to Kohut (1977:60) puppets and creating a puppet theater can afford a self object for the creator and puppeteer. They provide a shape and image for the feelings, for imagination, for wishes and fears that are sometimes chaotic for the psyche (Eleanor and Irwin, 1985).

The self object can be viewed as the developmental continuation of the transitional object that participates in the person's life progression. The self object is anyone else whose presence towards the individual is experienced by him/her as creating the self. It must be separate from the individual while through the mutual process of immersion, must be the individual him/herself. This is a type of self external to the individual, who, by merging with him/her, develops and is simultaneously him/herself. A transcendental occurrence happens between the player and his/her playing that refers to the paradoxical situation of 'selfhood' that deviates from the self in order to be the self. The existence and development of self objects never ceases. The essential conditions for every emotional existence at any age is the existence of self objects that will provide available reactions of accepting the self. Thus the self will be able to preserve the feeling of wholeness, power and harmony (Kulka, 2002).

Creating such a meaningful puppet theater that will serve as the self object for the individual can answer his/her diverse needs. Kohut (1977) notes three needs that fill the self object: Mirroring, idealization and twinship.

- Mirroring is receiving confirmation and appreciation in an empathic way. It contributes to a realistic view of the self, to a positive self-assessment. This process involves constructing a grandiose, exhibitionist self that becomes self-confident and not dependent on another. A puppet, by its nature, mirrors a person's existential situation. It is composed of material and soul, it contains the inanimate and death as it is an object and life, as it is a humanized image and operated in theater that is

representative of the *tantus* and the *eros*. It is omnipotent, like the human imagination and fantasies, but its independence is limited, like the limitations of the reality of mankind. A puppet will always welcome any operator and will arouse in him/her the creativity and feeling of capability to create life. In this it encourages grandiosity and appearing with it affords exhibitionism. The puppet mirrors an image; by embodying the puppet's roles the puppeteer can develop him/herself.

- Idealization originates in the human need for satisfaction, comfort and confidence. Children idealize the parent figure as omnipotent, and thus attain a balance and comfort that lead to a feeling of completeness. The wish to merge with the ideal parent image and the source of power that he/she represents is replaced by identifying with the parent and his/her preservation even in his/her absence. Cohesion of the inner structure occurs through internalization, assimilation of the functions of the self that were first filled by external objects that served as independent objects. The very innate nature of human beings is to be in the dramatic reality of 'as if' together with the awareness of the daily reality. By his ability for animist perception and its projection, every person at any age can exploit these abilities in encountering the puppet. He is capable of 'reviving' it, affording it ideal attributes and giving it the validity of a 'guide' and thus enjoying the puppet's ability to provide insights stemming from deep knowledge of the unconscious. Depth and meaning can be obtained by recognizing the figures of the imagination, that can be manifested through the artistic product, creating dialogue with them, with the imaginary other and providing the possibility for them to talk about their stories and themselves (McNiff, 1993).
- Twinship expresses a person's need for belonging, for emotional understanding and for maximum cooperation in the optimal set of relationships that is defined by this term. Kohut (1977:68) maintains that such a set of relationships leads to the development and exploitation of a person's talents and skills. In the developmental process, the parents and the meaningful characters can provide this need. The connection between the puppet and its operator is one of similar qualities.

### **2.8.2 The puppet and the transformational object**

The puppet can be a transformational object, according to Bollas (2000:31), who sees it as a means that contributes to change and the development of the self. Like Winnicott (1971), he sees the use a baby makes of an object as a transitional object as his first creative deed. After the creation of a transitional object by the baby, the transformational process is replicated to the 'mother environment', to the other subjective objects. The 'mother environment', according to Winnicott (1971:5), is a good enough mother who can function out of identification with her baby and adapting herself to him. This adaptation enables the mother to first be a subjective object for her baby and to agree to be created by him, without smashing his omnipotent illusion. Later, the mother becomes the representative of the reality and the baby uses her as an objective object (Palgi-Hecker, 2005). This is a process that contributes to transformations in the baby's experience and develops his feeling of real existence.

Whatever was a process in the reality that accompanied the baby's development is replicated at the later stage to symbolic equations. Later, the search for a transformational object is manifested in the memory of the early object experiences. The memory of the set of relationships that was identified with the experiences of transformation of the self can be aroused following a strong emotional experience and reconstruction of the self (Bollas, 2000).

The puppeteer's complex relationships with the puppet and with the personal puppet show include attributes of the transitional object, transitional phenomena and transformational objects. The creative processes in puppet theater have the developmental potential in everything connected to constructing the self in the development of personality at the diverse stages of life.

### **2.8.3 Uses of puppet theater**

- Puppet theater as an art: Puppet theater holds a respectable place in the stage arts around the world. Formerly it addressed children, the entire family and adults. Now there are puppet theaters that mainly address children. Puppets sometimes perform before the broad public as part of the popular events and carnivals that are connected to certain festivals during the year such as the *Adloyada* parade held on the *Purim* spring festival in Israel. The carnival and puppets unite to create an

inverted logic and to represent an alternative to reality (Kleinberg, 1995). They create a world in which fear, authority, norms and death arouse the audience to laugh and to catharsis (Ankori, 1995).

- Puppet theater in the therapeutic and educational realm: This artistic medium plays an important role in education and therapy around the world, and is suitable for work with both children and adults (Weiss, 1998). The little theater movement appeared in America at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that provided the opportunity for amateurs to appear in public. They provided the incentive to professional therapists to use this artistic medium, using plays, puppet theater and comic plays in group frameworks.

Noble (in Phillips, 1996), a psychiatrist in Maryland USA, was influenced by the little theater and used drama in therapy with an orientation of encouraging observation and insights. She recommended that professional therapists use drama with people suffering from mental sickness. Later dramatherapy developed as a discipline, as a unit in the world of art therapy, known as expressive arts therapy. The use of drama in therapy can improve the personal ability and capability, empower the self perception and develop social skills.

The experience that accumulated in the use of puppet theater from ancient times till now, as a means of human expression of thoughts and emotions using symbolism, is considerable. In parallel, examination of the studies on the subject give the impression that puppet theater is used mainly when working with exceptional children and adults.

The education and therapeutic processes are based on therapeutic attributes of the puppet theater medium. They are used for learning, developing cognitive and emotional social skills as well as for the development of the individual and the community (Yehezkely, 1988).

#### **2.8.4 The therapeutic attributes of puppet theater**

Creativity through puppet theater entails therapeutic values for both the creators and for the participants, who are the audience.

#### 2.8.4.1 The puppet as a symbol

The puppet is an archetype: It does not imitate life but represents the human essence. Diverse aspects of the structure of the psyche and of humanity are mirrored in the puppets. The symbolic representation of the puppets expresses archetypes of the collective that represent general human issues that cross time, culture and place. These arouse the emotional load and the system of internalizations, contributing to the significant experience (Jung, 1969:130). They are powerful, for both the audience and for its creators (Tillis, 1992). The puppet is an independent object separate from man but still they unite. The puppet lives thanks to the puppeteers while the puppeteer can express himself through the puppet. Thus the relationships between the puppet and the puppeteer are an unconscious reflection of the existential situation of the person in the world, a situation in which he is free to choose his way in life within the framework of the limitations of the world in which he lives, as influencing him and influenced by him.

#### 2.8.4.2 Life and death

Puppet theater is by its nature transcendental. This art is based on the transformation of the artifact puppet from a situation of death to one of life, wherein the puppet image lives and breathes (Blumenthal, 1997). The puppeteer is the one who gives the puppet pseudo-life. Puppets can be hit but they feel no pain, they can be killed but their death is temporary until they are revived (Woltman, 1951). Landy (1996) claims that the concept of the puppet being simultaneously real and imaginary is a distancing variable necessary for therapeutic identification and dramatization.

The puppet arouses identification. It embodies an image that function dramatically and arouses identification with it of both the puppeteer and of the audience. Paradoxically, the fact that the puppet is an object and everything occurs in the 'as if' space, helps the viewer and the puppeteer to identify the image represented, not rejecting it and alienating it, as a way of protecting the self from the fearsome and threatening (Yehezkyel, 1988). Landy (1994) believes a deeper connection between the patient and the character embodied in the puppet is created when he/she creates the puppet by him/herself.



#### 2.8.4.3 The puppet and taboo

The puppet enables expressing taboo subjects. Shutaro (in Peterson, 1975), a Japanese puppet theater artist, claims that puppeteers behave like the shadow of the puppet and when they operate it they become its victims. The separation between the puppeteer and the puppet that represents the character is a safe place that offers protection for the artists (Woltman, 1951). Therefore topics connected to social, political and personal prohibitions that the puppet presents can be manifested. While the human actor, the puppeteer, connects to the superior parts of the body, the puppet focuses on the inferior parts, on the erotic. The puppeteer, who enjoys the nickname "Those who touch the heavens" and the puppets that can represent the 'prohibited to touch', the supreme power, the God, together create the relationships between the superior and the inferior worlds. Puppet theater moves between the divine and the childish, between the world of life and the world of spirits, between the sacred raised above people and lusts and drives (Peeri, 2003).

Weiss (1998) notes that the characters she creates in puppet theater can breathe and express thoughts, emotions that she does not dare to experience or even admit. Steinhardt (1994) avers that we can dare to see our fears, feelings of guilt, the complications and the unsolved questions that fill our inner world under certain conditions. This is through the shape, the voice and the movement we afford the characters. Should we be able to respect their independence, we will suspend our desire to control them and give them the shape they need - ugly, fearsome, unacceptable as they sometimes seem. Theater puppets consistently explore that which is dangerous, the boundaries between the legitimate and the criminal, between the permitted and the prohibited (Sherzer and Sherzer, 1987).

Puppet theater enables sublimation. The human drives and urges can be manifested and satisfied indirectly, through acting and watching puppet theater. This activity paradoxically encourages free but supervised expression of emotions and drives. The act of building coherent drama, creates inner restraint that assures that, together with the freedom of expression afforded, the creators can learn to contain and monitor their drives and emotions (Landy, 1996).

#### 2.8.4.4 Puppets and humor

Puppet theater affords a catalyst for creating humor, one of the conditions for which is distance. The separation between the puppeteer and the puppet, the paradox existing in the object that embodies a living image, creates distancing for both the puppeteer and the audience. The puppet, by its very essence, represents something that it is not, and it, the puppet, can behave differently, unacceptably and surprisingly. The lack of compatibility constructed into this medium creates comic and grotesque elements. A small puppet can talk with a deep bass voice, while a large one can squeak with a weak voice (Proschan, 1987). Creating unfamiliar and non-routine compatibility is also connected to the way the puppet is embodied and to the content. The lofty can be represented passionately, and can enjoy divine qualities. The contrasts that humor arouses are created in the relationships between the grotesque puppet and its image in accepted culture (Gross, 1987).

The linguistic use of puppet theater is also free and relaxed of the ties of a uniform style. Every play creates a style that can include language of a high register mixed with curses and vituperation. The language of puppets does not meet the known norms; it is surprising and creates humor. The encounter between the human and the nonhuman that is humanized is the heart of humor in puppet theater (Sherzer and Sherzer, 1987).

A study that explored the impact of the therapeutic approach based on humor with a population suffering from AIDS, employed puppets as a way of awakening humor. A skit presented through puppet theater aroused the awareness of the advantages of humor in reducing tension. Similarly, the contribution of the sense of humor to survival was emphasized. In this study the patients expressed the desire to use aids that encourage humor such as puppet theater (Welch, 1999).

#### 2.8.4.5 Puppet theater as a container

The puppet serves as a container for the projections and the puppet theater as a containment vessel. People, creators and audiences use puppets for projecting their personal attributes, issues and concerns, thereby finding satisfaction and emotional and cognitive release. The puppet is the means for projection (Irwin and Shapiro, 1975). In therapy, puppets become the container (Steinhardt, 1994). They leave safe margins of over-distancing from people. Thus the puppet enables people

to project their qualities, to act and explore the reality from a safe distance (Landy, 1996).

Dramatherapy with three women that blends story telling, preparing puppets and autobiographic presentation was most successful. These creative processes helped the women to discover and express suppressed emotions and memories. These were connected to events in their lives that made them victims of harassment and attack. Participating in creativity provided support and containment. A feeling of belonging again to the world develops through the interaction in the artistic process in the group setting (MacKay, 1989).

Jung (1991) maintains that the imaginary figure is not humanized by people but they, the characters, have their own personal nature from the start. McNiff (1993) believes that the artistic product must be considered as having its own story and not only as telling the story of its creators. Estes (1997) sees the puppet as a source of intuitive knowledge, as a reminder of what was felt and was invisible.

There is a small piece of soul in the puppet that bears all the knowledge of the self. It represents the inner spirit of the women, the voice of inner wisdom and awareness. The puppet holds the miniaturized voice of the wise old woman, the knowing person, and is connected to images that represent these attributes in her stories such as the leprechaun, the imp, the fairy and the dwarf. Similarly, she describes the puppet as a small bird from the fairy stories that comes and whispers what to do in the heroine's ear. This is homunculus wisdom, the small creature within, the invisible assistant that is always accessible to us.

#### 2.8.4.6 Puppet theater and the development of personality

Puppet theater is a manifestation of several languages of expression. The artist who constructs and operates the puppets develops his expressive abilities in several domains - at the symbolic level, the sensory level (Olson, 1998), the cognitive, verbal, plastic design level, in movement, embodying a role and dramatic expression. Puppet theater is a medium that combines several languages of communications as a theater of word and of image (Nelson, 2001).

Creating and watching puppet theater develops a sense of capability and ability for creation and control: The artist, in puppet theater, can create, operate and even give meaning to an entire world.. The feeling of control that develops within the creator is complex. He is the creator and he

breathes life into it while it, the living puppet, tells its story and lives its life, until sometimes the puppeteers experience the puppet leading them into its story (Watkins, 1986). The puppet-puppeteer relationship entails control as a duality of an exchange that parallels the experience of control by a person of his life, and between whom exists a leader-led relationship alternately. This is a process of release from control of the individual's reality and from the individual's overcoming the reality (Weiss, 1998). Schiffman (1998) saw work that combines therapeutic puppet theater as a way to cope best by women suffering from depression through returning a feeling of control of their lives.

One artist's puppet theater can manifest a complex system of relationships simultaneously. The solitary puppeteer can operate several puppets at one time and present their relationships, the relationships between the puppets and himself, and between them and the audience. Coping with the stage design and its adaptation to the content, he/she combines the components of the theater into one totality. Yorkovski (1988) describes puppet theater as theater of relationships, claiming that the relationships between the actor and the puppet are multi-faceted and always involve meaning. The puppet is an artifact, parallel to other objects and always in the active presence of people, alters its statements. The context of things, artifacts and items sometimes seems more important than all of them unto themselves. This is the reason for artists' conviction that the significance of the puppeteer is the relationships, creating a new connection, a connection with artifacts.

Puppet theater affords a catalyst for developing a feeling of coherence and integration. Creating and watching a puppet theater show encourage the development of integrative and coherency skills of each component of the play and the puppets into one totality. The puppet operator has a central role since he is the one who raises issues from the past and connects them to the present, thus attaining a feeling of controlling the future. The artistic integration in puppet theater, that is manifested in the show, can lead to healing that unites all the particles of the feelings of self (Astell-burt, 2002).

The puppet is a product of transformation that is created by the artist, builder of the puppets, creating something out of nothing, shaping raw material into shapes. A second transformation occurs through the puppeteer who infuses life into the puppet and gives it a soul that converts the inanimate figure into an animate figure. A third transformation occurs in the personality of the puppet figure following its experiences in the diverse plots comprising the drama. These processes

influence both the creative artist and the audience. By humanizing the characters we enable them to function as the representatives of change (McNiff, 1993).

The characters to which we give organized artistic shape help us in the struggle to attain clarity and in their ability to create transformation of pain and distress in life (Steinhardt, 1994). Estes (1997) claims that for hundreds of years people felt that the puppets reflected both sanctity and fear that works on people and creates spiritual change in them.

Jennings (1998) maintains that the healing process expands and is empowered in therapy when the means are larger than life. Amongst patients who make giant puppets and masks imitating mystical characters, one can see how the transformation, in the experience of the transition to themselves, occurs. This is a metaphysical experience that leads to expanding the way in which we perceive ourselves and the world.

Weiss (1998) believes that therapeutic puppet theater encourages the puppeteer to raise issues from the past and to link it to the present so the participant will feel in control of the future. The use of indirect objects facilitates presenting the puppet show story that depicts issues from the author's own life as a way of discovering the self.

Dasa-Masa (2004) claims that working with a puppets enabled her to discover aspects of her personality, to do things she had not done previously and to find a balance between diverse elements including emotion and logic, imagination and reality, exposure and protecting oneself, doing and listening, and observing and learning. At the end of her personal process working with a puppet she was aware of the change that had occurred within her, from the patient who tried to understand the personal process to the dramatherapist.

Avoglia (2001), in a qualitative study of women, explores an artistic work model based on preparing a personal play comprising the written plot, music and puppets, performance and feedback from the audience. She finds this model suitable as a method of self-development through a spiritual journey to discover the authentic, metaphorical and realistic voice of women.

### **2.8.5 Summary**

A puppet can be any inanimate object that is humanized and operated by the puppeteer. It is a variation of the transitional object; it can serve as the self-object and as a transformative object, thereby answering the psychological and developmental needs of humanity.

Puppet theater is used in the educational and therapeutic realm as a therapeutic means for development. The therapeutic elements of this medium are symbolic archetypical mirroring of the essence of humanity in everything connected to life and death, and to the existential paradox of the temporal and the limited with the eternal and omnipotent. It involves identifying and developing a repertory of roles and manifestations of the taboo topics, the possibility for sublimation, for projection and for humor and the source of knowledge. It assists in developing a feeling of healthy capability and control and languages of expression, developing a feeling of coherency and individuation, and the ability for transformation and personality integration.

This study is conducted in the framework of a group dramatherapy workshop for mid-life women. It is based on a plan of action developed for this purpose that includes creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a puppet theater. The next chapter deals with the research methodology.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 The research objective**

The research objective was to discover and understand the processes of change and development amongst women at the mid-life phase, and as discussed and presented in the review of the literature.

The study proposes ways for women to cope at that stage of life through the dramatherapy workshop, to which end the researcher developed a plan of action according to the research hypotheses. It is based on several components: Group work, creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater. It will examine the impact of these expressions on the participants and their contribution to the process of change and development.

#### **3.2 The research method**

The method used in the workshop is dramatherapy, which is an educational-therapeutic approach intended for individuals and groups. The process is based on two metaphorical separate spaces. One space is that of the daily reality, in which behavioral and verbal interactions occur that are adapted to accepted norms. The second space is the dramatic reality, in which dramatic, creative and theatrical processes take place. This space has a liminal character, free of social codes (Pendzik, 2006).

The models in this domain relate to diverse aspects that are connected to expanding the personality repertoire of the individual and of the group. They include the use of dramatization of the life events, processing the painful experiences through drama, imaginary spontaneous activities and preparation for anticipated events using role playing (Gersie, 1995).

The transitional period of life sets a challenge for negotiations by the individual with the cultural and social norms, and provides opportunities for developing new skills necessary for new roles and for re-integration of the individual in society (Turner and Bruner, 1986). Group dramatherapy affords a processing of the transition in identity, which includes expanding the individual's internal psychological role repertory that enables choice of diverse social roles (Jennings, 1994).

### **3.3 The research population**

The study was conducted in an art therapy studio in Holon, a large city in central Israel. The research population included eight women aged 45-55, who define the current period in their lives as mid-life. These women, mothers and professionals, accepted a proposal to participate in a workshop on the mid-life stage through dramatherapy that was advertised in a local newspaper and was publicized by word of mouth.

### **3.4 The research approach**

This study is based on the case study approach, a method of organizing information and social data in a manner that preserves the unique character of the objects studied (Sabar Ben Yehoshua, 1990).

It entails a learning process of a particular unit within the framework that provides information whose boundaries vary from a description of the individual to the description of an event, community and so on, in terms of qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1990). Case study includes observations of the human activity in the framework of defined boundaries that are determined by place, specific time and participants (Stake, 2000). This study tries to understand the processes occurring in a group dramatherapy workshop.

The processes occurring at the group and the individual level during the workshop were located as indicative of group and personal processes, from which human, personal and organizational behavior can be understood, as well as about the processes in the case studied (Yosifun 2001).

A case study can include multiple smaller cases (Yin, 1994). The current study relates to the processes occurring in the dramatherapy workshop amongst all the people participating therein, the group being one independent 'entity' and each participant an independent 'entity' unto itself. These entities afford the eight smaller case studies that comprise the case study.

The researcher's decision to use the case study stems from the discipline to which she belongs, the perception of the world and the paradigm through which she relates to the reality studied and the type of research questions. This approach provides the basis for the attitude towards the processes in dramatherapy in which the researcher believes. The perception according to which the research related to the reality studied,



is based on an integration between the ideographic approach and the nomothetic approach. An attempt was made during the study to track the individual and the unique, and only thereafter to locate the categories and topics common to several cases.

The research questions relate to the processes of change and development amongst women who take part in dramatherapy workshop, towards whom and to everything that happens to them the attitude is specific and unique. The study examines the processes experienced by the participants during the workshop through a case study, which is the approach suitable for such a process (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This is the study of one type of phenomenon from which generalizations and explanations can be derived regarding a broader phenomenon, and can be used as a test for the broader, general claim (Jary and Jary, 1991).

It attempts to track the processes that develop amongst the participants in the above framework through observation and the desire to understand the worlds of those observed. It involves attention to that which is said, scrutiny of the acts performed and steps taken, observation of the creative processes and artistic results, as well as focusing on the meaning of the experience for the participants. This case study is based on a qualitative study that deals with meanings that can be derived from language, behavior and activity (Dey, 1993), based on and employing several research perspectives.

### **3.4.1 The phenomenological aspect**

The phenomenological approach sees the individual and his world as structured together. The individual is perceived as lacking existence separate from the world, and the world is seen as lacking separate existence from people (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The workshop is based on group work by the individuals who comprise it. Accordingly, the research analyzes the processes that comprise the dialogue existing between the group entities, that represent the human world and its members. The analysis focuses generally on the behaviors that comprise this interaction.

This approach explores the structure of consciousness in the human experience (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996) and deals with the types of consciousness through which things become structured (Giorgi, 1995). The case study approach aims to collect information about the thoughts and activities of the people who take part in the case studied, how they structure and create the self-awareness and social consciousness

(Phillipson, 1972). It investigates the ways through which a reciprocal system exists between activity and behavior, verbal expression and symbolic expression through the creative processes, their influence on the development of consciousness and how this affects the processes of change and development amongst women who participate in the dramatherapy workshop.

### **3.4.2 The narrative aspect**

The study is founded on aspects of the narrative approach that see the narrative as a way of investigating the issues through which people experience the world (Gimmet and Mackinnon, 1992). The narrative is one of the ways through which people organize the events, structures the reality they experience, filtering the sensory world and organizing its preservation in memory (Bruner, 1996; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998).

From this point of view the study attempts to track the processes of change and development amongst the participants in the dramatherapy workshop. Such studies examine a broad variety of subjects such as the identity of the individual, his/her attitudes and perceptions and development. By exploring the participants' personal stories, the study tries to identify and understand the various components of the personal identity and how they develop, since personal stories create and present many parts of the self (Ochs and Capps, 1996). Personal stories are born on the basis of the experiences and dialectically also shape experiences.

The narrative discourse that is part of the workshop comprised a group discussion and personal discussion, since the narrative aspect perceives the human individual as several stories and as a narrative structure about the self and social life (Bruner, 1990). All human interaction includes a process of structuring and restructuring personal and social stories (Gimmet and Mackinnon, 1992).

In a dramatherapy workshop the participants' verbal manifestations are of different styles: Personal stories, metaphorical stories, declarations etc. The narrative reflects the dynamics, the changes, the human intentions and their manifestation in daily life, and it is thus of diverse characterization and styles of speech such as expressional speech, declarative speech etc. (Bruner, 1985).

### **3.4.3 The artistic aspect**

The study is based on creative processes by women participating in the dramatherapy workshop that are manifested in movement, plastic arts and theater art, since the arts can reorganize perceptions and feelings (Sheffler, 1991). This is through metaphysical expression that is discursive, such that employs literary and artistic language to distinguish it from abstract theoretical concepts (Alexander, 2001). Art includes the reciprocal influence of cognitive and emotional investigation that are manifested in complex symbolic ways (Goodman, 1980).

It investigates the cognitive and emotional impacts as they are expressed in the participants' creative processes and artistic products and their affect on the processes of change and development. These are studied through creating new ways of experiencing in the reality studied (Dewey, 1980; Eisner, 1988), i.e., the group dramatherapy workshop, using metaphysical language, symbolic behavior, shapes, sounds, and movement that express various characters. The creative experience was an integral part of the workshop. The process of constructing a group totem pole with participant cooperation held a central place as did a personal puppet theater creation by each participant. These are discussed separately in an attempt to locate their impact on the development of processes of change in the group in general and of the participants in particular.

During the workshop, the participants were given the opportunity to provide artistic and verbal feedback on the various artistic pieces. They were both creators and an audience with these two artistic roles enjoying the status of inter-subjective discourse and not of object and subject (Alexander, 2001).

Thus aspects of phenomenology, narrative and art are interconnected in this case study that explores the ways in which the dialogue between the individual and the group occurs. In addition it will examine the ways through which personal and social awareness are created, and their affect on the processes of change and development. Behavior, artistic work and the development of narrative are a dialectic axis, creating processes on the one hand and affording reflective activity regarding these processes on the other, arousing consciousness which develops through consideration of the object to which they refer through reflective activity (Giorgi, 1995).

### **3.5 Triangulation**

This case study includes facets of the phenomenological, narrative and artistic aspects. They provide several points of view that enable examination and analysis of the processes observed during the dramatherapy workshop, and afford the process of triangulation that attempts to validate the phenomenon through alternative subjective perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Schwandt, 1997).

The case study assumes the existence of situations of many realities. The researcher examines the individuals' interpretations while providing legitimacy for a variety of cultures in the research field (Fetteman, 1989). The multiple realities in the phenomenon explored in this study are manifested at the personal and the group levels. It tries further to examine the reciprocal relationships between the diverse realities, between the personal world of each participant and the social world, i.e., the group.

The researcher's attitude in case studies as regards revealing personal structures is as to social reality comprised of several layers (Yosifun, 2001). In the framework of the dramatherapy workshop, these two layers afford a meta-reality, comprised of:

1. Verbalization - the verbal reality as manifested by the participants
2. Behavior - the behavioral reality which is the dynamics that occur in the group and its reflection in the participants' behavior
3. Art - the artistic reality in expression - as manifested in different types of creative processes, whether group or personal

Processes of change and development are explored in the triangulation at two levels that afford this meta-reality - the group and the personal. The processes are also examined through three realities that comprise them.

### **3.6 The researcher's approach**

This empirical study is based on the researcher as a research tool in which the researcher is involved in face-to-face contact with the research population participating in the workshop (Robson, 1993). As part of the process of gathering the data, the researcher uses her abilities to comprehend the covert knowledge, the non-verbal knowledge that affords the basis on which she constructs many of her insights and assumptions that are supposed, eventually, to support the study (Shkedi, 2003).

The researcher is interested in understanding the complex world out of empathic insight, while remaining neutral from the judgmental aspect, and to relate to the data to the phenomena without her personal opinions and value judgment influencing her (Yosifun, 2001). Involvement of the researcher as a dramatherapist involves the development of such a dialectic skill, in everything connected to therapeutic connection with her clients. Accordingly, developing these complex relationships is part of her skills.

The researcher's role as leading the group dramatherapeutic workshop that affords the research arena, helped to develop cooperation between the researcher and the participants in the research process. This led to the creation of a web in which diverse and separate pieces of expression connect to a complete meaningful story which is significant for participants in the discourse (Shkedi, 2003).

### **3.7 Research tools and methods for gathering data**

Diverse research methods are used in this study that can be judged using criteria of validity and reliability (Yin, 1994). Data gathering here is founded on three qualitative research methods: Observations, reviewing the artistic product (that are a type of document) and interviews.

The study relied on field work that entailed a relatively lengthy stay at the research site and making a personal connection with those in it (Yosifun, 2001). Artistic products were collected that would afford documents from the research site. At the end of the workshop interviews were held with each participant, citations from which are presented and analyzed. Follow-up interviews were held a year later.

#### **3.7.1 Auxiliary research tools**

Auxiliary tools in observations in qualitative research are the systematic notation of events, behaviors and objects in the social environment selected for the study (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Minutes were gathered in this study that offer verbal, behavioral and artistic documentation of the group and of the individual activity. This was done by a neutral observer who documented the participants' events and comments during the workshop. Similarly, photographing, audio and video recordings of the sessions and of the interviews at the end of the workshop were made, that enabled the researcher to examine the tone of speech and its character in addition to written documentation.

### **3.8 The structure of the workshop and sessions**

Physical design of the space: The room in which the workshop was held was spacious and enabled the participants' movement. It was organized prior to the session with a circle of chairs, with materials for the artistic work at the side.

Each session was based on a fixed ritual. It comprised six continuous stages that can repeat themselves according to the dynamics occurring in the group.

1. 'Transition': Establishes the transition from daily to group reality. The participants sat in a circle. The session was opened by the guide (this researcher) who defined the setting that included checking attendance and reminding the participants of the confidentiality of the session.
2. 'A place of my own in the world': An opening verbal round was held in which all the participants took part. Thereafter, they spoke freely about issues concerning them, the two first stages pertaining to the daily reality.
3. 'Group light': Expression using movement by members of the group. This is a transition stage to the dramatic reality.
4. 'Multi-faces': A dramatic creative process by the participants. It usually included personal or group creative work, naming the artistic product, communion by the artist or the entire group with the work while looking at it. This is the stage of the dramatic reality.
5. 'Connection': Each participant presents her work to the audience. Shared subjects are sought by the participants. In group work the participants share associations and impressions of the group artistic product. This is an additional stage of the dramatic reality.
6. 'Transition to separateness': The final stage in which the members involve the other participants in their experiences, emotions and thoughts that accompanied and accompany them in the transitions. Transitions that can be the personal voice to the group voice, between inside of the room and daily life, and additional transitions. This stage belongs to the daily reality.

### **3.9 Components**

- a. The group: At the mid-life transition stage, women suffer from feelings of loneliness and lack of understanding from those around. The framework chosen is a group framework, based on a group of equals, with whom it is possible to freely share similar content and understanding of issues typical of this period (Binkley et al., 2002). The group can provide a source of belonging for the participants at this transition stage at which women can feel lonely in view of the lack of support and recognition of the processes they experience. In addition, belonging to a group helps women who tend to define themselves relative to their connection with others (Gilligan, 1983). The reciprocal activity with other people enables deeper learning by the individuals about themselves, since the dramas of other peoples lives also belong to our lives and the drama of the group life is also the drama of life itself (Jennings, 1994). Dramatherapy is, in essence, a group phenomenon (Anderson-Warren and Grainger, 2000).
- b. Creative processes: At the transition stage at which the women find themselves transitions and changes occur in their lives. These are connected to life processes that are not of choice. The tension between the external reality, the family and society and the internal intra-psychic reality intensifies (Goldstein, 2007). The creative processes are a transition phenomenon that helps people in the transition between the internal-fantastic world and the external-realistic world (Winnicott, 1971), which is a transition between objects to object-representation (Granek, 1987). An attribute of the transition phenomenon and the processes of creativity as an individual is the dialectic structure pertaining to unity and separateness, me and not me existing together (Palgi-Hecker, 2005). This characteristic is part of the enabling space that facilitates discovering meaning (Ogden, 2001). The participants devote themselves in the creative processes to illusion as a way of coping with the limitations of reality (Kulka, 1995).
- c. Constructing the group totem pole: The group totem pole is a key element in the creative processes of this workshop. It represents the community identity and the cultural array including the link to values, dispensations and taboo prohibitions (Levi-Strauss, 2003). The totem pole fills roles at the social, spiritual-psychological and ceremonial-ritual levels that are connected to the community's survival array (Halpin, 1981). It serves as a mediating bridge between the community's inner spiritual reality and its daily reality, between the perceptions regarding the origin and identification

values of the community and its social arrangements. The totem pole serves, as a group transitional object, according to Winnicott's (1971:1) definition of the term, for the community to which a person belongs.

- d. Creating a personal puppet theater: This is a central element in the creative process of this workshop, and affords a metaphoric personal journey for each participant. The puppet is a variation of the transitional object according to Winnicott's (1971:1) definition of the term. Both serve as a bridge between the individual's internal and external worlds. Both are means of pacification by containing the internal content. Both participate in maintaining the separateness between the internal and the external reality and together with this, maintain reciprocal relations between them (Astell-burt, 2002). Both have manipulative elements in their use. They arouse identification and serve people in examining components of their identity and in the development of parts of the self. Thus the puppet can serve as the self-object according to Kohut's (1978:60) definition of the term, which, in adult life, can be a person, an ideal of group belonging or an artistic symbol that fills a function for the self and is experienced by the self as part of it. The creation of a personal puppet theater can serve as a transformational object according to Bollas' (2000:31) definition of the term. This creative process can generate a strong emotional experience for each participant that can awaken the memory of relationships that were identified with the transformational experience of the self and release the self.

### **3.10 Observations and documents**

Observations were conducted during the sessions and the artistic work, that afford a type of document. Observations are the main tool in case studies and reflect the cognitive and epistemological shapes, and are presented as such in the reality observed, from which one can advance to the researcher's scientific explanation (Yosifun, 2001).

Multiple observations led to the revelation of repeated phenomena, such as types of activity and behaviors. Thickening the data and their confirmation in repeated observation is one of the ways of furthering reliability (Fetterman, 1989). The observations in this study were of the involved observation type. This demanded a high level of involvement in the site, but usually took a short time and did not include attempts for active participation in the lives of the research population and in the daily processes of the surroundings. Involved observation lies mid-way between pure observation and participatory observation (Shkedi, 2003).



In this study the researcher guided the dramatherapy workshop by involved observations in which she participated to a small extent in the activities observed, as long as this could be combined with her role as an observer (Shkedi, 2003). The researcher's choice to operate as the workshop instructor was based on the assumption that covert knowledge is acquired through assimilation in the surroundings studied (Polanyi, 1967).

Integrating in the surroundings studied, i.e., the dramatherapy workshop, enabled the researcher to listen, to see and experience the reality, as the participants do (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Participation and involvement in the surroundings studied increase the possibility for authentic observation, since the researcher is thereby directly accessible to what the people think, do and feel from several points of view (Mason, 1996).

The documents in this study are the artistic products of diverse types, as documented in the field work. They include group artistic work and individual work.

### **3.11 Interviews**

At the end of the workshop individual in-depth interviews were held with all the participants in order to understand the researcher's experience during the workshop and the meaning she relates to this experience. These are conversations in which the participant-speaker, and the listener-questioner, develop the meaning together. This is a process of structuring a reality to which both parties contribute and are even influenced by it (Woods, 1996).

An interview is one of the ways to help people to express their perceptions, thoughts and understandings, and to make overt things that were covert for them (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

The interviews offer information gathered during observations and from relevant items taken from the surroundings observed (Shkedi, 2003). This is a way of enriching data gathering that also include the conscious processes that developed in its course. The interview offers the participants the opportunity to tell their story regarding the phenomenon explored, the processes they experienced during the dramatherapy workshop and their connection to their personal development, in their own way and their own language. During the interview relevant sections

were presented from the minutes of the observation together with the group's and the interviewees' artistic products. This documentation affords a point of reference for the interviewee to be able to describe and explain what happened and why, the personal meaning of the things as she saw them their connection to their personal development. The interviewees' stories, the minutes of the observation and the artistic products are the building stones for the process of constructing meaningful reality and development, to which the researcher, interviewing the participant, and the interviewee are partner.

A year after the workshop, personal interviews were held with all the participants. They were comprised of two complementary processes, one - a process of adaptation and creating a connection between the interviewer and the interviewee; the second - a process of extracting information (Sabar Ben Yehoshua, 1990). These interviews helped to understand which processes of change and development occurred during the year and the impact of the workshop in them.

### **3.12 Data analysis**

Analysis of the data collected in the research arena attempts to describe patterns from which one can reach deep understanding of the phenomenon examined. A case study is, by its nature, based mainly on holistic social phenomena that include humane dilemmas and therefore one can make generalizations on this basis (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The analysis provides generalizations and clarifications that facilitate understanding the broader phenomena (Yosifun, 2001).

Group and personal processes are the two main axes of analysis. Analysis of the group processes is based on structures of the first order, (i.e. behavioral dynamics, the verbal narrative and artistic expression) structuring the work that builds the group reality and the personal reality, that enjoy the status of meta-reality.

The analysis includes locating structures of the second order that are the conceptual clarifications arising from the structures of the first order (Scuts, 1970), and including:

1. Stages of development of issues of content
2. Stages of dramatic development
3. Stages of artistic development
4. Stages of the development of a group
5. Stages of development of the individual
6. Axes of the process of each participant

The analysis refers to several theoretical models.

### **3.13 The research questions**

In view of the approach to this study and its components, four research questions were posed:

1. What processes developed in the group at the
  - a. Verbal level
  - b. Behavioral level
  - c. Artistic level?
2. What processes developed at the individual level for each participant?
  - a. What are the characteristics of each process?
  - b. What are the factors creating and generating change
  - c. What are the components of change and development?
3. What are the prominent categories, the topics and the structures that were significant of change and development amongst the participants?
4. What are the understandings and significances of the researcher arising from the connection between the research findings and the review of the literature?

### **3.14 The research hypotheses**

The basic hypothesis of this study views the mid-life stage in women's lives as a normative developmental stage occurring in the transition from the first to the second half of life. Its impact is noticeable amongst women in diverse areas of life – the physiological, the cultural, the social, the emotional and the psychological realm. This is a transitional stage, a turning point for women involving the need for change and development. Hence the research hypotheses.

1. A dramatherapy group can help women to cope with the mid-life stage. It can provide a framework for the rite of passage, it can be a reference and mutual support group; it can afford an enabling space, in which the conditions for change amongst the participants exist.
2. Creative processes in general and of the group totem pole and personal puppet theater in particular, are outstandingly suitable for the rite of passage and for creating the conditions for the processes of change and development amongst the participants.
3. Creative processes in general and of the group totem pole and personal puppet theater in particular create conditions for coping

- with taboo in a contained way without the feeling of over-endangerment.
4. The group totem pole is a physical representation of the conceptual and symbolic perception of that group of itself. It can serve as a type of group transitional object that functions as a psychological bridge between the first and the second half of life. Experimenting with the construction of a totem pole creates the fertile ground for change and development in the social roles.
  5. The creative processes of the personal puppet theater can serve as a lever for the processes of change and development. The puppet can be a variation of the personal transitional object and a psychological bridge between the individual's internal and external reality. This medium facilitates concrete and externalized representation of the intra-psychic roles. Role playing allows transformation to take place that can lead to change in the psychological roles and to the discovery of new ones.
  6. Ideas, experiences, stories and artistic expression are manifestations of the human consciousness that takes part in the dramatherapy workshop. These expressions can participate in the process of change through structuring the personal and group reality.
  7. The processes of change and development involves raising consciousness. Personal awareness can take place in several ways through verbal expression by members of the group and mutual feedback, activities and behavioral reactions of members of the group, and through creativity.
  8. Processes of change involve discovering meaning, which can occur at unexpected moments. Raising consciousness increases the possibility of discovering meaning.
  9. The changes and developments that can occur amongst the participants are at the intra-psychic level, at the interpersonal level and in the realm of career or occupation.

### **3.15 The research boundaries**

This study deals with the mid-life period of women and does not include that period of life amongst men. The eight participants, in this study of limited in scope, are Jewish mothers living in Israel, from a upper middle class socio-economic status. The findings relate to the research conducted within the given boundaries but an attempt is made for comprehensive generalizations as far as possible. Case studies, by their nature, are based on holistic social phenomena and can be used or generalization (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

### **3.1.6 Professional ethics**

Researchers who conduct case studies are party to participants' experiences that are sometimes intimate, and develop empathy towards them. These relationships force the researcher to greater human sensitivity and to develop stringent ethical codes (Fetterman, 1989; Stake, 2000). Accordingly, the researcher and the participants agreed to participate in the study, to the presence of someone documenting the session proceedings, to recording and photographing the artistic works and to participating in interviews with the researcher on the conclusion of the workshop and a year thereafter.

A confidentiality agreement was signed between the participants and the researcher, and between the participants themselves regarding issues that arose or photographing the participants' faces. Accordingly, fictitious names are used.

The researcher herself is at the mid-life stage, and is thus aware of possible emotional over-involvement with the participants. This can make it hard for her to be a relatively neutral observer in the events. She therefore was aided by private professional support during the study.

The following chapter presents the research findings, analysis and discussion.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Research Findings, Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter discusses the group processes of change and development that occurred in the six phases of the dramatherapy workshop, following which the personal processes of change and development will be discussed according to the attributes of each process, the factors generating change and the components of change.

The findings, their analysis and discussion are adapted to the case study research method, which is based on a description of the processes and characterized by a thickened description of the findings. Comments made by the participants are presented to illustrate the various situations. The researcher has further decided to present the research findings according to several categories, thus enabling clearer discussion of the elements comprising the study.

#### **4.1 Group processes of change and development**

This section on group processes offers comments on the three levels of reality – verbalization, behavior and art - that comprise the group and the personal meta-reality prior to the six phases observed during the sessions of the dramatherapy workshop. The findings are submitted at each phase, integrate by analysis and discussion. Summary is presented at the end of each phase, at the conclusion of which is a general summary.

##### **4.1.1. Phase one**

Phase one included three sessions.

##### **Verbalization**

All the participants presented themselves verbally, after which a free discussion developed. The main topic revolved around transition and change. Similarly, there was discussion of the reasons of each for participating in the group, the meaning of the group for them and interpersonal relationships.

The participants referred to the transition between stability and change at this time of their lives that are connected to the family, the professional and the intra-psycho domains:

- I will soon be 50 which is the middle of life and want to make changes.
- I am betwixt and between.
- Today I have my needy parents on the one side and on the other, needy adolescents.
- Children leave home and then they decide to return.
- I am considering switching occupation.
- I am torn between professional demands and obligations and the desire for a let-up, for free time.

Another subject discussed was the connection to motivation that led the participants to join the workshop on loss:

- I have no energy. I feel I have no strength for my children. I have no good communications in my couplehood. I am lonely.
- My children left home and several of my best friends have died recently, giving me the feeling that my role in life is over.
- I want to find points of light, to find the ability to open a gate, because the gates are shut.
- I am seeking strength and the tools to help me with one hand to extract myself from the mud and with my other hand to find something to hold onto. Take time so that my hands will have strength.
- I feel that my body isn't my body.

Another factor in the motivation to participate in the workshop is the possibility of dealing with 'Who am I?':

- I need to organize myself for what I will do when I'm big.
- To fill a space that has been created.
- I understood that I must change my hat as a mother and working woman to myself.
- To live an independent life of who I was and have already forgotten.
- I am looking to go back to the starting point of what I am, before I was task-oriented and OK.
- I was always led and now I want to take the reins into my hands.
- To return to myself the ownership of my life, control.

The participants characterized the group time as 'a place for myself':

- Participating in this group is a gift I gave myself.
- Here I'm far away and no-one disturbs me.

At the end of the phase one the participants related to the group and to the interaction between its members, saying:

- I don't yet know what substance I can bring here.
- I am pleased to be in a group where I found the wonderful opportunity in the windows of life.
- It's amazing why we arrived in so short a time, that we came as strangers and became a group.
- I think that this group is suitable as a womb to rebirth myself.
- I got to know you quite well, and I am pleased that the artistic work spoke.
- I have the feeling of a journey that began.

The main topic was transition and change. Similarly, participation in a group was discussed. The participants related to change in their lives in the physiological, domestic-social and emotional-psychological realms. These were caused by developmental processes that are connected to cyclicity in their lives, in contrast to their personal choices, such as children's maturity and awareness of time. These changes, they noted, led to personal needs involved in voluntary change and development, such as filling the void created, time available, involvement with themselves and return the control of their lives.

Multi-topic content is compatible with the attributes of the mid-life period of women according to the literature review. At transition times in the life of women changes occur in all spheres. In the social domain, roles vary in the domestic setting and changes occur in the status of women. In the physiological domain, there are changes connected to the hormonal exchange and to the aging of the body. In the psychological realm awareness of the dimension of time occurs and the need arises for introspection and change in the internal roles (Neugarten, 1964; Northrup, 2001).

The participants related to their motivation to participate in the workshop. They noted the loss, the loneliness and the possibility of dealing with 'who I am'. They noted seeing the group as a place for themselves and as an opportunity for processes of change and development. They related to their need to be part of the group and to their fears of rejection. They noted the experience of group cohesion at the end of this phase.



## Behavior

The participants sought a common denominator through issues vocalized and attempted to find common acquaintances. They participated and gradually exposed the personal and universal content. Behavior was characterized by polarity in the transitions between expression to restraint, and between the personal and the group.

Involvement swung between fraternization and disconnection, between outburst and restraint, between exposure and vagueness. Feelings were sometimes expressed in extreme manner, such as loud laughter or tears. During the creative work the participants focused on their personal work while investing concentrated energy in it. Thereafter the need was expressed for creating a group picture composed of the personal work. Connections were made between the participants.

## Art

The creative process at phase one included several parts occurring at different points in time during the three sessions, notably expression in plastic materials, in drama and in movement.

The artistic work that afforded the products of expression in diverse plastic materials dealing with self-presentation using different techniques. The first two pieces were mostly two-dimensional and the third piece was three dimensional. They express an approach of experiential self-perception as regards the current period in the life of each member. They included the work on 'the period in my life', 'my inner portrait ', and 'a place of my own'. Each person gave a name to the work.

Each participant presented her work and included the participants in the experiential group verbally:

- While I was looking and involving them in my work, I had various thoughts. I have the feeling that the reason for coming to the group is not what I thought.
- Until now I didn't dare to express myself in materials; it seems I can.
- I didn't dare to take such a large place in the group as my work dared.

Group participants expressed the need to combine the personal work into a group picture. Each person hung or laid her work as she wished.

The work on 'the period in my life' was laid or hung on a wall separating the building from the garden while using the window and mirror that were there. The group decided on a name for the group work: 'Transitions'.

The work on 'my inner portrait' was spread on the floor, each piece separated from the next by a piece of colorful material. The group decided to name the work 'a group picture'.

The work on 'a place of my own' was laid in three groups and created a 'shared environment' for the entire group. The continuation of the creative work was done through dramatic expression.

Expression in drama included:

1. Personal writing of a monologue about the work 'A place of my own', for example, 'I am Alona's heart' that was presented to the participants.
2. Creating and presenting a group myth: A group artistic product is the combination of the creative processes of the small groups that comprised the shared environment. Each group wrote the story of its environment as woven in the participants' imagination. The three small groups combined into one group that created the group myth from the stories. The presentations were accompanied by humor that manifested itself through expression in acting, in movement and in the use of percussion instruments. The content imbued by the group participants to the myth included the word 'journey' and a process: The journey starts with the courage to want, continues through beats and flows to the target that is a journey to the lost islands.

Expression in movement included free movement in space. In the beginning the participants danced and moved differently from each other; later they shifted to personal movement, to movement in dialogue, in pairs, in small groups and in large groups. Sometimes one of the participants moved into and in the circle. Movement in general has several expressive qualities: Personal convergence, creating a contact and creating movement rituals for the entire group. These latter usually included free dance that became increasingly energy-intensive, accompanied by moments of laughter and closeness between the participants.

After the expression in movement the participants involved the others verbally, saying:

- When the group started I was scared to come close to you and in this movement it was far easier.
- I forgot myself during movement and this was a place of quiet and calm for me.
- The movement was a release from tension and intensity.
- I am pleased that the artistic work spoke and helped us to meet beyond our safe partitions. Good for us that we had the courage for that.

The creative processes included transitions from projectional expression to expression in movement, thence to expression in drama. Furthermore, the creative processes structured the transition from the individual to the group, and at the same time validated it. The personal work was united to a group artistic piece that constructed the group entity. The framework of group work had a containment character - it contained the variance of the members of the group. Yalom (2006) mentions containment as a dominant quality of the group framework that developed to the maximum. Artistic expression deepened the familiarity and connection between the participants.

The group artistic work and the use of metaphoric language when giving it a name contributed to raising the participants' awareness of everything connected to the main topic that needed to be discussed. Similarly, these led to discovering the ability for expression in materials and opportunities to take a place in the group. The awareness of the group's common substance echoed in the transitions and changes and the departure for a group journey. A combination between cognitive attitude and emotional attitude constructed the group experience and meaning. These participated in the start of structuring the narrative, which is one of the ways through which people organize the events they experience, structure the reality, filter the world of senses and organize its preservation in their memory. Through the narrative, people give meaning, understanding and justification to the deviation from the fixed order, finding a reason and purpose for their deeds (Bruner, 1996; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998).

Expression in movement enabled release and closeness between the participants. Artistic expression created conditions for humor. The creative processes are composed of symbolic expression that creates distancing from the content that threaten the creator (Jennings, 1999). They are a means of separating the me and the not me (Perroni, 2002).

Distancing and surprise are conditions for creating humor. When people are involved in creative work they manage to deviate from routine methods of action and activity (Noy, 1999). Movement allowed them development from an esthetic distance, an optimal combination between thoughts and feelings which is an essential condition for generating catharsis (Landy, 1993: 148; Scheff, 1979).

### Group meta-reality

The beginning of the development of a process that was manifested in the three levels of reality - verbalization, behavior and art. It included the start of structuring the group narrative and of several components – content, the dramatic stage of development, the artistic stage of development and the group stage of development.

Content: Discussion of the topic of 'transitions and change' that has a universal character and helped the participants to connect and create cohesion-developing and uniting interaction. The participants accepted and recognized the fact that they all experience this in their lives.

The dramatic stage of development: Establishing the framework for activity that is characterized by 'exposition', a type of introduction that affords the first stage in the classical structure of the development of drama (Thompson, 1976). The exposition included the description of the participants' events prior to beginning the workshop and their condition today, their desires and needs and the circumstances that brought them to participate in it. Similarly, an infrastructure for the conflict and for future substance was constructed.

The artistic stage of development: 'self presentation ' included the artistic work and work in dramatic expression of the period in my life, my inner portrait , a place of my own, and creating the group myth.

The group stage of development: The participants made sweeping mention of the reasons for participating in the group as an opportunity for change. They expressed their desire to be part of it and their fears of rejection. They noted the experience of group cohesion at the end of this stage. A process of structuring the group narrative began. These attributes are compatible with the first stage of the group development known as 'engagement'. It is typified by gradual personal exposure and the start of group cohesion (Mackenzie and Livesley (1983).

## Personal meta-reality

The start of the development of personal processes began to be manifested in the three levels of reality, and included the start of structuring the personal narrative, stages of development noted above and the stage of personal development.

The personal stage of development: This is the start of the process of structuring the personal narrative through the position of 'Myself in the world'.

### **4.1.2 Phase two**

Phase two lasted three sessions.

#### Verbalization

Each participant expressed herself verbally in the opening round following which a free discussion developed. The main subject of the contents revolved around the conflict of collectivism compared to the individuality. Similarly, there was consideration of the group and the process of awareness.

As the participants commented:

- Most of the transitions in my adult life are connected to the parenting roles; now its time for the transition that is connected to myself.
- It's now time for me to live my independent life.
- The comprehensibility that characterized my professional development and was according to the expectations of me is no longer suitable for me. I want to clarify where I am going.
- I want to do good and have fun for myself for once without considering my family.
- I want to clarify to myself what I want to do without relying on others.
- I always forget to pay attention to my conscious decisions and follow decisions that others make for me.
- Insisting on what I want leads to unpleasant conflict with others.
- During this period I need to focus on myself – me, who was considered to be mother hen – who would have believed it?
- I also need to take care of myself and also to calm the surroundings.

- The more I take care of myself the more it threatens the surroundings.

Additional issues that were discussed were connected to the group and to discovering awareness.

- Here I feel I am in Nirvana.
- The group accompanied me this week, everyone a little bit.
- The things you said clarified for me why I felt uncomfortable regarding something that happened to me this week.
- The group helps me to think what is pleasant for me and what makes me feel good.
- I began happy and suddenly what I see here is so hard for me.
- Experiencing the group aroused the need for introspection into my life.

The main topic expressed verbally was the conflict comprised from collectivism compared to individuality. The topics included the struggle between the tendency to respond to the needs of the community and the need to focus on oneself, and the struggle between the tendency to react to the expectations of the surroundings and the personal choice and the need for its application; a struggle between the need for harmony attained by responding to the expectations and needs of the community and the need to focus on the self and free choice that entail harsh conflict with which it is hard to cope.

Another issue discussed was the group and its considerable importance for the participants, as well as awareness that arises following the group process. Yalom (2006) avers that meaning is created for the individual who participates in the group following a feeling of belonging, and that the activity in the group contributes to raising awareness amongst its members. Furthermore, the need was mentioned for introspection. Researchers note the movement from outside inside, and the need for reassessing life expressed in introspection (Jung, 1971; Neugarten, 1964, 1968).

### Behavior

During the conversation each participant took herself a place for involvement, and listened closely to the others. After the conversation, they began to build a group totem pole. The first part was characterized by an attempt to clarify what the group represented as an entity, how each participant would express herself, and what is the manner of working suitable to the group.

Brainstorming was conducted during which the participants wrote the ideas they expressed. There were arguments and disagreement regarding the topics, the visual representation and the method of work. Some of the participants decided to start building and were joined by the others. The arguments, suggestions and disagreements continued during construction. Participants tried to persuade others to follow them and some tried to aggressively dictate the method to the others. The voices rose and with them stormy feelings. Some of the participants quit the argument and started working. Others created their own object. One burst into tears.

Work ceased and members of the group decided to return to cognitive brain-storming and observe what had already been created. They took a decision to work together, to be in the process, to listen to the various voices and to seek a path that would contain the various approaches. They decided on a link between the elements completed, returning to shared construction based on the principle of pluralism, linking everyone to unity.

Two poles were built and the participants decided to seek and create an area connecting them on which to attach elements that had already been completed, as well as distinctive representation for each person in the group.

Thereafter, the creative process developed with the joy of doing and with mutual help to the point that the participants declared it was completed.

#### Verbalization that accompanied the process of totem building

Verbalization included attention to shape, content and meaning, methods of creating, diversity and conflicts, emotional expression, coping with conflicts, discovering awareness and social roles.

Attitude towards shape:

- In my imagination a totem is something spiral of increasing height.
- Perforations. Each person makes her own perforation.
- One needs a central point.

Attitude to content and meaning:

- I think a totem is the backbone of a new cosmos.
- The totem is the umbilical cord that connects us to the group.
- I am giving this totem a womb.

#### Attitude to the way of working:

- Are we building a structure to which each connects her thing or is each creating her thing and then we connect them?
- It is essential that there is a basis before we attach elements.
- I first need planning, organizing work that is composed of stages.

#### Difference and conflicts:

- It's too pagan for me.
- I am an analytical type; I need clear separation rather than merging parts.
- This looks like a Barbie totem. This shape made out of sponge reminds me of too soft and sweet a wedding cake and I need something hard with projections.
- I can connect with the soft part but not with the rough parts.
- I like the circles. I want it to be more feminine.
- I don't like the skirt you made. I am a person who wears pants.
- We are conducting a dialogue between the womb and the phallus. The basis is phallic and some of the group want to alter it.

#### Emotional expression:

- Building on a totem pole arouses terrible anger in me.
- I am frustrated. I feel it shrinks me and I must reduce volume.
- I hate the feeling of narrowness.

#### Coping with conflicts:

- We have to alter the basis so that it is suitable for everyone, because otherwise some of us remain outside the group.
- Everyone must have her wish within the totem.
- Some want to take over the leadership, while there is also the desire to seek a group way of running things.
- I suggest adopting the spiral image that creates a path without hierarchy.
- Let's go back to the stage where we were together, to the original brainstorming and see what the needs of each are.
- There is a search for a path between a variety of styles. Some start to build a house out of the stained glass windows or alternatively from the womb. We have to find a method that combines the styles.
- The way in which you react to the various needs voiced here paves the path for me back to involvement in the group.



- Compromise is our truth, or it can be seen as a combination of details into a group existence.
- Without fear of conflicts and over-caution that leads to paralysis.
- I have a request: That no-one voids the person standing next to her.
- For there to be a space for each of us.
- We will relate to it as to labor pains. From a place of uncertainty and see what happens.
- We will relate to the process as to a moment and not as to a product.

#### Exhibiting awareness:

- What happens here between us is a symbolic process for what happens to me in life.
- I am surprised by the waiving of my being opinionated and I enjoy the revelation of the dormant part of myself.
- I discovered that I take roles that focus on others when I first want to meet myself.
- I located the point in need of strengthening: To recognize my wishes and desires and not to deride them.
- I understand that this treads on eighty eggs in my personality so I cope out of love.
- Everything that happens here leads me to the thought that it is worth examining how it will be possible to expand the boundaries of the group and accept the differences between us.

#### Social roles:

- My role is to wait till you build the main structure and then to add decorations.
- I have a tendency to take over leadership.
- While building the totem I help. Like an apprentice. This is rest for me as in daily life I am a principal and instructor for many people.
- I found myself in the role of observer and guard, worried that nothing bad happens to anyone.
- I didn't want to see where I am located in the group so I took a position of not taking any responsibility.

Behavior in the first part of this phase was characterized by personal exposure and closeness between the participants who changed while building the group totem pole. Conflict and differences of opinion arose regarding its shape, content and method of work. Members of the group

sought ways to solve the conflict that pertained to the individuality of each member compared to the collective representation of the group as an entity. Similarly, a conflict arose regarding the method of work alongside the question of whether it would be through leadership and hierarchy, preliminary analytical planning or through a network of group relationships and providing space for a developing process. These conflicts characterized female styles compared to male styles.

The process included expressing feelings of anger, frustration, thoughts and mutual attention leading to controlling hostility, to developing patience while providing legitimacy for the uniqueness of each participant. Awareness of the diverse social roles filled by participants of the group developed.

Members of the group found a way to unite the many types of work and totem content. They combined, during its building, time out for thought, for expressing feelings and for planning on the one hand, and for legitimacy for spontaneity and freedom of creativity in the process on the other. Designing the totem included representation of content conceded by all, as well as elements that represented each participant according to her choice. Closeness between the participants, mutual help and joy in creativity were created in the second half, after finding a way of coping with the conflicts.

### Art

The group artistic product (the group totem pole) is composed of two connected poles (see appendix 2). One is wrapped with sponge surrounded by materials in a spiral shape creating a cone, to which are attached many elements including hands hugging the pole and images that represent the choice of each participant. Shells and notes on which values such as love, courage etc, were written were inserted into the layers of material. The second pole was made of a wooden branch wrapped with glued paper to which were attached laces like bird feathers. The space connecting them was made of threads like cobwebs, on which were hung smiley shapes, a leopard, a snail, a womb with an embryo and a figure swinging on a swing.

### Expression in movement: The ritual of the totem celebration

On completing the totem the participants burst into a free movement ritual of creative release of an increasing pace accompanied by music and percussion instruments. The movement included communications

through dialogue in movement, contact and creating a personal space for each to dance in the middle of the circle.

Expression through verbal images: The participants observed the group totem pole from all angles and expressed associations and images that related to the group artistic product. They manifested several topics including transition and change, collectivism and individuality, identity and taboo, the internal and the external, loss and development.

Transition and change:

- A community that is at a transition stage between sickness and health, between life and death.
- A space is created between two poles, a place to grow, a place to be seen.
- The area that connects is a transition between changes. It involves danger. It is not balanced and seems fragile. It is a bridge between two different situations – from paucity to plenty and from plenty to paucity.
- The totem represents the transition and change from a poor reality to splendor, to fertility, to that desired, to containment. From helplessness to ability.
- In the connecting space that there is a danger, there is a leopard, it ate the bird, it's on the way to the baby

Collectivism and individuality:

- For me the hands symbolize a hug, doing. Power is in our hands.
- Personally I don't like the esthetics but it symbolizes for me things that I do like.
- To contain all of us there was a need to expand, there is much complexity, expansion to two totems and the space between them.
- Metaphorically speaking and symbolically, there is space here to contain everything there is inside us.
- A personal statement within group representation. Space for each without dominance.

Identity and taboo:

- The totem expressed the need of our community for a place for prayers and wishes – for rain, joy, innocence, warmth, a hug, strength and free choice in dangerous situations.
- The totem belongs to a female, open and cohesive community, strong but not aggressive.

- The town is the colorful community that strives upwards, seeking air from the burden, from the full warehouses.
- What is lacking in a totem? There are no swords and weapons. There is no bear or eagle.
- There are no qualities that men would have brought.

The internal and the external:

- Airy compared to opaque. Introverted like a snail shell and powerful like a tiger.
- The soft that inside the totem and the rigid outside are also manifested in materials and in textures.
- What outwardly looks different from the inside of the totem.
- The inside is the stable and massive skeleton on which there is sponge that absorbs everything.
- The second part is composed of a branch growing on a natural tree around which is wrapped artificial material that gives a feeling of withering.

Loss and development:

- On one side of the totem there is no life and on the other side the vitality breaks through.
- A totem that deals with bridging the contrasting parts, the healthy and the sick side. One is colorful and loaded and the other wounded and bandaged.
- In the supportive pole there are chrysalises in shrouds, like fossils. The threads can be disentangled and connected, to create a fossil that lacks life from a chrysalis, to another stage from which life is born.
- The embryo creates an association with miscarriages.
- The group totem pole deals with life cycles. One part is female by its essence, rising upwards in a spiral movement, soft and spongy and optimistic. It is also the spring and blossoming, in many languages. In the second part the wintry tree stands wrapped in shrouds and bulbs that are like embryos from which life does not yet burst. The part representing spring spins cobwebs towards the wintry part, as if saying 'we are together'.

The artistic product was a group totem pole that was present in the group space through the following phase. The words that accompanied the process of building the totem included all the topics of shape, content, humor, methods of creativity, variation, conflicts, expressing emotions, coping, uniqueness, awareness and social roles. Members of the group expressed their impression of the totem pole on several issues – transition

and change, collectivism and individuality, identity and taboo the internal and the external, loss and development.

### Group meta-reality

The continued process was manifested at the three levels of reality – verbalization, behavior and art - and included further structuring of the group narrative and several components – content and the dramatic, artistic and group stages of development.

Content: Consideration of the topic of ‘collectivism and individuality’ that afforded part of the conflicts existing in the group.

The dramatic stage of development: This entailed establishing a framework of action characterized by ‘conflict’, and affords the second stage in the classic structure of the development of drama (Thompson, 1976). It is the result of the all the objections that can stem from intrapsychic contrasting motives and the objection of others. The conflicts that arose in the group revolved mainly around collectivity compared to individuality, and femininity *versus* masculinity. Similarly, an infrastructure was constructed for the development of a ‘complication’ that is a stage *en route* to the climax.

The artistic stage of development: Constructing a ‘group totem pole’ that included brainstorming, construction and presence in the space.

The group stage of development: The participants expressed the differences between themselves and allowed space for the variance based on their appreciation of it that developed during this stage. The participants' social roles enjoyed a central role in this process. Coping with conflicts that arose and finding methods to solve them led to control of hostility, to tolerance, and to acceptance of the group identity and the continued structuring the group narrative. These attributes are compatible with the second stage in the development of groups, known as ‘differentiation’. This stage is characterized by developing a mechanism for solving conflicts through cooperation, criticism and discovery (Mackenzie and Livesley 1983).

### Personal meta-reality

Personal processes occurred manifested in the three levels of reality mentioned above, and included the start of constructing the personal narrative, the stages of development mentioned previously and the stage

of the personal development. This latter was the start of constructing the personal narrative through placing the 'myself and the group' position.

### **4.1.3 Phase three**

Phase three lasted three sessions.

#### Verbalization

Each participant expressed herself verbally during the opening round following which free debate developed. The main topic pertained to the content of personal identity and taboo. In addition, there was consideration of the group and the discovery of awareness.

As the participants said:

- I am here in a new constellation of the endless puzzle of me being who I am.
- I was wrung out by the real me, and if I don't care for myself, then who will. I have nothing meaningful to fulfill.
- I am interested in lowering the partitions and separations within myself that cause me to disconnect internally, which I have done for so many years.
- I want to discover anew who I was as a girl and got lost over time.
- I hope to find tools to connect the pieces that did not have room in my life till now.
- I have a weighty name that is a reminder of the dead in my family. I chose here to be known by my nickname since it has a lighter and softer sound.
- Demons constantly escape Pandora's box.

The participants shared sentences of a forbidden nature said to them during their childhood and adolescence:

- She – she's not ashamed to do things that are not suitable for girls.
- Who's going to marry you?
- If you don't eat you won't find a husband.
- Get your feet away from your friend's house lest he bites you, my mother said. I didn't allow myself to accept help. I conveyed this to my children too. Something happened here in the group, something happened that climaxed in the construction of the totem pole and I, in a process of change in this regard, apply it to my children too.
- My mother told me don't forget there are lots of wolves out there. It affected me. I was very good, helped and shared what I

had with everyone. The first thing that occurred to me here in the group was that I would build a puppet of evil and experiment with it a bit.

- You should be a lawyer, my father said repeatedly, and I walked the streets throughout high school.
- My father called me a stupid cow, unsuccessful. That's the image that accompanied me throughout life and creates helplessness and a low self-image till today. I hope I manage to do something with my life.
- At home, when I grew up, one didn't express feelings – only knowledge and sophistication.

Other comments referred to the group:

- This group has a lot of power and warmth and this helps me to open my thoughts to the difficult things as well.
- I was pleased to come here today, to be here with myself together with you.
- In this group one can also talk about sexuality.
- I greatly identify with you and I know there are moments when one must struggle in order to escape this situation.
- I wish you success in unraveling this prison of yours.
- I suppose that in the group process I will find more and more light and strength to be at peace with who I am.
- I am pleased with what is happening to me here, because I came to work and this is a group that works.

The key topic was composed of the content of the personal identity and the taboo. Issues of taboo included prohibitions embedded during childhood. They were discovered to be constitutive events that affected the participants' life style. During this period of life, they afford an obstacle to development and accordingly afford motivation for change.

Similarly, there were references to the group and the participants. The attitude to the group was directed towards the relationships between the participants that were based on help, empathy and support. Yalom (2006) sees them as essential conditions for change and development. Similarly, there was consideration of the group as a working group.

### Behavior

Behavior entailed personal exposure of the taboo substance and the development of a deeper appreciation of the emotional complexity of each participant. A meeting with the taboo puppet aroused pain, anger

and sadness amongst the women. Some of the participants react to discoveries that arise while working in a stream of emotion and tears and humor as a technique of dissipating the emotional tension.

They were sensitive to themselves and to the others and when they located someone in distress they came to her, encouraged her and hugged her. They recruited and invested energy that created a feeling of a work group. The interpersonal relationships were directed towards mutual help for the challenge of creating a personal presentation. A warm and supportive atmosphere developed that enabled emotional expression that varied between pain and satisfaction and the use of humor for release.

### Art

The group totem pole stood in the middle of the visible group space throughout the three sessions.

The creative process included some parts in creating a personal presentation through puppet theater. The parts included the choice of a heroine from fifty human, animal and imaginary creature puppets; constructing a taboo puppet from diverse materials; involving the group in a monologue about the heroine and a taboo puppet; involving the group in a presentation in a monologue by the heroine puppet and by the taboo puppet and dialogue between them and between their operators; work in pairs that was based on mutual help in finding a key topic for the personal presentation, writing a text and arranging the scenes. The dramatic expression was accompanied by humor that was created as a result of the use of the grotesque in a playful style. At the end of this phase a ritual was performed of covering the group totem pole and creating a space lacking stimuli, for presenting the personal representation at the next phase. The totem pole was covered during the ritual and was moved to a hidden corner in the group space. Comments from the dramatic expression illustrate this.

Monologue of the heroine puppet:

- For me as a donkey, you are a suitable puppeteer. I am forlorn, I am alone. If people want to be with me they're burdening me a heavy load and I'm fed up of being the porter. I have decided to quit. I won't be anyone's.
- I am masculine, impatient, cynical, somewhat similar to my puppeteer. She also gets at you but is awfully restrained. We'll



see what will be, either we'll stick together or I'll retreat and she will advance. The stage is free.

Dialogue between the heroine puppet and its puppeteer:

- When I met her I saw she was a total chicken. She thinks she must spread her wings over everyone.
- If I manage to empty her head and mine, it will be better.

Dialogue between the taboo puppet and its puppeteer:

- The mouth is also the mouth of eroticism. What I was told at a younger age was that it's not right to be like this, so it's OK.
- I detest her, she represents all the stigmas about what it is to be feminine and motherly.
- I'm into the subject of sanity and craziness. My puppet is the crazy one.
- It goes in all the rough directions that are contrary to what I like. I understand that the puppet must be part of me; I don't hate her.
- On the one hand she is the one who exposes herself, the stripper, both physically and emotionally and on the other hand she is connected, physically and emotionally and as regards her legs she's an amputee.
- This character represents the taboo that was customary in my family. Forbidden to need, we have to manage by ourselves. This made us people who live in a type of small prison, everything closed behind a fence. We provide all our own needs and everything that grows outside the fence. I remained imprisoned inside till now.

Awareness that increased with dramatic expression:

- Leave words, stick with your heart.
- I am boring from the outside as compared to the puppet. What is most outstanding to me is the layers, the sealed face that can take on any expression. In this regard the puppet and I are similar.
- If I release the reins I will become a rag puppet on a string.
- What could happen to me if I am not committed; it's scary to deal with that.
- The puppets, with their special language, can arouse capability and helplessness. It has no alternative; how can one deal with the most helpless place with such potency.

The creative process included several parts of work by creating a personal representation in the puppet theater. It included the use of puppets as representing parts of the personality that can be defined as psychological roles and are part of the components of the personal identity. They included conscious roles that were manifested in the heroine puppet and unconscious roles that emerged as a result of involvement with the taboo. These roles were embodied in a taboo puppet. The puppets were used in an attempt to discover a personal issue or conflict as a result of recognizing parts of the soul that are assessed as inferior and creating a dialogue between them and the other parts.

The creative process exposed the contradictions and the intra-psycho parts of the self more deeply. Unconscious aspects of the individual are revealed that lead to awareness of the complexity of the self, such as a reaction to the puppet that represents aggression: 'It's actually soft...one mustn't be scared of the external appearance; we'll still become friends, that's for sure.' This reference is to dialogue between the parts of the personality and acceptance of the self, such as things said by the puppet to the puppeteer: 'I felt choked; you released me. Thank you.' This alludes to the contrasting components in the personality – the one choked, unconscious and not expressed in a controlled manner and the other part, the conscious, that led to acceptance and containment.

The group totem pole was visible throughout the sessions of this phase. It served as a generator, delegating strengths of the entire group and for each participant in her personal coping. Researchers, such as Halpin (1981) and Berthiaume (1996) believe that totem poles were part of early cultures, and objects and monuments with totem pole attributes are located in an obvious open public place where people pass. Its location, its presence and its representation of social and value belonging for members of the community empowers the community and its members to cope with the daily reality. At the end of this phase a ritual of covering the totem by the group was performed, creating a space lacking stimuli for the personal presentations.

### Group meta-reality

The further development of the process that was manifested in the three levels of reality (verbalization, behavior and art) occurred. It included further structuring of the group narrative and several components such as content, and the dramatic, group and individual stages of development.

Content: This pertained to the attitude towards the topic of ‘identity and taboo’ of the participants in the group and their universal component.

#### The dramatic stage of development

This stage entailed establishing the framework for action characterized in the ‘complication’, which affords the third stage in the classic structure of the development of drama (Thompson, 1976). Intensifying the conflict by the intervention of additional forces is known as complications. At this stage, in addition to the conflict of the collective compared to the individual that characterized the previous stage, the internal conflict also affords a conflict between parts of the psyche that represent identity and taboo. This stage appears after the conflicts and leads to a climax.

The artistic stage of development: ‘Creating a personal puppet theater that includes the heroine puppet, constructing a taboo puppet and dramatic dialogue.

The group stage of development: This stage entails furthering uniqueness. The participants expressed deeper appreciation of the emotional complexity of each. The feeling of a work group continued. The interpersonal relationships were characterized by a warm supportive atmosphere. Each participant coped with recognizing herself, her defense mechanisms and how they relate to each other. These attributes are compatible with the third stage in the group development known as ‘individuation’. It is characterized by introspection and developing understanding of the individual by exposure and reflection (Mackenzie and Livesley 1983).

#### Personal meta-reality

Further personal developmental processes occurred that were manifested in the three levels of reality and included the stages of development mentioned previously, further construction of the personal narrative and the personal stage of development.

The personal stage of development: The process of structuring the personal narrative through the ‘personal journey’ continued of each participant.

#### 4.1.4 Phase four

This phase lasted two sessions.

##### Verbalization

Each participant expressed herself verbally in an opening round following which was a free discussion. The key topic was composed of internal and external aspects. Similarly there was consideration of the group and exhibitions of awareness.

This is illustrated in the following statements:

- I want to reach something deep, something internal that is not seen from outside.
- I am aware of the need for conducting inner change although I seem to function from outside. I am prepared for the difficulty involved in dealing with it.
- I need emotional order. Because of confusion between the internal and the external the Tower of Babylon disintegrated.
- I told my daughter. I need to let things out, to the surroundings, what happens to me inside, here in the group.
- I am seeking the way to let out what I feel inside.
- I am amazed at what you say; I see you as someone totally organized. Even at moments of crying and emotional outbursts you convey your chaos in an organized way.
- My daughter began to ask me about the group. She asked what taboo puppet I made and what puppet was permitted.

Discussion about the group described deepening the closeness in interpersonal relationships, the meaning of these relationships and a feeling of mutual commitment.

- I want to tell you that I have connected to your world and you are very important to me.
- I want to say thank you for helping me to be meaningful in my granddaughter's birthday.
- Thank you for the warmth I received from you, after the flood I released here.
- Thank you for the order in the thoughts that my partner to the process here contributed to me.
- My partner's reactions during the work on the presentation were like a mirror for me and helped me to attain consciousness.

- The group for me is like a home. I allow myself to be. I feel free to wear a tank top.

The main topic was composed of aspects of the internal and the external. It included intensifying the uniqueness while externalizing the inner essence, exhibiting awareness of internal and covert parts of personality, and their legitimate acceptance, a view from outside the self and of the way in which the individual is perceived by others, and a view of the internal experience of the self.

There was consideration of the recognition of the importance of relationships in the group and a desire to involve the surroundings in daily life. The impact of the process in the group on the relationships in the family and on the mother-daughter relationship is particularly important.

### Behavior

The personal exposure continued and included all the relationships in the family. The mutual reactions of the participants continued to be tolerant and an intimacy developed accompanied by physical contact and hugs. Similarly, attempts were made to develop social relationships outside the group.

The personal puppet show aroused tension and emotion prior to presentation and emotional release thereafter that sometimes was accompanied by tears. The participants, who were the audience, created an atmosphere of sanctity and reacted emotionally during the presentations, and with support, encouragement and expressing appreciation prior to them and thereafter. This step was an emotional climax, the pinnacle of revelation in the presentation of an important personal issue.

Receiving written feedback from each participant at the end of the presentation raised consciousness and contributed to the commitment in inter-personal relationships and to their meaning for each participant.

### Art

A personal puppet show afforded the artistic expression (see appendix 3). This step was accompanied by a ritual with several parts. Prior to all the presentations, a ritual in movement of 'thanksgiving' was held from the observers' and the actresses' standpoints. Prior to each presentation, the

stage area and the audience area were defined according to the actresses' needs. A bell was rung three times at the start of each show and the name of the puppet show was announced. The end of each presentation saw applause and bowing. After every presentation, each member of the audience wrote her personal feedback to the actress. At the conclusion of all the shows, there was again a ritual of thanksgiving as there was in the beginning. The artistic styles that were manifested in the presentations were different and varied. They dealt with personal conflicts and included transition and change, collectivism and individuality, identity and taboo, the internal and the external, loss and development. Thereafter, the participants involved the group in their experiences.

As the participants said:

- It was very difficult and very meaningful for me.
- What you wrote me was very meaningful; it went from the heart to the heart.
- I took it very much to heart; it was very personal work for me.
- It was experiencing an experience, not to reconstruct. It had a lot of truth in it.
- It was life, not bits of a play.
- It was a moment of happiness. A flash. A point in history.
- After a long period of silence, of being paralyzed, I not only let my voice be heard but also presented it before everyone.
- I presented hard things here that my daughter and I never discussed. I think sharing the presentation with her can be the start of communications.
- Suddenly all the fear melted and I had a feeling of catharsis.
- The moment I was prepared to relinquish things and shifted to the dance with the wild female leopard is that which I take with me.

Reactions and feedback:

- I felt in the group something I had not felt for a long time, for many years. In the surroundings in which I live, I feel I have nothing to offer at the level at which I want. I thank you for the positive attitude and the support whose climax was in things you wrote me in the feedback after my presentation. This was a ray of light in my life.
- Writing the feedback honed for me the extent to which each of you is important for me, and when I read your feedback to me I felt how important I am for you.
- You in fact returned yourself to yourself.

- There is something in the tone of your voice that is calming, exceptional in its tranquility.
- The shows were a way to discover and get to know other sides in you all.
- My experience as an audience for the presentations was an exciting, powerful and touching experience.
- The experience of being an audience and an actress was a very unique human and artistic experience due to its intensity and cleansing.
- You gave me a great present; I am capable of coming close to you and I feel that I can go forwards.
- I think you are amazing. You bring me to such experiences that they are not even close to standard, and I hope that you manage to dare to arouse this donkey.
- This was nice to hear and it had the quality of Fellini.
- I want to tell of the little woman with the small body and so much inside. A small woman with strength.
- Each copes with her own issues that were emotional and brought me to tears.

#### Expressions of discovering consciousness

- Something else happened to me when I began the presentation with its intensities and authenticities that was not planned and this was the greatest surprise for me. I discovered something new.
- When I read the feedback was the moment I realized that I previously was not aware of it.
- I took an obligation on myself: From today, every day to break a small piece. It moved me when I saw your work.
- My work suddenly was a mirror of myself in previous years. It's a shame I didn't know to do both and to rest a bit.
- Your work enlightened me. It's like a womb and birth. This enlightenment touches my heart. The issue of our transition is that we constantly need to be reborn.
- I wanted to tell you that after giving birth one brought a sacrifice of impurity. It's paradoxical because one does this also after death. There's room for birth after death.
- I am amazed really like a child who stands open-mouthed throughout what you had done. You organize tiers in my mind.

Artistic expression included presenting personal work through puppet theater. Presenting the work was the peak of the creative process in

which the puppets, text and acting were all part. These combined to succinct artistic expression of personal conflicts.

The artistic works dealt with substance of transition and change, the collective and the individual, identity and taboo, external and internal, and loss and development.

The participants' experience included an external position in the role of audience and an internal position of greater involvement in the actress role. Most participants characterized the experience as a catharsis.

Social and personal consciousness arose during the work and as a result of feedback and mutual reactions between the participants. Yalom (2006) refers to the quality of consciousness that occurs during the group process as a result of reciprocal feedback.

### Group meta-reality

Further development was manifested in the three levels of reality (verbalization, behavior and art) and included further construction of the group narrative together with content, the dramatic stage of development, the artistic stage of development and the group stage of development.

Content: This refers to the 'internal and external' issue that is manifested in the point of view and in disparity in the experiences between the observer and the actor.

The dramatic stage of development: This stage established the framework of activity that is characterized by the 'climax' and affords the fourth stage in the classical structure of dramatic development (Thompson, 1976). It is accompanied by the pinnacle of excitement and of intensity, as a turning point that will lead to resolution at the untying of the knot, a releasing stage at which the participants reached the climax of artistic and emotional expression.

The artistic stage of development was 'a personal puppet show' in which each participant was both actor and audience alternately.

The group stage of development: The personal exposure of the participants led to personal understanding and understanding by the others in a more complex way. There were deeper and more meaningful interactions. The participants accept their ability for closeness and meaning for someone else. The tolerant and open atmosphere for making



friendships was accompanied by strong connections. These attributes are compatible with the fourth stage in the group development known as 'intimacy'. It is accompanied by further development of individuation and mutuality. The stage is characterized by developing interpersonal involvement and facilitating mutual influence (Mackenzie and Livesley, 1983).

#### Personal meta-reality

The personal processes continued to develop and were manifested at the three levels of reality. They included stages of development mentioned above, further construction of the personal narrative and the personal stage of development.

The personal stage of development: The process of structuring the personal narrative continued through the 'climax and catharsis' of each participant.

#### **4.1.5 Phase five**

Phase five lasted two sessions.

#### Verbalization

Each participant expressed herself verbally in the opening round, after which a group discussion developed. The main topic of the discussion was loss and development, in addition to discussion of the group and discovering awareness.

The participants expressed themselves:

- Now, after the climax that there was in the individual work I presented, I am capable of looking at the entire process and seeing how everything combines and is connected to me.
- Before I joined the group I felt that life put a rope around my neck. I joined the group and became dependent on it like a life belt and now am connected to the umbilical cord that helps me to be born anew.
- The umbilical cord gives life and symbolizes separation.
- I am usually prepared to forgo something big that I wanted from life and it's painful and difficult.
- My time is running out and I feel young.

- Yesterday, when I saw the tree that fell in my courtyard, I said to myself, 'You've grown up'.
- I feel that I have moved from a place of mourning to one of comfort, understanding and acceptance.
- The things that happen to me here are a catalyst. I have the feeling of flowing, part introspection and part places where I find it hard.
- I suddenly realized. I am switching from a place where fear was in control to one of freedom.
- As a child I was paralyzed. I was forbidden to know, to ask questions. Here I allow myself to change and to be the unknowing, the questioning.
- I realized that this project was, as far as I was concerned, arrival at the point I hoped to reach. What I hoped would happen was that I would overcome the rational aspects, that I would be able to overtake myself and that happened.
- I use the workshop tools, which is to embark on an experience without much thought. To let things flow, without creating defenses or criticism or judgment. I put myself into more situations of letting people lead or to be on the receiving side.
- The first thing I did following my experience in the group was to alter things in my family and with my son.
- My husband was interested and I also told my daughter things that were never discussed.
- Following my participation with my daughter she asked, 'Mother, don't go. I need you.'
- I discovered I apparently still have a meaningful role in life.

Comments relating to the group:

- That I am no longer prepared to keep things to myself and not be hurt any more, each of you has a share. A part that gave me the strength to dare. I was freed from some issue – perhaps the last. I feel that the group honed for me the recognition of my talents.
- The place of the group was a protective hothouse for me, a womb, a very containing place. I felt very good. Even the timbre of my voice changed. Something more open. I think that everyone of you, in the things you raised, gave me a point onto which to hold, and energy and gifts.
- I am amazed at your courage and I know that is what I must do.
- The group is a place sufficiently protected to shed layers.

The main topic was loss and development. The participants verbalized the process that they had undergone during the workshop. They mentioned this was possible after the climax in the presentation of the personal work through puppet theater. They related to loss and to rebirth, to mourning and acceptance and to increasing the vitality created as a result of the readiness for parting.

They noted the change and development in internal psychological roles, such as from independent and lonely to accepting and belonging, from controlled to free. Similarly, they noted the impact of their process on the family and on discovering personal meaning.

The attitude towards the group, and working as a group, was as to a source of inspiration of power that raising consciousness, containment and increasing the feeling of potency (Yalom 2006).

### Behavior

The relationships between the participants at the outset were accompanied by relaxed communications. The ritual of returning the group totem pole aroused emotion and closeness between the participants, and creative expression in dance. Thereafter the situation changed and the participants created an atmosphere that facilitated personal introspection by each participant. This testimony was accompanied by a feeling of mutual obligation and appreciation of the uniqueness of each participant. The group ran itself.

The transitions between the diverse situations were flexible and adaptation to them was rapid. The emotional reactions of the participants enjoyed self-containment. The participants initiated and created verbal and physical communications as long as this was demanded. Towards the end of this phase integrative mention was made of integrative types of group process and the end of the workshop. Sadness and the desire to delay the subject were voiced. Finally, the participants returned to expression in movement that included the rituals that were constructed in previous phase of the process.

### Art

Artistic expression included the ritual of returning the totem pole and positioning it in the group space. It was accompanied by drumming and dance. Cries of curiosity were heard and thereafter expressions of surprise. The participants walked around the totem and conducted a type

of repeat acquaintanceship with the parts. A shared group dance began to develop. The drummers allowed the drum music to be heard, left the drums and joined the ritual that developed to a crescendo, with vital and creative expression in movement. Finally the participants hugged each other and allowed the quiet to envelope them. This was a ritual for assimilating the group memory, as one of them said, a moment of silence in memory of the group.

Later the participants created the 'path', their personal route using the personal artistic products, the group totem pole and additions as needed, such as crowns with names for the stations *en route*. Creating the personal journey was an expression by each participant of the personal development process that she underwent during the workshop. It afforded a developmental axis that included the losses, achievements, discovery of the meaning and turning points throughout the process.

The artistic expression was accompanied by feelings of trust in the process, in the group and in the members. This process enlightened the power of art and of creative processes in discovering consciousness, offering expression for the absence and loss in a vital way that give life.

Each participant served as a guide for the other participants who were invited to 'walk' the personal path, returning finally to the group movement ritual. Through the movement they came closer to each other, created dialogue and turned to personal movement.

Comments made during the artistic expression included:

- A manifestation of the lack in the multitude of the creative work and in the depth of the characters.
- Expression of the death also in a vital way.
- I was surprised how much artistic work can broach things that in life would not arise.
- This reminds me of the cyclicity in the totem.
- A world is built here with this totem pole as its representative. A world covered in sponge that functions like a shock absorber. It was like being born into a female womb, a sponge, protective, ameliorating and accepting. A place that allows growth and development, of the soft parts and the prickly parts too. The difficult and rough parts necessary for coping with life.
- This time it suddenly seems to be like a tree standing in the forest on which everyone comes to hang their baggage.
- The totem pole is our wishing tree.

- I am taking you on a trip between planning and repetitiveness and spontaneity. Let's start from the place whence I came to the group, from a view of the world that says that the world is dangerous, unexpected and therefore constantly spontaneous, and constant change is a guarantee of survival. We will conclude in a place where I choose to live. This is a turning point in which I start to feel the change in me.
- I am taking you on a trip to experience. Please leave all your rational, analytical thoughts at the starting point together with your criticalness. As food for the journey you are invited to take a variety of emotions. On the way, allow yourselves to lead and be led. Enjoy yourselves.
- The end point in my journey is my desire to be understood without being transparent.
- During the workshop, when I created these works, they seemed not to belong to each other. Now, I see what I did not see then. In the first artistic worlds there was mention of my main issue, which is my focus of coping at this period. I see the continuity of development through the material I used and through characters.

### Group meta-reality

The process developed further, manifested in the three levels of reality – verbalization, behavior and art - and included further construction of the group narrative and several components including content, dramatic, artistic and group development stages.

Content: This included the subject of ‘loss and development’ that afforded a component in the group and the participant process.

The dramatic stage of development: Establishing the framework of action, that is characterized by ‘untying the knot’ and affords the fifth stage in the classic structure of the development of drama (Thompson, 1976). This stage sees a drop in tension and in emotional intensity, offering the resolution of the turning point that developed at the previous stage.

The artistic stage of development: ‘The path’ – integrative artistic work that employs diverse objects as well as dramatic expression.

The group stage of development: The expansion and intensification of individuation continues while intensifying the feeling of mutual

commitment and of appreciation of the uniqueness of each participant. Old knowledge was illuminated from a new angle. The issue of trust is central. The participants take responsibility for their processes and for their interaction with others. Further communications and real work continues. These attributes are compatible with the fifth stage of group development known as 'mutuality'. It is characterized by group independence and developing understanding of the equality in the relationships without dependency and exploitation (Mackenzie and Livesley, 1983).

#### Personal meta-reality

Further development of the personal processes occurred, manifested in the three levels mentioned previously, as well as further construction of the personal narrative and the personal development stage.

The personal stage of development: The process of constructing the personal narrative through the 'achievements' of each participant continued.

#### **4.1.6 Phase six**

This phase lasted one four-hour session.

#### Verbalization

Every participant expressed herself verbally in the opening round, followed by a discussion. The main topic was transition and change, and included parting, the impact of the process on relationships in the family, the transition to daily life, reconstructing events that occurred in the workshop and mutual thankfulness, alongside an attitude of discovery and consciousness. The following comments illustrate this.

Parting:

- There are partings that are as sharp as a knife and there are weakening partings.
- Today there is a mixture of joy and sadness. The problem is that I can't be both sad and happy simultaneously.
- So we won't start to cry about the parting. Sometimes not to come to the group will be a task. I will miss it greatly. I feel the absence but there will be a continuation.
- Will we be given video documentation?
- For my part the workshop could start over again.

The impact of the process in the group on relationships in the family:

- My daughter said, Mother, you haven't been like you are for a long time. This opening enabled me to dare to open up and talk about the traumatic event in my life whose impact was felt by my daughters but was not discussed and open. My daughter opened her heart to me. So it's as though I experienced this workshop for her too.
- I exploited my daughter's interest regarding what happens here. It was an opportunity for me to open the painful family issue that accompanied us for years but was not discussed. It was not simple but extremely rewarding, but in addition to everything I experienced here it was a really amazing crazy bonus.
- It was another jump, also as regards the older children. It gave me a enormous bonus and mainly for myself. To dare to organize my boundaries for myself.
- My mother came from abroad and is with us a lot. Following the work I presented here I decided to talk to her and started talking clearly with her. I told her, You can stop what is happening between us. She said, I don't understand. I said, It doesn't matter that you don't understand, I will say what I have to say. I am grateful to you for that.
- My husband's interest and his need to be part of things provides me with the next challenge – to develop the friendly and intimate connection between us. It started first from this separateness, that I came to the group despite the difficulties of life and his objections.

Transition to daily life:

- This transition from the group to life is very exciting.
- I had a deep process with myself in the group. I am at the stage that I am my own friend, don't judge and don't berate, that's how I get through daily life.
- The relationships with you and yours with me enable me today to discuss myself and the world from a gentler place.
- This workshop - the best thing that it did for me was to raise awareness to the threshold of recognition. It will help me in the future too.
- I feel wonderful. I feel so good and I am experiencing very hard things and somehow overcome them with a lot of acceptance and without anger. I am scared this goodness will end.

- I feel wonderful, very good, very relaxed, balanced. I saw so many things that I experienced in the group, that flow in my life

#### Reconstructing events that occurred in the group:

- That thing that we discussed and created that place for me - I created it in life. It introduced much pleasure for me. It's the most important thing for me right now.
- The issue of the place was very important. It gave much pleasure and gave me more confidence. Much more readiness to face my things. People think the main problem is to face the foolishness of oneself; to sometimes face the ability is no less complicated.
- I felt something in the group that I did not experience for a long time, for many years. In the environment in which I live I feel I have nothing to offer at the level I would like. I am just grateful for the positive attitude and the support climaxing in the things written to me in the feedback after the presentation. It was a ray of light in my life.
- The work in the group honed the advantages for me, the adaptation and the good there is in couplehood.
- It took me a long time to understand that standing opposite the problem and coping with it means parting from it. That's what happened in the presentation to me. When I returned home I really heard the voice of fracture of the monster fear – the taboo puppet that participated in the presentation.

#### Thanking the group:

- I was very pleased to get to know each of you, women of high quality. I will take me with through life.
- Thank you all, it was an amazing experience to meet you.
- It is hard for me to leave you. I went to the hairdresser in your honor.
- Thanks to each; you have meaningful giving for me.
- There was a lot of life here, containment, acceptance, and the fear; I came with anxieties and saw that I don't have totem pole make an effort, it came. I must give each of you a personal hug.
- Now I can celebrate my and everyone's achievements. To play around and release the imagination and drives as only this group knows how. It hurts to part, I am surprised.
- Perhaps you'll come to visit?



The main topic was transition and change. It included separation and conflicting emotions of sadness and happiness. The participants related to the connection between the processes in the group and those in their daily reality. They shared the way in which the former affected the relationships in their families. They validated the achievements in their development and responsibility for themselves in daily life. They noted events in the group and the contribution to the processes of change and development within them. Yalom (2006) observes that many forces of change operate in parallel, throughout the group work. The participants expressed the positive and constructive experience that developed in them throughout the experience as regards the group. Similarly, appreciation and thanks were given to the group and for its contribution.

### Behavior

The participants came to the final session dressed festively. The session opened with a discussion that took place in a festive mood mixed with a feeling of achievement, sadness and joy. Thereafter, each participant prepared a gesture for the group. They set the table for a parting meal. Each prepared a special dish determined in advance. The participants complimented each other and exchanged recipes. During the meal, the participants were very lively. They spoke loudly with each other, laughed and enjoyed tasting from the plentitude of dishes.

Prior to the concluding part of the session there was a recess. The participants, on their own initiative, dressed in accessories and at the start of the concluding part they did a fashion parade under the title, 'The saucy woman – the woman I didn't dare be and today do'. They joked, laughed and took photographs. When parting they hugged and were emotional. Afterwards some hurried away and others stayed.

Values and skills were developed in the group and were now realized. Playing and play groups were the attributes of shared management, including independence, mutual commitment, mischievousness and humor. Matri (2002) notes that play and playfulness contribute to growth and development. Playing is the place where a person can be, live, grow from within and within.

### Art

Artistic expression included gestures by the participants to the group that were planned in advance. They included play on words that was made from a combination of the participants' names, a hug for each, a live

totem presented by one of the participants, giving a 'key to life' adapted in style to each participant, a written poem suitable for each, a dance presentation entitled, 'My group', reading a poem on 'The path' and reading verses from the Bible.

Toward the end, the participants initiated a fashion show as mentioned above, wearing accessories differing greatly from their usual ones, and defined what she was illustrating. One of them compered the artistic event and the others walked the catwalk. Cries of surprise with the participants' choices were heard, realizing their attribution to changes that occurred during the workshop.

The artistic expression was in the framework of the celebration of the achievements characterized in playfulness, fun and mischief and in sharing the personal abilities in group artistic work.

### Group meta-reality

Further development of the process continued, manifested in the three levels of reality, and included further construction of the group narrative as well as the components of content, dramatic, artistic and group stages of development.

Content: The content related to the issue of 'transition and change', from the group to the daily reality.

The dramatic stage of development: Establishing a framework for activity characterized by 'close', which is the sixth stage in the classic structure of dramatic development (Thompson, 1976). Conclusion and closure occur, characterized by mixed emotional expression of alleviation, sadness and happiness.

The artistic stage of development: 'Celebration', that included gifts and a fashion show as described above.

The group stage of development: Comparisons were made at this stage between the group and the daily reality, and taking responsibility for oneself in the daily reality was emphasized. Similarly, the assimilation of the group experience was manifested as a positive constructive experience. The participants made room for reconstructing the history of the group and events experienced by the participants. They recalled decisive moments and returned to them, such as making a living totem by one of the participants or repetition of the movement ritual and feedback.

Types of behavior created in the group were manifested, such as humor, embodying dramatic roles and playful mischiefness. There was a feeling of loss and parting that was accompanied by mutual gifts, hugs and kisses. These attributes are compatible with the sixth stage in group development known as 'closure'. This stage is characterized by individual autonomy and assimilating the group experience (Mackenzie and Livesley, 1983).

Personal meta-reality: Further development of the personal processes occurred, manifested in the three levels of reality and included the further construction of the personal narrative, its conclusion and the stage of personal development.

The personal stage of development was a continuation of the process of structuring the personal narrative and its conclusion in the framework of the workshop through positioning of 'separation'.

#### **4.1.7 Summary**

The group processes that occurred observed in the workshop during the six phases were tested through triangulation. They included the three levels of reality – verbalization, behavior and art - that developed through the participants' modes of expression and composed the group and the personal meta-reality.

Meta-reality includes four axes that developed during the workshop, and afforded the stages for each phase: Content, dramatic development, artistic development and group development. Personal meta-reality included one axis that developed during the workshop and afforded a stage for each phase. This was the personal development axis. Accordingly, each phase of the workshop included five attributes that are the components from each development axis.

Phase one included transitions and change, exposition, self presentation, engagement, myself in the world.

Phase two included collectivism and individuality, conflict, a group totem pole, differentiation, myself and the group.

Phase three included identity and taboo, complication, creating a personal puppet theater, individuation and a personal journey.

Phase four included the internal and the external, the climax, personal puppet show, intimacy, climax and catharsis.

Phase five included loss and development, untying the knot, the path, mutuality and achievements.

Phase six included transition and change, close, celebration, closure and separation.

The group totem pole and the personal puppet shows included the stages of the content axis.

Group processes occurred during the workshop common to all the participants as well as personal processes that were unique to all the participants and had common attributes described in the next section.

#### **4.2 Personal processes of change and development**

The personal processes of change and development of the eight participants, including the attributes, factors generating change, components of change and a summary are discussed here. The participants referred in interviews to these processes that developed throughout the workshop and during the following year.

For seven of the eight participants a process of change and development was obvious, occurring during the workshop. One participant (Miki) experienced a process of change that did not bear a developmental character, but one that afforded legitimacy and validity to her need for time out, introspection and focusing on the present. Miki's process of development and its difference from the processes of the other participants can be linked to her age since she was the youngest in the group. Miki may have been in need of time for maturation that the other participants had already undergone. Similarly, her developmental processes may have been slower, since a year later she reported significant development in her life.

These findings are compatible with those of the professional literature that relate to the processes of change amongst women at the mid-life period (Nardi, 1991). Erikson (1985) maintains that accelerated and dramatic changes occur in life at this stage, which is accompanied by a crisis as regards a critical turning point at which there is development for better or for worse, decisions regarding progressing or regressing. Personal development can occur, he believes, when a person successfully copes with life assignments that are connected to this period.

## Attributes

The attributes of personal processes of change and development are compatible with the content axis that comprised the development stages in the workshop, as defined in the section on group processes of change and development. Similarly, they are compatible with the issue of the totem, as viewed by the participants to it, and the objects of their personal puppet shows, including transition and change, identity and taboo, collectivism and individuality, the internal and the external, loss and development.

## Transition and change

An attribute common to the processes that each participant was manifested in the transitions and changes that occurred in physiological, domestic, social, psychological, intrapsychic and intra-emotional realms. They began prior to the workshop and continued throughout.

Researchers believe that the mid-life period amongst women is characterized as a time when changes occur at the physiological, social and psychological levels (Goldstein, 2007; Neugarten, 1963, 1964; Northrup, 2001). Transition, in its formal definition, is the conversion from one situation to another, a complex process that sets the individual demands that necessitate change (Chiriboga, 1989).

Voluntary change and coping with transitions were part of the attributes of processes of change and development during the workshop. Researchers claim that people of that age have the ability to create meaningful change in life that will lead to prosperity together with awareness of the limitation of the body and understanding the psyche (Goldstein, 2007; Northrup, 2001).

## Identity and taboo

Another shared attribute of the personal processes of all the participants that occurred during the workshop is that of 'identity and taboo'. Researchers such as Livson (1981), Goldstein (2007), Robertson (2004) and Sheehy (1995) view mid-life as an opportunity for women to reassess the components of identity and change in the psychological roles, a role that involves coping with diverse taboos.

The review of the literature finds that women at the mid-life stage need to redefine themselves (Sheehy, 1995) and reconstruct the self to suite the new structure in their lives (Livson, 1981; Neugarten, 1964). Erikson (1985) claims that one of the constructive functions of the self is creating a feeling of identity. Developing cohesion in the feeling of identity is the most important objective facing mankind. Self-definition is an ongoing process throughout life that reflects change in the components of identity, as is demanded in diverse periods of life. He avers that there is a crisis of identity during transitional periods. The identity that was attained in the past is no longer compatible. People must cope with the crisis to attain a new cohesion in their identity.

The participants related to the subjects of taboo that affect their identity and the desire the release themselves from them. Involvement in this issue is accompanied by a stormy outpouring of emotion. Researchers such as Goldstein (2007) claim that women need a mid-life transition period to arouse desires, drives and wishes that were considered taboo in the first half of their lives.

The process of shaping identity over the years brings the innate nature, personal history and intergenerational issues into conflict with the ability for personal creativity. The individual psyche combines with the greater historical forces. People are influenced as children by the families in which they grow up. Each family has values, norms and secrets that affect its attitudes, behaviors and development (Strenger, 1999).

During the workshop the participants experimented with diverse roles that represented components of identity and taboo. A process of personality integration began that stemmed from the attempt to combine these components into a coherent whole.

Researchers such as Strenger (2005) see the renewed definitions of identity as a connection with a renewed definition of self. This process stems from striving for coherence, connection, context and adaptation of the thought, lust and deed.

Transition, change, identity and taboo are attributes that were manifested in all the personal processes of each participant in addition to mention of additional characteristics. Each personal process revolved around a process axis with a dominant attribute. These were collectivism and individuality, the internal and the external, and loss and development. The process of one participant (Alona) had two dominant process axes.

Each characteristic of the process axis involved three of the personal processes.

#### **4.2.1 Axes of the personal processes**

The personal processes have been divided according to the dominant attributes, and as regards the components entailed in the definition of the process axis. It includes the dominant attribute, roles that developed in the group, social roles that developed while constructing the group totem pole, internal psychological roles that developed while creating the personal puppet theater and were embodied through the heroine puppet and the taboo puppet, the name of the presentation of the personal puppet show and its description. The process and relevant statements are presented below.

##### ***Collectivism and individuality***

###### *Mira*

Definition of the process: From non-actualization and immersion in the surroundings to an area of expression, to focusing on strength and self-actualization.

Attribute: Collectivism and individuality

Role in the group: Confused, questioning

Social roles: Concern for others, daring, helping

Internal roles: The good girl, the blond provocative extrovert

The presentation: "Reflections" - emerging from the material that closed in on her while struggling for legitimacy and expressing the extroverted and provocative part.

For Mira, the process comprised the need for the development of authenticity and deserting the accepted norms that afforded an obstacle to discovering her truth, desire and choices. It entailed a struggle between her need to invest energy and time in her personal development, and the expectations of her family and social surroundings. They had become accustomed to her investing time and meeting their needs. Awareness of an internalized taboo that caused her to hide her wishes led to a turning point. Mira ceased being paralyzed and began to be heard and seen.

Statements from the process illustrate this:

- I need time for myself but I am a full time mother. My grown children returned home and my partner feels deprived.

- In the home in which I grew up it was forbidden to know and forbidden to want something for oneself that was exceptional.
- I tell myself not to concede. To take time and space for myself is like shifting the Himalayas.
- I began to make myself heard, to want, to be seen.
- I took the place. When one takes a place, place opens and people learn to accept this. My children and my partner make room for me.

### *Ili*

Definition of the process: From a position of being led by others to personal choice and proprietorship of life.

Attribute: Collectivism and individuality

Role in the group: Led, creative

Social roles: Concern for others, daring, helping

Psychological roles: Captivating, omnipotent, an impotent rag

Internal roles: The good girl, the blond provocative extrovert

The presentation: "The sorcerer, the wretched one and myself: A multi-faced personality". A dialogue between the characters, two puppets and a puppeteer that led to accepting the creative omnipotent part and the inferior impotent part.

For Ili the process was composed of the motivation for change that included the need for a transition from reliance and dependence on others to independence and control of life. It included a struggle between her tendency to avoid interpersonal conflicts and the need for authentic expression and influence on the surroundings. Similarly, her need intensified to broaden the possibilities for free choice. Consciousness of the taboo and recognition of the inferior part of her personality led to recognition and reconstruction of the creative powers and humor. This was a turning point at which Ili chose to experiment with insisting on her opinion, assertiveness in the group and revealing her inferior aspects. These steps contributed to the feeling of free choice and control.

Comments regarding the process illustrate this:

- I was always led and now I want to take the reins into my own hands.
- Insisting on my opinion resulted in unpleasant conflicts with others.
- I want to clarify to myself what I want to do, without relying on others.



- I feel comfortable enough with you to express satisfaction.
- I reached the conclusion not to derogate my wishes and needs.

### *Alona*

For Alona the process was the most complex relative to those of the other participants. It entailed two key attributes: Collectivism and individuality, and the internal and the external (discussed in the next section.)

Definition of the process: From analysis and alienation to a combination of spontaneity, emotions and belonging.

Attribute: Collectivism and individuality

Roles in the group: Analytical, cynical, alienated, provocative, motivating processes

Social roles: Analytical, stubborn, confrontational, stormy, flexible, spontaneous

Internal roles: The male cynical fighter, rational, the sensitive and vulnerable child, forbidden and sealed

The presentation: "Decoding: The way to combine the lost parts of the soul". A meeting between the three characters represented by the puppets, in an attempt to connect and go with needs and feelings.

Alona's process was composed of her need for emotional and meaningful relationships with others and their need for feeling belonging. It entailed a struggle between collectivism and individuality that was manifested in her difficulties in conceding extreme control and relying on spontaneity and on cooperation with others.

Furthermore, the process included a struggle between the inside and the outside, a struggle with the inner disconnection that did not allow recognition of the emotion and balanced emotional expression. It entailed awareness of the internalized taboo that was manifested in the prohibition to need another, led to a turning point. Alona admitted that her analytical approach replaces emotion, and recognized this as an obstacle to creating meaningful connections of a feeling of belonging. She began to recognize her feelings, to express them and to involve the surroundings. This step improved her interpersonal relationships and contributed a feeling of belonging to a group and a connection to herself.

To cite some comments:

- I am trying to return to the starting point of who I am, prior to becoming task-oriented and proper.

- In the group I cope with my most vulnerable places. This is a discovery for me. I am usually very careful and here the conditions and the process lowered a barrier, whose threading intensified over the years and, here, in a short period of time, it was released.
- I have a feeling of satisfaction. I feel protected and belonging. I am ready for the rest.

Several researchers including Bakan (1966), Guttman (1965), Jung (1968) and Sheehy (1992) view personality development as characterized by social and psychological androgyny. They claim that this process is an attribute of women at the mid-life stage. They see two styles that are ascribed to the female and the male genre. The male approach is characterized by observation of the world in a hierarchic manner, emphasizing the personal achievements and defining identity using an ongoing process of separation and individuation. It is characterized by task-orientation and parting manifested in the individual being the totality facing the world. This approach is patent in the individual's need to protect himself, to insist on his wishes and to impose his opinion on the surroundings.

The review of the literature finds many researchers who discuss personality development that is characterized by social and psychological androgyny. They claim that this process is typical of women at the mid-life stage. The process of androgynous development enjoys several terms – uniqueness cohesion or individuation (Jung, 1968), matching traits (Bakan, 1966; Guttman, 1965), the complementary process (Gilligan, 1983), and the inverted hexagon (Sheehy, 1992).

The female approach is characterized by the attitude to reality as to a network of relationships, maintained by contacts and connections of emotional giving and receiving. The male approach is characterized by hierarchic observation of the world, in placing emphasis on personal achievement and in defining identity in an ongoing process of separation and individuation.

For Mira the process was a blend of styles.

In the transition to the second half of life, women move from intimacy to independent identity and men perform the reverse process, with each becoming more balanced. The first half of life was typified by role stereotyping that encouraged stereotypical traits. The stereotypical perception of personal characteristics amongst men saw attributes

characterized by instrumentalism in capability and implementation, while emotional expression connected to warmth and the ability for emotional expression was attributed to women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Ciarkson and Rosenkrantz, 1972). Studies by Smith and Midlarsky (1985) and by Spence and Sawin (1985) further support the findings.

Block (1973) refers to the highest development of the male self as a blend of assertiveness and consideration of the other, while for women it is a blend and combination of the attraction to harmonious relationships while expressing power. Guttman (1975) notes the process of cross-matching the attributes of both genders at mid-life. He maintains that at this period, the sharp differences between the genders are blurred and androgynous traits develop. Men become softer and more passive and women become more assertive and active. Sheehy (1995) claims that both genders tend to approach a better balance at mid-life between the drive that seeks self-assertiveness and the drive to merge and mutual communications.

The process that occurred for Ili was composed of a shift from female to male styles. Gilligan (1983) sees a complementary element as central in maturity at mid-life. Women shift from a female to a male approach.

The process experienced by Alona entailed the opposite direction. Lieblich (1986) finds that there is no uniform development track that is typical of women. She maintains the possibility exists of completing the part of personality missing - the principle according to which the developmental track is determined.

These distributions are apparently connected to the intensity of the need for complementing the styles absent amongst women. For Alona and Ili one style developed to become dominant during life at the expense of other styles. Therefore the transition to other styles is predominantly necessary to attain a relative balance. For Mira, the change was manifested in a blend of styles. Her need, apparently, for meaning and maintaining her self-value are connected to relationships with the family and meeting her needs. These affect and dictate her development.

### ***The internal and the external***

#### *Alona*

Defining the process: From being analytical, alienated and lonely to spontaneous, emotional and belonging.

The process for Alona was the most complex compared to that of the other participants. It had two key attributes – collectivism and individuality, and the internal and the external (see above)

### *Livia*

Definition of the process: From muteness and operating through fear of speaking, a struggle and feelings of control.

Attribute: The internal and the external

Roles in the group: Mother, sensitivity

Social roles: Involvement, integrating

Internal roles: Fear, mother hen

Presentation: "Catharsis" – the struggle between the mother hen and the bad mood, fear. The struggle included mother hen overcoming fear and concluded with the dismemberment of the fear puppet and the victory of the hen.

Livia's process entailed processing a traumatic terror event in which she was seriously injured. It involved a struggle with fear that managed her life and did not allow her control of it and free choice. Consciousness of the internalized taboo that forbids involving others and talking about everything connected to the negative aspects of her life brought her to a turning point. Livia began to involve the immediate surroundings in what she experienced and found release, support and mental relief therein.

Comments from the process include:

- Demons constantly escape Pandora's box.
- One doesn't talk about un-nice things that happen, my mother said.
- I have a ticking bomb in my stomach, in more than one sense of the word. I have no choice. I have to talk about it otherwise it will explode.
- I suddenly realized. I am moving from a place where fear controlled me to freedom.

### *Miki*

Definition of the process: Provides time and introspection, legitimacy for delay and focusing on the present.

Attribute: The internal and the external

Roles in the group: The blurred, the clear

Social roles: Concealing sexuality

Internal roles: Witch on vacation, princess

Presentation: "Transitions": Dialogue between the witch on vacation and the princess, dealing with the relationships between them that swing between concealment and discovery and between reticence and creativity.

For Miki, the process was composed of providing space for her need for time in life and for a change in attitudes towards that. The process, for her, was one of change, but did not have a developmental character. It entailed a struggle between the expectations of her partner and of herself for full functioning in all areas of life, and her need for closing herself off and stopping work. Consciousness of the internalized taboo that prohibited recognition and response to the needs of the individual in the family led her to a turning point. Miki recognized her central need to allow time for introspection at this point, afforded it legitimacy and found interest in focusing on the present.

Comments from the process include:

- I was extremely active. Now I need rest.
- I am examining my life and working through things that concern me.
- I am trying to persuade myself and my husband that we don't have to run.
- I have the feeling of a journey that is just beginning.

Self-reflection is a component of the introspection process that is likely to lead to significant change in people's perceptions of themselves and their surroundings (Tamir, 1982). This process is an expression of the need for reassessment at mid-life (Dior, 1990; Jung, 1971; Livson, 1981; Rubin, 1979) and is defined as change in focus from the outside in (Guttman, 1965). It can lead to tension amongst women at the mid-life stage. In parallel, it can contribute to growth, discovering new meaning and also to change in the professional and other realms (Neugarten, 1968; Northrup, 2001).

Common to these three processes is coping with the separation between the intra-personality aspect and the external expression in interpersonal relationships. For Alona, this was manifested in converting emotion to analytical thought; for Livia it led to avoiding involving those close to her in everything connected to the definitive event in her life, and for Miki it led to denying her existential need.

Ussher (1992) maintains that the personality split between the woman and herself characterizes certain stages in the development of the female

identity in her journey to the woman through the life cycle. At the mid-life stage women are split as a result of existing interpretations regarding their bodies and their sexuality. The split is sometimes between the self image of the young woman and physiological changes that testify to being a mature woman, between the feelings of lack of use as a result of change in the meaningful roles whose degree has declined, and the life experience and maturity that can be realized, and between the internal feeling of attractiveness and the social self image of uselessness. In the first half of life, split was a means of coping with tension and contradictions that made implementing the life tasks hard. At the mid-life stage women need a process of personality development and integration in order to allow themselves realization of their abilities in the second half of their lives.

### ***Loss and development***

#### *Nili*

Defining the process: From loss and chaos to acceptance and reorganizing the order of priorities.

Attribute: Loss and development

Roles in the group: The different, belonging

Social roles: Avoiding responsibility, participatory

Internal roles: Child, stereotypical mother, grotesque

Representation: "Soul searching": The search for a place in the personal, the internal and the external world, for a child and reorganization

For Nili the process was comprised of recognition of the complexity and multiple issues in her life to which she relates similar relevance and importance. It included a struggle between her need for professional development and the deliberations and possibility of becoming pregnant and having another child. Consciousness of the internalized taboo released Nili from the tendency to prove to everyone that she is successful and to chase achievements that were larger than life at the cost of chaos in her life and lack of choice. A turning point in the process was the readiness for self-examination and renewed choice in her order of priorities. Age, difficulties with fertility, health problems and the desire to progress professionally led Nili to concede the attempt to become pregnant of her own free will. Returning to the order of priorities and free choice contributed to her enjoyment of reorganizing her life.

Comments from the process include:

- I am operating from one moment to the next. I am a Swiss clock who manages to provide for an entire family.
- I look at my life and see there isn't a moment free. I don't know how to rest.
- I am on the way to conceding something large that I wanted from life and it's hard and painful.
- I planned a vacation, I reserved place in a hotel and I am going to practice doing nothing.

### *Galia*

Definition of the process: From avoidance, helplessness and withering to vitality and recognizing creativity.

Attribute: Loss and development

Roles in the group: The 'shadow' that is manifested in the representation of the absent, the missing, withering, the hope

Social roles: Taboo, manifested in representing withering

Internal roles: Donkey, the naked truth

Presentation: "The journey": The journey of a burdened donkey to the treasure that is to be found at the top of the female pelvis, at the bottom of the vagina, where the naked truth is trapped.

The process, for Galia, was composed of bad moods that swung between passivity, avoidance and pessimism. The absence of friends who had died and emptiness after her children left home made her feel useless and her life lacked meaning. Conscious of the internalized taboo of her experience as the black sheep in the family, and encouraged by the group that recognized her talents and contribution to the group process, she reached a turning point. Her self-image improved somewhat, cautious optimism was revealed and her level of vitality rose.

Comments from the process include:

- Recently my children, with who we were in very close contact, left home and I need to fill the space created.
- My children left and some of my good friends died recently. I feel that my role in this world is finished.
- I am like an ostrich, stuck with my head in the sand. If I take my head out I only see the past.
- My father called me a stupid cow, unsuccessful. That's the image that accompanied me throughout life and creates helplessness and a low self image till today. I hope I manage to do something with my life.

- Before I joined the group I felt that life put a rope around my neck. I joined the group and became dependent on it like a life belt and now am connected to the umbilical cord that helps me to be born anew.

### *Ossi*

Definition of the process: From being perfect to the recognition of loss and a feeling of lack of perfection

Attribute: Loss and development

Roles in the group: Perfection, empathy, arouses empathy

Social roles: Apprentice

Internal roles: A woman from the 19<sup>th</sup> century representing madness

Presentation: "Where have the butterflies gone?" An imaginary conversation between the sane woman and the mad woman leading to reconciliation.

The process, for Ossi, was composed of the need to clarify wishes and possibilities regarding an occupation suitable to the conclusion of her professional role, to which she ascribed her reason for joining the group. It included a struggle between maintaining a perfect façade and recognition of her weaknesses. It entailed consciousness of the taboo connected to chronic emotional illness of a member of the family and her death, and recognition of an unsolved conflict connected to this, led Ossi to a turning point. She dealt with this issue, that became a key issue in her work, and processed unsolved parts. This process gave her a feeling of acceptance and wholeness.

Comments regarding the process:

- A natural continuation to my career that was obvious to me, ceased being obvious.
- I have a wonderful husband, our couplehood is the happiest in the world and I have great children.
- Mental sickness is a very large black hole in the family. We fear to admit genetic inheritance and it is not discussed.
- Inside I blocked myself. I feel I must crack it in order to go on.
- At this time in my life I can perhaps cope with madness.
- I was very frustrated and helpless which I hid by control. My anger with her enjoyed legitimacy here, and for me, inside, it helped attain acceptance.

Sheehy (1995) claims that, from the psychological perspective, something must die before a new self can be born. She sees this as coping



with the trivial death of early adolescence amongst women. Researchers such as Cumming and Henry(1959), MacQuaide (1998) and Wilk and Kirk (1995) believe that women at the mid-life stage need to process loss that occurs due to changes in their lives.

Nili coped with loss connected to fertility. Similarly, she copes with chaos created in her life following the lack of acceptance of the decline in her physical and mental abilities with age. Nili coped with formulating a renewed self-definition accompanied by concessions and change in her self-image.

The loss of ability to become pregnant naturally and the loss of the birth role is just one of the issues with which women have to cope. Mid-life is experienced as a stage of loss that can include loss of fertility, loss of youth, loss of the physical and mental abilities, loss of sexual ability, loss following the death of friends and parents, loss of roles and values that held a positive and meaningful place during a woman's life till now (Back, 1971; Bart, 1971; Benedek, 1970; MacQuaide, 1998). Viorst (1986) maintains that women who are moving towards the second half of life mourn the loss of their self-image that relied on self-definition as it developed and was adapted to the first half of life.

Galia coped with the feeling of emptiness, lack of purpose and meaning to life following the death of several friends and her children leaving home. Bart (1971) related to the empty nest as a sociological explanation for the mid-life crisis amongst women. Coping with separation and loss can cause a feeling of time running out and a reduction in life's opportunities. Neugarten (1964) believes these are some of the causes of tension, anxiety and depression at this time.

Ossi coped with unsolved conflict connected to chronic mental sickness and death of a family member. This process enables development and contributed a feeling of acceptance, and perfection. With the process of accepting the loss, an opportunity for reorganizing life that involved change opened (Granot, 1994).

All three women experienced relief and release following their coping with loss and could then clear a path for themselves to development. Developmental psychologists (such as Downing, 1987, Sidi, 1993 and Viorst, 1998) relate to the mid-life stage as to an opportunity for psychological growth following the mourning process that facilitates processing the changes and losses. The emotional reactions embrace feelings of release together with sadness.

### *A year later*

The participants reported that transitions and changes connected to their bodies, society and the family and to involuntary involvements continue to occur in their lives. They all noted that their coping resources had developed. They emphasized that processes of change and development continued for them from choice, including for Miki for whom the process in the workshop manifested itself in legitimizing introspection but not for change of a developmental nature. All noted an improvement in the quality of life.

#### **4.2.2 Summary**

For seven of the eight participants a process of change and development occurring during the workshop was obvious. One participant (Miki) experienced a process of change that did not bear a developmental character, but one that afforded legitimacy and validity to her need for time out, introspection and focusing on the present. Miki's process of development and its difference from the processes experienced by other participants can be linked to her age since she was the youngest in the group. Miki may have been in need of time for maturation that the other participants had already undergone. Similarly, her developmental processes may have been slower.

The attributes of the personal processes included defining the process axis, its dominant attribute, roles that developed in the group, social roles that developed while constructing the group totem pole, internal roles, psychological roles that developed while creating the personal puppet theater, and a description of the process. These processes were unique to all the participants and shared similar components.

The attributes of the personal processes of change and development were transitions and change, identity and taboo, collectivism and individuality, loss and development, and the internal and the external. The level of dominance of the attributes differed.

Transitions and change, and identity and taboo were found to be dominant in all the processes. Another dominant attribute was found on the process axis for each of the processes. The attributes were: Collectivism and individuality, loss and development, and the internal and the external. Each of them was common to the three processes.

Alona demonstrated two dominant attributes on the process axis, hinting at a relatively more complex process. The distribution of the attributes was equal and no correlation was found between these distributions and the family situation or age. In contrast, distributions were found for the various attributes in the process found to be connected to personal developmental inhibitions that were identified as the main issue during the workshop. Coping and processing the conflicts and events connected to the main topic led to development.

The issues and conflicts manifested in the personal processes of identical traits were different from each other. Similarly, all the processes were distinguished in the differences from each other, in the ways of coping with them and in their unique substance.

A year later, the participants reported that processes of change and development continued for them. They all noted that their coping resources had developed and an improvement in the quality of life occurred.

These processes of change and development were influenced by factors generating change. The next chapter presents them according to the participants' report.

### **4.3 Factors generating change**

All the participants referred, during the workshop, the interview and thereafter, to four components that generated change: The group, creative processes, the group totem pole and the personal puppet theater. All the participants afforded similar levels of importance to all the components.

#### **4.3.1 The group**

All the participants noted the group component as generating change. Researchers note that working in a group is founded on emotionally-loaded, reciprocal inter-personal contact and introspection, on a supportive and trust-building array. The factors that afford an infrastructure for cognitive, behavioral and emotional change are reducing hope, universalism, acquiring knowledge, altruism, affirmative correction of the primary family group, developing socialization techniques, socialization, modeling and identification, inter-personal learning, group cohesion, catharsis and existential factors (Yalom and Leszcz, 2005).

The participants referred to several criteria including the group structure and composition, participation, involvement and mutual feedback, experiencing shared activity and the development of roles in the group.

### *The group structure*

The participants related importance to the setting, the workshop framework and to its structure. They referred to the location of the workshop that was held fairly near their homes but far enough away to afford a feeling of a separate space from their daily lives. They also referred to the conditions of the setting which was large enough to facilitate movement and space to work. They stressed the importance of a continuum and permanency in the weekly sessions held on a fixed day, and noted that the fourteen four-hour sessions allowed them a deep process and sufficient time for artistic work.

The participants mentioned the group as a place for introspection of themselves and their lives, relating to the workshop structure as a key factor generating change. It was a structure that included group discourse that was a type of transition from daily life to another reality. Another reality was created through symbolic expression in the diverse creative processes and the possibility of returning to daily life and to functioning. They emphasized that the homogeneity of the participant population contributed to the development of a group and of themselves.

Comments regarding the group structure included:

- When I come here the length of the drive helps me to disconnect and when I come I close my mobile phone and thus have my private space, with you.
- Outstanding organization of space and the conditions gave me confidence and a feeling that I am meaningful to someone. For me the group is the possibility for inner peace, for introspection.
- Experiencing creative processes was for me a transition to another reality in which everything is possible.
- The homogeneous age of the women afforded mutual understanding.
- We clearly all have rich life experience.
- The composition of the intelligent group of women of my age neutralized tension on the one hand, and encouraged comparisons regarding the external appearance, beauty, dress, movement, on the other. It did me good.

Researchers emphasize that working in a group framework, with individuals with a suitable common denominator, is suitable for women at transitional stages. They need a fixed framework separate from daily life (Turner and Bruner, 1986).

### ***Participant involvement and mutual feedback***

The participants mentioned that the possibility of involving the other participants in the group as regards verbalization and art helped them to reveal themselves and define relevant subjects and areas of consciousness. The mutual feedback afforded them support, transparency of their situations, a feeling of significance, of belonging and mutual obligation, and aroused consciousness.

They noted that such complex cooperation helped them to develop the ability for interpersonal interaction, emotional expression and the capacity to combine the emotion and the cognition. They emphasized that the cooperation helped to build the group and develop the group entity. They added that the cooperation contributed to the arousal of humor and a feeling of legitimacy, and validated them and their achievements.

Comments regarding the issue included:

- In my daily life I do not have the opportunity to share such personal substance and enjoy such understanding. Rubbing shoulders with these people continuously makes me feel good.
- The mutual involvement and feedback contributed to me a broader perspective regarding issues and conflicts and a way of coping with them.
- To be part of a group is not something natural or easy for me. At the same time, it was always my wish that was realized in the workshop.
- The sharing that was accompanied by so much emotion was far greater than what I am familiar with. To show weakness and to cry in public were a breakthrough in the absolute taboo and helped me enormously. These were practice for real life.
- The group helped me, by its identification and acceptance, to overcome my great difficulty in exposing myself and in expressing emotions. The group helped me to reveal myself to myself too.

McNiff (1993) claims that the basis for the connection between creativity and health lies in involving others who are in our physical and emotional surroundings. Creative processes in group dramatherapy occur in an

empathic framework, in which one can receive feedback from members of the group. They enable the symbolic externalization of the inner substance, their reorganization and affording them an esthetic style. He believes it is essential to see the artistic products as a separate and enriching reality. They should be related to as to having a story of their own and not as telling the story of their creators.

### ***Experiencing shared activity***

The participants noted that the involvement of members of the group in activity contributed greatly to the direct connection between them, to arousing humor, to close relationships, intimacy, mutuality and a feeling of belonging. They noted the feeling of significance that developed amongst them as a result of belonging and from the mutual help. The shared activity contributed to the group construction and to developing the group entity characterized by humor and tribalism.

Comments regarding the issue included:

- The participants conveyed warmth. It was a positive and enriching experience for me. Thanks to the work and expression in movement, the relationships were partly in primary languages of emotion and containment.
- Tolerant and patient women, generous and empathic, open to working, not cynical. I am proud to be one of them.
- The group saved me from isolation although I have friends at home.
- To do together, to cry together, we are like a tribe of women. Here I receive support and can function freely and find authenticity.

Researchers claim that our reciprocal activity with other people enables deeper learning of and about ourselves. Dramatherapy groups are the empty stage that enables presenting characters at different levels, which can be diverse ways of expression through which life is recreated and presented symbolically. All the events symbolize the group's life, the life of the individuals in the group and the scenario of life itself (Jennings, 1987, 1994).

### ***Development of roles in the group***

The participants noted that during the workshop and through group discourse and activity they could experiment with diverse social roles actively and extrovertly that aroused awareness of them.

During the workshop roles in the group developed and changed.

Comments regarding the interpersonal interaction included:

- I am amazed at what you say; I see you as someone totally organized. Even at moments of crying and emotional outbursts you convey your chaos in an organized way.
- Here I feel I am in Nirvana.
- You seem perfect to me and I wondered why you were in the group. Now I understand.
- I am the mother of the group. I have the necessary bust, and warmth and love for all.
- I am the group's shadow. I always bring what's missing, the withering and death.
- I am the analytical one.
- You vanish from time to time.
- I am the most different of all of you here.

In his discussion of identity Erikson (1985) maintains that experimenting with social roles in the interpersonal domain, and with personal psychological roles in the interpersonal realm contributes to identity cohesion. Women at the mid-life stage experience change in the family structure and social status. Accordingly, women at this stage need to develop new social roles and reduce or empower the old (Sheehy, 1995). Livson (1981) reaches the conclusion that the key to good functioning at this period is the compatibility between the female personality and the social roles that they choose.

Thus the participants noted the group component as a factor generating change. They referred to several criteria - the group structure and composition, involving the participants and mutual feedback, experimenting with shared activity and developing roles in the group. Researchers see these components as conditions for the generation of change in the group (Yalom and Leszcz, 2005).

#### **4.3.2 Creative processes**

The participants noted the component of experimentation in the processes of creativity as one generating change.

Researchers note that processes of creativity in dramatherapy make use of metaphor and focus on symbolic expression and realization through dramatic activities. The use of metaphor in therapy is known as the healing metaphor (Lahad, 2006). It mediates between the contradictions

that arouse contrasting feelings, contains the tensions between the known and the familiar and the internal pressures that lack mapping, all of which serves as a bridge between the internal and the external reality (Ayalon, 1996). It is a bridge between logic and consciousness, and emotional experiences and unconscious experiences. The metaphor raises inner substance to the consciousness, which helps to bypass stereotypical roles and reveals a covert dimension pertaining to the inner reality (Lahad, 2006). In dramatherapy, the individual investigates the meaning of his real life through examining the metaphoric, imaginary and play experience, that is manifested in the artistic-dramatic process (Jennings, 1998).

The participants related to several categories: From chaos to shape, control and containment, movement between the conscious and the unconscious, transitions, release, impulsiveness, catharsis and tribalism, playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity.

### ***From chaos to shape, control and containment***

Researchers claim that coping well by the mid-life stage contributes to a feeling of proprietorship and control of life, to the arousal of awareness, and provides place for creativity. Such coping develops spontaneity, a feeling of capability and creativity (Goldstein, 2007).

Comments on the subject:

- I discovered the satisfaction in creativity. It's fun, releasing, helps one to function and stimulates.
- The creative processes were for me a safe space for touching the taboo, on the dark side, in pain.
- The creative process is not structured and the artistic product is structured. This helped me to change in the process and to feel the containment *versus* my creativity.
- In order to create I had to concede control and when I finished I was surprised that the feeling of control returned to me.
- I am pleased that the artists' work spoke, and helped us to meet beyond the safe barriers.
- This mixture in creativity, between the feelings, emotions associations and rational thoughts is satisfying, arouses consciousness, raises insights and mainly is surprising.
- To be a witness to the attributes of the other participants caused me esthetic pleasure and contributed to self-discovery.



The participants recognized the strength of the creative processes in everything associated to the possibility of expressing difficult and threatening essence in a protected manner of images and distancing. Researchers note that the creative processes include both the imaginary life and the realistic life. The dramatic reality is found between them and provides a safe space where man is free to experiment (Grainger and Duggan, 1997). Jennings (1990) notes that expressions of creativity through images in the dramatic reality create distancing and a safe space for the individual. The more the artist uses an image that is distant from himself, the greater his chance of coming closer to his substance and himself. Jennings (1990) terms this dramatic space. Thus does the encounter with parts of the self, that are loaded with emotional intensity, take place in a contained way (Pendzik, 2003). Winnicott (1971) maintains that through play and creative processes, an experience of control occurs that helps people to cope with the reality and with the anxieties it arouses.

The participants noted that the opportunity afforded in this workshop to represent the inner perception through creativity and artistic work was, for them, an exceptional experience of introspection and control. In dramatherapy these processes occur in the dramatic reality, which researchers claim is a private case of potential space and creating processes is a private case of transitional phenomena (Pendzik, 2006). Winnicott (1971:1) defines these concepts and add that the potential space is also termed a mediating area or an intermediate area, and is the space in which the subjective experience occurs. The events that are created in the potential space are a transition from objects to representing objects. This concept is connected to the development of the dialectic process, between the fantasy and the real world (Ogden, 1993).

The participants related to the creative process as if to the transformation of inner representation. It included locating a relevant topic that in a structured way is motivated by internal representation, giving shape through materials, its conversion to an artistic product, naming and sometimes the addition of dramatic expression such as monologue. They emphasized that this process helped them to express the substance of taboo, to define and to organize confused internal substance and even to alter them and to change through them.

Researchers note that an artistic piece of work affords a container and arouses a feeling of containment for its creator. Jung (1964) asserts that the creative process makes use of symbols. Symbols are a means of expressing contrasting values, opposites, and thus afford a container for

ambivalence to conflicts and paradoxes. The creative process needs structures to be contained. Development is contained in structures that change according to the process (Mittelpunkt, 1995). Bion (1970) terms the container an instrument for thinking thoughts; the content is first contained in dispersed and chaotic form and later enjoys an organized form.

Discussing Freud, Fridman and Scustak (2006) refer to the creative processes in the context of displacement and sublimation. The defense mechanism that enables indirect manifestation of drives is the displacement mechanism - the transfer of the drive from one object to another, from a forbidden object to a permitted one. It entails the displacement of libido energies – the energy of the life drive - to refined and more accepted activities, termed sublimation. He saw artistic work as a type of sublimation, and thus creating in art allows people cognitive freedom that leads to the development of the authentic self and human uniqueness.

Winnicott (1971) observes that man is free to express internal substance, even if it is taboo, through creative processes. Through these creative processes we preserve the connection with the subjective part, with the real self, and they create the basis for feelings of self.

The participants stressed that creative processes that include emotional experiential experimentation, followed by observation of the artistic product, enable them to integrate their thoughts and to manifest cognition. Researchers relate to the language of art as to a type of communications. The language of art employs primary signs of being part of the primary cognitive process that express feeling and experience. Similarly, it makes use of secondary signs that are part of the secondary cognitive processes that are rational and convey information. Cognitive activity is intended to deal with the meaning and primary associative contexts of the symbolic expression that comprises the artistic product (Noy, 1999).

### ***Movement between the conscious and the unconscious***

The participants noted that they attained consciousness and new insights that afforded meaning during the creative process.

Researchers from the world of dramatherapy aver that in the dramatic creative processes symbols that are embodied in the language of role playing take part. The uniqueness of the dramatic activity lies in the

manipulation created by the transformation (Pendzik, 2006). The transformation in the creative process occurs by reaching insights and awareness. This essential development occurs when unconscious foundations become conscious, which we term insight, with the cognitive development that we term consciousness. Thus the creative process contributes to the developmental process (Mittelpunkt, 1995).

The soul is inconceivable, and is expressed in symbolic means. The symbol is the means that bridges that which is understood and that which is not understood, between that which is perceived and that which is unknown (Jung, 1964). Conscious and unconscious connect in the creative process. In a creative situation people direct attention to the unconscious based on expectations and intentions. This situation entails energy and awareness of materials that arise from the unconscious (Jung, 1967). Conscious and unconscious are interchangeable in the creative process (Scharfstein, 2006).

Creative processes in dramatherapy enjoy phenomenological consideration by members of the group. The meaning of the creative phenomenon and its components are provided by its creator (McNiff, 1993). Winnicott (1971) maintains that self-expression through play and creative processes give people a feeling of a real life of significance.

### ***Playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity***

The participants emphasized the development of the ability for playfulness, spontaneity, a feeling of capability and creativity as the result of experimenting with creative processes.

Scharfstein (2006) believes that play and creativity are attractive to people since, when they are intensive, they void the consciousness of time and self, and arouse a feeling of absolute spontaneity. Paradoxically, we feel most ourselves when we do something intensively to the point of forgetting ourselves.

Fromm (1941) and other researchers observe that spontaneous activity is expressed as the desire to do something, for action, as in the Latin word 'spont' – voluntary. The creativity that can be manifested in all areas of life stems from spontaneity and is itself part of the attributes of creativity. Spontaneous activity is possible when there is no separation between wisdom and emotion, but when they blend. People whose thoughts, feelings and deeds are an expression of themselves are people who can express themselves spontaneously. Spontaneous activity reinforces the

self and serves as a basis for perfection through facilitating expression of the real self and affording us happiness and joy (Djuric et al, 2006).

Jung (in Netzer, 2004) sees the development of creativity as part of the process of formulating the uniqueness that climaxes in the second half of life. The artistic and creative work results in the discovery and expression of the self at its best. Creativity in art is characterized by coping and experiencing the new and unfamiliar. The self attains the highest levels of functioning and realizes the most perfect of its strengths, which it attempts to absorb, understand, react, and solve problems in a creative manner. This process occurs when people manage to deviate from the routine and familiar reactions and activities, and dare to seek new solutions (Noy, 1999).

### ***Transitions, release, impulsiveness, catharsis and tribalism***

The participants related to the practice and development in transitions and in change after experiencing processes of creativity and the possibility of release, of creativity and of tribalism through movement rituals.

Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, (Djuric et al., 2006) sees spontaneity as the strength appearing in the present and creating a suitable reaction to a new situation, or alternatively, a new reaction to an old situation. The development of spontaneity and flexibility helps to cope with transitions. Movement rituals are the component that creates the possibility of impulsive release, forgetting the self and its merger with the others. After the movement ritual the individual returned to herself and to a feeling of individuation, free of incubus. The movement rituals contribute to the members of the group a feeling of communality with tribal strength (Jennings, 1990).

Thus, in summary, the participants noted the experience in the creative processes as a factor generating change. They referred to several categories - from chaos to shape, to control and to containment, movement between the conscious and the unconscious, transitions, release, impulsiveness, catharsis and tribalism, playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity.

Play and the creative process help to bridge the external and the internal worlds, to process substance, pleasure, relaxation, providing meaning, developing creativity, control, consciousness and contribute to the development of identity. Winnicott (1971) includes artistic work and the

need for the artistic experience as a transitional phenomenon. Creativity starts from a type of play, somewhat similar to imaginary play for children. Such play is intuitive, *en route* to the artistic creative work. Transparency in the substance and materials raised is feasible.

The following stage is the formulation of materials and substance to a communicative work with esthetic values of attributes and structure, from which neither the creator nor the audience can derive meaning. Creative processes develop the ability to move from one behavioral pattern to another, from the quality of the experience of rest, of being, to one of doing and so on. In the creative process, the quality lacks the shape of a self flowing towards accepting the artistic shapes that can develop and change at any given point (Matri, 2005).

### **4.3.3 The group totem pole**

The participants related to the impact of building a group totem pole on the development of the group and of the personal process. They referred to several categories - group identity, personal and group taboo, conflicts, social awareness and social roles.

#### ***Group identity***

The participants referred to elements that compose group identity during the construction of the group totem pole.

The literature indicates that women at the mid-life stage need to redefine their identity (Neugarten, 1964; Sheehy, 1995). Erikson (1985) refers to identity as to a feeling of being in need of constant reconstruction of the entity of self within the social reality. It includes the component of social belonging as one of the components of the feeling of identity. He maintains that people create a feeling of belonging and a connection to ideals and values of a particular group. This affords the individual a feeling of security.

The totem pole is an artistic piece that belongs to a community and its cultural array. It is a means of illustration that represents the community identity. It represents the link of members of the community to their perception of their world (Levi-Strauss, 2003). It is placed clearly in the community public domain.

## ***Taboo***

While building the totem and on its conclusion the participants referred to the subject of personal and group taboo.

Researchers, such as Dior (1990), Liveson (1981), Rubin (1979) and Sheehy (1992) believe that following the changes in the diverse daily domains of women, the desires and drives that were taboo stir in the second half of life. The need awakens to find new sources of satisfaction and meaning, to develop unknown, new parts of the self, and the desire to realize wishes that were suppressed.

Fromm (1941) claims that the development of uniqueness depends on coping with various types of taboo – whether social, internalized or internal. Self-actualization is the product of the environmental variables that are in reciprocal activity with the foundations of the individual's unique personality.

Freud (1940) observes that there is a link between the totem and the taboo. The totem pole represents community attitudes towards the taboo prohibitions (Levi-Strauss, 2003).

## ***Conflicts***

While constructing the totem pole two main conflicts arose regarding the ways in which it would be built and the substance it represented - collectivism *versus* individuality, and female *versus* male.

At the mid-life stage, according to the professional literature, women cope with the development of their selves, with the transition from the family and society to themselves. They undergo changes in their tendency to be part of a collective and responsible for it (Sheehy, 1995). Women have been programmed for generations to believe that expressing feelings such as anger or aggression or alternatively, such that express power, assertiveness and dominance, are taboo and their infringement will lead to the destruction of themselves and their relationships (Nardi, 1991). Sianno (2000) observes that the transitional period creates pressures and storms for the individual and sometimes irrational behavior originating in drives. Since the therapeutic process uses art conflictual issues that arise find expression and containment in constructing the totem.

The female conflict, in contrast to the male conflict, stems from the fact that gender is one of the most important components of personal identity, and therefore people live in fear of the taboo if they do not manage to meet the criteria necessary to be real men or real women (Strenger, 1999). Fromm (1941), referring to the conflict between individuality and collectivism, maintains that adults bear responsibility that that will lead to further development. The individual must extract his consciousness that is subjugated to outside authority and to social norms, and instead develop autonomous and critical awareness.

### ***Social roles***

While constructing the group totem pole the participants experimented with social roles during the interpersonal interaction. Such experimentation included individual behaviors that were manifested in change in attitude towards activity and towards the participants.

Sometimes, one of the participants, switched from cooperation and involvement in the activity to avoidance and seclusion. Sometimes there was movement from personal to shared work with several participants, from helping to being helped and so on, from harmony to conflict and so on. These transitions were accompanied by expressing emotions interchanging with humor and jocularly, belonging, alienation, anger, frustration, sadness and the joy of doing.

Researchers, such as Sheehy (1995), note that women at the mid-life phase experience changes in the family structure and in social status. Accordingly, they need to develop new social roles, reduce the pressures and empower the old.

### ***Social consciousness***

The process of constructing a group totem pole aroused social consciousness.

Livson (1981) concludes that the key to good functioning at the mid-life stage is the compatibility between the female personality and the social roles they choose.

Thus, the participants noted constructing a group totem pole as a factor generating change. They referred to several categories: Group identity, personal and group taboo, conflicts, social consciousness and social roles, with the totem pole a variation on the transitional object (Winnicott,

1971) and a group transitional object. It serves as to bridge the internal reality, the spirituality of the community, the external and daily reality and the imaginary and tangible work.

#### **4.3.4 The personal puppet theater**

The participants related to the creation of puppet theater as a process generating change. They saw this step as an emotional and artistic climax. They discussed several categories that comprise the impact of creating a personal puppet theater, including personal identity, taboo, containment and consciousness, control and humor, and personality integration.

##### ***Internal roles, personal identity and transformation***

The first stage was characterized by the symbolic expression of diverse psychological internal roles. It included the choice of a heroine puppet from a selection of existing puppets and presenting a monologue. Researchers claim that at mid-life women need to explore psychological roles, to empower or to reduce the extent of some of them and to find new roles (Livson, 1981).

A puppet that affords a variation of the transitional object, as Winnicott (1971:1) defined the concept, is important for its puppeteer. Similar to the meaning a baby affords a transitional object. The puppet and the transitional object are a semi-autonomous entity that is both the me and the not me. Both serve as a bridge between the internal and the external world, between the self and the persona, between the social self, that creates connections with the world, between the known to the world and the not-known (Olson, 1998).

Similarly, these puppets served as self objects as Kohut (1978:60) defines the concept. Puppets that were external objects aroused the subjective experience of each participant and fulfilled internal functions for her. Kohut (1977) further notes three needs fulfilled by the self object: Mirroring, idealization and twinship.

The essential conditions for the very emotional existence at any age, is the existence of self objects that provide suitable and available reactions of the acceptance of self. Thereby can the self preserve a feeling of uniformity, strength and harmony (Kulka, 2002).



Creating a personal puppet theater is a transformational object for the participants, as Bollas (2000:31) defines the concept. The search in adulthood for a transformative object is manifested in the memory of earlier object experiences. The memory of a relationship that was identified with the transformational experience of the self can arise following the strong emotional experience and the reconstruction of the self. This is a process that contributes to changes in the baby's experiences, and develops the feeling of its real existence. When older, reconstructing the process is possible through creating a puppet theater.

The puppet theater is a product of transformation that is created by the artist, who builds the puppets and creates something out of nothing, affords raw material a shape. A second transformation occurs through the puppeteer who breathes life into the puppet and gives it a soul that converts the inanimate to animate. Another transformation occurs in the personality of the puppet following its experiments with the different plots that comprise the drama. These processes influence both the creative artist and the audience; through humanizing the characters, we allow them to function as the agents of change (McNiff, 1993).

### ***Taboo, containment and consciousness***

After choosing the heroine puppet and dramatic expression, the participants created the taboo puppet from a variety of materials.

Researchers, such as Friedman and Pines (1992), maintain that women at the mid-life phase need to cope with diverse types of taboo in order to attain authenticity and self-actualization. Coping with diverse types of taboo involves the risk of deserting the familiar life style and encountering the unknown. This facilitates seeking meaning, identifying lusts and aspirations and implementing them.

Freud (1961) relates to the defense mechanism that suppresses emotions from the conscious to the subconscious regarding the conceptual and emotional substance, and the memories that threaten the personality. These include the taboo substance that is derived from society or from internalized moral orders. Our conscious acts grow from an unconscious layer that is created from the permitted influences. This latter includes the footprints of generations, their perceptions, values and prohibitions.

Making a taboo puppet was accompanied by loaded emotions. Some of the participants reacted to the discoveries that arose from the work with

stormy emotions and tears, and with humor as a way of dissipating the emotional tension.

Researchers into the world of therapeutic puppet theater assert that puppet theater, as a tangible, symbolic genre, is a containment vessel for loaded substance that arouses a feeling of danger. It affords shape and image to the feelings, to imagination, to wishes and to fears that are sometimes chaotic (Eleanor and Irwin, 1985). Puppets represent the entity of me and not me. They are a means of containment of the internal substance, and protection from the threat of decomposition of the self. The dual entity of the puppet helps to preserve the separateness between the internal and the external reality (Astell-burt, 2002).

Puppets provide man, the creator and the audience with the possibility of projecting the personal and issue substance that concern them, and thus to find emotional and cognitive satisfaction and release. The puppet is means of projection (Irwin and Shapiro, 1975). In therapy, puppets become the container (Steinhardt, 1994). They leave safe margins of over-distancing, of distancing from people. Thus the puppet allows people to project qualities of themselves outwards, in order to play and to explore the reality from a safe distance (Landy, 1996).

Dramatic expression by the participants included a monologue by the taboo puppet, a dialogue between it and the puppeteer and between the puppet and the heroine puppet. This experiment exposed the contradiction of the intra-psychic facets of the participant and unconscious aspects were revealed that lead to awareness of the complexity of the self. Some of the participants' roles represented personality parts that were considered to be inferior, prohibited and fearsome. The separation between the artist and the puppet represents a safe place that protects the artist (Woltman, 1951). Thus the possibility exists of expressing topics that are connected to the social, political and personal prohibitions represented by the puppet. While the human actor, the puppeteer, connects to the upper parts of the body, the puppet focuses on the lower parts, on the erotic. The puppeteers, also known as 'those who touch heaven', and the puppets that can represent the 'forbidden to touch', the divine superior power, and together create the relationships between the superior and the inferior worlds. Puppet theater moves between the divine and the childish, between the world of life and the world of spirits, between the lofty, the sacred and the lusts and desires (Peeri, 2003). Puppets consistently examine the dangerous, the boundaries between the legitimate and the criminal, between the

permitted and the forbidden and thus arouse consciousness (Sherzer and Sherzer, 1987).

### ***Control, humor and catharsis***

During the dramatic expression using puppet theater, the participants expressed pleasure at the possibility of affording the puppet a character and style. They enjoyed complaining about the puppets that dictate to them what to do and say. This experience was accompanied by humor that they aroused.

In puppet theater the artist can create an entire world, operate it and even give it meaning. The very creativity provides the patient with a feeling of capability and the status of a creator. The feeling of control that develops is complex. He creates the puppet and breathes life into it, while it, the 'living' puppet, tells its story and lives its life, until sometimes, the puppeteer's experience is one of the puppet leading him into its own story (Watkins, 1986).

One of the conditions for creating humor is distance. The separation between the puppeteer and the puppet, the paradox existing in the object that is intended to be a living figure, create distance for both the puppeteer and the audience. The puppet, by its very essence, represents something that it is not, and it, the puppet, can behave differently, in an unacceptable and surprising manner.

The lack of structured adaptation in this medium creates comic and grotesque elements. A small puppet can talk in a deep voice, while a large puppet can squeak weakly (Proschan, 1987). Creating compatibility that is unfamiliar and non-routine is also connected to the way a puppet is embodied and the content. The lofty can be represented in sensually and this can receive a divine quality. The contrasts that humor arouses are created in relationships between the grotesque puppet and the character it represents in accepted culture (Gross, 1987). The encounter between the human and the humanized inhuman is the heart of humor in puppet theater (Sherzer and Sherzer, 1987).

After the dramatic expression that the dialogue between the puppets entailed, the participants began to create a personal puppet show. They identified a key topic that arose from their personal work, composed a text and held rehearsals. Each person chose a name for the work and presented it to the others who were the audience. The personal work

aroused tension and excitement prior to the presentation and emotional, sometimes tearful, release thereafter. This stage afforded an emotional climax and a peak of exposure in the presentation of a personal key issue. Researchers claim that this process sometimes involves extreme emotional fluctuations - feelings of early knowledge that is revealed later in the fulfillment of the external reality, meaningful dreams and the arousal of human energy (Netzer, 2004).

The participants' experience included an external position in the audience role and an internal position of high involvement in the actress role. The experience was characterized as a catharsis for most participants. Esthetic distance is a key concept in the world of dramatherapy. Landy, (1993:148) claims it is based on Scheff's (1979) distancing theory and is related to styles of relationship that can be characterized over points on an axis between ranging from emotion to intelligence. They can be characterized as over-distancing and alienation or as under-distancing and absolute identification, and in the esthetic distance of a balance between the two poles.

Catharsis can occur in esthetic distance, and is emotional release, consciousness and insight that contribute to emotional palliation and the group and personality development. This situation hints at the possibility of identifying contrasts, understanding how conflictual, emotional and cognitive aspects, that are part of the human soul and social life, can exist simultaneously. Catharsis can be seen as the identification of the psychological paradox (Landy, 1993).

### ***Personality integration***

Examples of the comments bearing an integrative character between diverse, and sometimes contrasting, personality parts are manifested through the name of the presentation, the puppets, the roles and the plot as followed:

- The magician, the miserable one and myself: Multi-faceted personality
- Decoding: The way to combine lost parts of the soul

And from the text:

- Long ago there was one perfect person. It's not clear why she had three rotten apples. The plot deals with the encounter between the three and their attempt to link up.
- I am both young and old. I am organized and like disorder. I like to sit and think but also to dance.

- I present you with the struggle over accepting the cheapie-looking part of me. I want to let it live, because it bears vitality and daring.

Dasa-Masa (2004) maintains that working with puppets enabled her to discover aspects of her personality, to do things she did not do previously and to find a balance between diverse elements, including emotion and logic, imagination and reality, exposure and protecting herself, and between doing and listening observing and learning. Jung (1968) claims that a persona's ambition in balanced psychological organization of all the contradictions in his psyche motivates him to an accelerated developmental process in the second half of life.

Every presentation afforded personal dramatic expression of each participant. The presentation dealt with the key topic and with the participants' personal conflict. The puppets were part of the presentation along with additional means that represented other contrasting intrapersonality parts. The participants' presentations blended these parts into a concise coherent plot.

Researchers, according to the review of the literature, aver that creating and watching a puppet theater presentation encourages developing the ability for integration and coherence of all the components of the play and the puppets into one while. The theater merges the puppet creations and their stories into a spontaneous show. Through creating a puppet theater, the artist copes with the perception of the continuum and time. The puppeteer has a key role since it is that which raises topics from the past and connects them to the present, thus achieving a feeling of monitoring the future. The artistic integration in puppet theater, manifested in the show, can lead to healing that unites all the fragments to a feeling of the self (Astell-burt, 2002).

The process of creating a personal puppet theater includes components that contribute to personality integration. The individuation process, according to Jung, climaxes in the middle of life (Robertson, 2004). It is described in the review of the literature as characterizing personal development and the self according to Jung (1969:130), as a result of the development of the ability to cope with the *persona*, and from combinations of traits typical of the *shadow* and those that are attributed to a contrasting type, the *anima* and the *animus* (Robertson, 2004). The self is a psychological entity that entails all the contrasting personality components that Jung saw as an archetype unto itself, representing perfection and loftiness (Storr, 1982). This process of cohesing

uniqueness will lead, he believes, to unifying the contrasts that afford the personality uniqueness, balance and stability (Harding, 1965).

The heroine puppet represents the *persona*, which is the archetype that develops at the early stage and throughout life (Jung, 1969). This is the human social scheme that serves as camouflage for the private self. The taboo puppet represents the *shadow* that is an archetype that contains the personality attributes that are denied and suppressed by the individual. The presentations of the personal puppet show are an expression of the self archetype.

Landy (1993, 2000, 2001) discusses personality integration that is attained by developing a system of roles. He hypothesizes that mental health is dependent on a person's ability to cope with a complex set of relationships with internal contradictions that are in a state of constant flux. He develops a role theory as a framework to be applied in dramatherapy. He refers to the many faces of the personality with each role another facet of the personality and a set of roles that represents the entire personality, characterized in the reciprocal relations between the roles that provide a feeling of meaning, order and objective. This is a system with connections to the occupational, social roles and to the internalized psychological roles.

He describes the components that are part of creating dramatic roles in dramatherapy. The key role is that of the protagonist – the main hero - such as is the heroine. The counter role is the antagonist who reflects the other side and sometimes contradictory side of the key role, such as the taboo puppet. The guide is the mediator between these roles and contains them, an example of which is the puppet show. This latter enjoys integrative quality and therefore is created at the maturity stage that facilitates this.

Thus the participants related to creating a personal puppet theater as a factor creating change and development. They referred to several categories that comprise the impact of creating a personal puppet theater, to their personal process. This entails internal roles, personal identity and transformation, taboo, containment and consciousness, control humor and catharsis, and personality integration. Puppets and creativity and a personal puppet theater were part of the changes in the self of each participant.

### **4.3.5 Summary**

Each participant related during the workshop and in the interview thereafter, to four components of the workshop as generating change and development. These were the group, creative processes, the group totem pole and the personal puppet theater. All the participants related a similar level of importance to all the components.

The participants related to the group component as generating change according to several criteria. These were the group structure and composition, participant involvement and reciprocal feedback, experimenting with activity and the development of roles in the group.

They noted the creative processes as a factor generating change and related to several categories – from chaos to shape, to control and to containment, movement between the conscious and the unconscious, playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity, transitions, release, impulsiveness catharsis and tribalism.

The participants mentioned constructing a group totem pole as a factor generating change and referred to several categories, including group identity, personal and group taboo, conflicts, social consciousness and social roles.

They also referred to creating a personal puppet theater as a factor generating change and noted several categories – internal roles, personal identity and transformation, taboo, containment and consciousness, control humor and catharsis, and personality integration.

The personal processes included attributes, factors generating change and components of change that are described in the following section.

## **4.4 Components of change**

### ***The components of personal change and development processes***

During the workshop and in the interviews conducted at its conclusion and a year later the participants related to changes that occurred in their regard and to the development process as a result of their participation therein.

They saw several categories as of particular importance – consciousness, self perception (that included creativity, authenticity, control and expressing emotions), significance and self-actualization (that included the intrapersonal, the interpersonal, domestic and occupation domains).

### *At the conclusion of the workshop*

The participants described the changes they experienced following their participation in the workshop. Miki, whose experience lacked a developmental character, reported minor changes. Only four of the eight participants related to the professional and occupational domain, mainly regarding thoughts for the future. This researcher hypothesizes that this is an area of self-actualization which is the result of internal-personal changes. The conclusion of the workshop is too early a time for general discussion and in-depth examination of this realm.

Researchers claim that correct coping by women at the mid-life stage can contribute to change and development. Following a renewed self-definition, the self-perception at this stage can and should alter and be adapted to the period (Dinnerstein, 1976). The changes in the self-perception are composed of many elements such as creativity, authenticity, assertiveness, control, expressing emotions etc (Goldstein, 2007). Correct coping with renewed cohesiveness of the self-perception involves questioning consciousness and rejecting denial. This process can lead to energetic, physical and psychic arousal that will help in self-reactualization and discovering new meaning to life (Sheehy, 1995). Many women perceive this period as a suitable time to examine future possibilities for achievement and change that will lead to greater independence and self-actualization (Defey et al., 1996).

### *Consciousness*

All the participants related to the rise in consciousness:

- I am only now aware of the degree to which the further processing of the loss and mourning for my relative who was mentally sick and died is essential for the rest of my life.
- Awareness of the fact that things can still change.
- Consciousness of the influences of my parents' home although they did not speak. I decided not to remain silent over things.
- I thought I was stupid. Now I realize that if I manage to focus and formulate things for myself they become clear to me and I am then understood by others.
- I have a tendency to be swept away by external things.



- Time is something one must not take for granted.
- The barriers and walls that served me in the past are no longer necessary and prevent me from progressing.
- Fantasy is the part that helps me.

### *Self-perception*

All the participants referred to the improvement in positive self-perception. They also related to components of creativity, authenticity, control and expressing emotions.

As they said:

- My self-value increased. I can pay attention, have better verbal skills and other good things.
- The work here helped me to reorganize and accept the parts that are not appreciated, without denying them and without falling apart.
- I can imagine being helped without vanishing and this will still have my fingerprint.
- The judgmentalism and my self-criticism were realized.
- I now feel myself powerfully.
- I received a ray of light that helps me to enlighten my self-image.
- Now, I can accept my change with age.
- I acquired a type of independence and daring, I now have the ability to chose and implement.

### *Creativity*

- I came with a low self-value to my creativity and I am leaving here very satisfied with myself.
- Discovering my creativity is source of joy and belief in myself.
- I came with the tremendous need for planning that killed my creativity. Now my expression of myself is freer and more intuitive.
- My creativity was reinforced.

### *Authenticity*

- I found here the value of my style of which I was formerly ashamed.
- I usually maintained a pleasant façade, cooperated, with nice comments at a heavy price of reduction and silencing my voice

and presence. I now dare to express objection, lack of satisfaction, difficulty and concern.

### *Control*

- I reduced, I hope, the need for such a high level of control.
- To think less about control and accept what comes.
- I was led by others and today I am experimenting with daring, initiative and assertiveness.
- I no longer let my expectations influence and control my decisions.

### *Emotional expression*

- I found it very hard; I took a big step forwards.
- I always thought emotions didn't work for me relative to the intellectual part. Now I know it's the exact opposite. Emotion is the leading power in my personality.
- In the past, I was uncomfortable with closeness and touch. Now I dare far more.

### *Significance*

All the participants referred to discovering the meaning of life. The attitudes were towards the values and practical principles according to which they are interested in functioning.

As they said:

- To be less purposeful and enjoy things more.
- I never imagined how significant I was for others.
- I discovered I still have a role in life.
- Less initiatives and overdoing, fewer flags.
- The daily matters are important, it's discovery for life. All my life I ran forwards and thought what is the next step.
- My children need me to continue the dynasty.
- I need to volunteer. To do something for someone without financial compensation.
- I have responsibility. I am an example for my children as regards the possibility and ability to make changes at any age.

### *Self-actualization*

All the participants referred to the improvement in positive self-actualization. They also related to components of intra-personal, interpersonal, domestic and occupation.

#### *Intra-personal*

All the participants referred to the improvement in the intra-personal domain:

- The emotional resources I once had awoke, like sensuality and amazement with artistic work.
- I found the right to be excited. I was previously threatened that if I get excited I would lose control.
- Energy of doing and the belief in it awoke.
- I formerly conceded my place. I am not ready today for people to drain my energy.
- I developed intimacy that I use in times of distress.
- I am more observant and tolerant.
- My challenge is to find the path back to being present from within in my daily life, to live the experience and not to disconnect and observe myself and others from outside.
- I give myself the legitimacy to postpone things.

#### *Interpersonal*

All the participants related to improvement in the interpersonal domain:

- I developed the ability for tolerance towards people who annoy me.
- I am more open for relationships.
- I get closer to people, am prepared to receive from them and to give.
- I initiate more cooperation with others.
- This year is the year of speech. Everything I kept in my heart that is connected to my parents' taboo, and about which it is forbidden to talk I shatter and discuss.
- I involve the surroundings in matters of emotion, which was not typical of me.
- When creating connections with the surroundings, what was difficult and complicated and led to rejection by the others, became simple and easy to realize.

- From difficulty and pain I learned to set boundaries. They are a condition, as far as I am concerned of the good relationships with my friends.

### *Domestic*

All the participants referred to the significant improvement in the family domain. They noted that this is an indirect but meaningful and unexpected contribution of the workshop.

As they said:

- Closeness and cooperation with my daughter that had not existed since her adolescence.
- The awakening of daring in the decision to talk with my parents about the will and the choice of a suitable style of reference.
- Following the workshop I began to develop a meaningful connection with my mother that was blocked for many years.
- I released, I revealed, and I shared an entire part of myself that I blocked in the past from my daughters. This upgraded our relationship.
- I learned to set boundaries in my relationships with my children and partner and I am really pleased about this.
- I am making far-reaching changes in my relationships with my children.
- Today, I can see my partner from another perspective. I greatly appreciate him for having absorbed the reductions I imposed on our lives and he nevertheless accepted me complacently.
- I have weighty thoughts regarding the rest of my life, whether to continue with my partner or separate from him.

### *Occupation*

Four participants, who accounted for half the group, related to the subject of occupation and profession. They mainly expressed thoughts about the future.

As they said:

- I am stuck as regards my profession. I have to think what next.
- I feel of a lack of professional satisfaction. I believe I will be able to dare to test myself and change profession and enjoy the recognition I need.

- I have decided to continue in my professional role till I retire early.
- The feeling that I can be better in my profession that involves counseling others.

### *Implementation a year later*

In interviews held a year after the workshop finished the participants noted that it had been a year of change and development and that the process was continuing. They claimed that the workshop was, for them, an exceptional opportunity to be involved with themselves and to lead their lives to optimal changes.

As they said:

- A laboratory with preferential conditions.
- A life belt in the stormy waves of life of the mid-life stage.
- A diving board from the mud to the horizon.

They noted that some of the changes in their lives may have also happened without the workshop, but at a heavy price - in loneliness and over a lengthy period of time. They referred to the same categories to which they gave afforded the meaning of change immediately on the conclusion of the workshop.

The youngest participant, Miki, who had not experienced a developmental process during the workshop but only one of validating her needs, reported significant development a year later. She was apparently in need of introspection and time out, which the participants had begun to experience a while before. Similarly, this may hint at the slow pace of development on the one hand and at good ability to apply it on the other.

In an interview held immediately on the conclusion of the workshop, only four participants referred to the category of self-actualization in the professional and occupational realms. They then noted mainly thought for the future in this domain. A year later, this category enjoyed sweeping discussion. It also included changes in the realm of work, including switching from work to studying, and thoughts for the future. Apparently, during the year, internal developmental processes matured and enabled realization also in the occupational realm.

The participants mentioned the group contribution, experimenting with creative processes, the group totem pole and the personal puppet theater, although they were not reminded of the components in the interview.

They related to the categories of consciousness, self-perception (that included creativity, authenticity, control and expressing emotions), significance, self-actualization that included the intra-personal, interpersonal and domestic domains as well as occupation.

To illustrate these categories:

### *Consciousness*

- It's lucky I participated in the workshop, otherwise life would have passed me by.
- If I hadn't stopped and participated in the workshop I would have been swept away with the flow of life.
- The workshop was an important stage in the process that belongs to reorganizing my life at the mid-life stage. It was a rung on the ladder.
- The workshop increased my consciousness and helped me to define my need at this period in time.
- I found it convenient to observe from the sidelines and I am interested in moving to a position of involvement and implementation. This began in the workshop.
- I am now continuing the search and not giving up.

### *Self-perception*

All the participants referred to the improvement in positive self-perception. They also related to components of creativity, authenticity, control and expressing emotions.

As they said:

- Creating a personal theater helped me to purify the significant elements in my personality, to expose the taboo, to recognize these parts and to give each its relative place without taking over the other parts. This contributed to calm stemming from being at one with myself.
- The workshop contributed to my maturity and to recognizing my understanding.
- The workshop contributed to my self-confidence in things that I want to do and change.

- The main issue for me in development is flexibility in the transitions, between doing and observing, between the individual and the collective. The transitions in the workshop were enforced and sometimes incompatible with my needs. So it created frustration for me and today I bless it.

### *Creativity*

- I feel that my creativity developed.
- I am building a community center and this demands much conceptual and implementational creativity, and I feel that I am ready for it.
- I play the flute as a hobby. Since the workshop I invest more in music. My playing expanded from structured classical music to jazz. My ability in transitions improved and the ability to improvise developed and improved greatly.

### *Authenticity*

- I feel the maturity, the creative experience in my life.
- A by-product that was discovered through the experience, through creative processes in the workshop. Today I have the ability to bring my authenticity in my relationships with the surroundings. In the past it was just myself.
- In the workshop I discovered how I avoid being assertive, and how much I try to be nice and not hurt others. Today I am coping with the reactions of the surroundings accordingly, even if this involves conflict today.
- I am practicing being totally me.

### *Control*

- My proportions are more correct, I have no need to get worked up, I attain what I want quietly and with relative calm.
- Today I force myself to commit, to take a stance.
- I am at the point of leading my life and not being led.

### *Expressing emotions*

- In the workshop I experienced the emotions as adding spice to life and I continue to allow them space.
- The emotional exposure enabled me to start to touch on things and today I am continuing to deal with them.

- Revealing emotions deepened the connections with my friends.

### *Significance*

All the participants referred to discovering the meaning of life. The attitudes were towards the values and practical principles according to which they are interested in functioning.

As they said:

- To be in the position of observer and of practitioner guide me in life.
- Slow in the pace of life afforded satisfaction to me and to those around me.
- I established a group of colleagues for support and development and this give me significance.
- A combination of the analytical and the intellectual with my emotions are the winning answer to life.

### *Self-actualization*

All the participants referred to the improvement in positive self-actualization. They also related to components of intra-personal, interpersonal, domestic and occupation and profession.

#### *Intrapersonal*

- A direct result of the workshop is the improvement within me.
- My connection with a member of my family who was mental sick and died received a turn. I was previously chased and threatened by thoughts about her. Today, I have good memories.
- The fear that controlled my life as a result of a terror attack in which I was injured freed me and I now run my life.
- I try to take a stance, to demand attention from those around me, not to vanish.

#### *Interpersonal*

- The totem and the group dynamics helped me to develop tools to handle people. The possibility of coming close to people was



Opened for me, to create intimacy and to continue my development.

- Work on the totem furthered my ability to move towards the group, towards belonging and cooperation.
- In the past if I didn't get what I wanted I opted out. Now I can hold a dialogue.
- Now I see cooperation with others as good compromise that contributes to me and not compromise on level and equality

### *Domestic*

- A window to more meaningful relationships with my daughter opened.
- The couplehood improved.
- My relationship with mother had a positive turn following the change I made during the workshop.

### *Occupation*

- I plan my second career after I retire and I am interested in opening a community center.
- In work, the boundaries are clear to me in everything connected to investment. I don't go crazy and feel good with this.
- I began to write a second draft of the book I began long before the workshop.
- I feel that I am coping from a position of consideration and with a feeling that I achieved what I wanted at work.
- I am retraining, studying coaching, which for me is an amalgamation of my abilities.

Thus the participants provided meaning to change as regards consciousness, self-perception that included creativity, authenticity, control and emotional expression, significance, self-actualization that included the personal, interpersonal, the domestic and the occupational domains.

A year later they noted that this had been a year of change and development and that this process was ongoing. They claimed that the workshop was, for them, an exceptional opportunity to be involved in themselves and to alter their lives for the better.

#### 4.4.1 Summary

The personal processes of change and development of the eight participants in the workshop included attributes, factors generating change and components of change. They related to the processes that developed throughout the workshop and during the following year in interviews and during the workshop.

Seven of the eight participants enjoyed processes of change and development that occurred during the workshop. The eighth participant (Miki) experienced a process of change without the attribute of development, which providing legitimacy and validity for her need for time out, introspection and focusing on the present. It is possible to connect the process experienced by Miki and its separateness from the processes experienced by the other participants, to her age that was younger than that of the others. Miki may have been in need of time for maturation that the other participants had already experienced. Similarly, the pace of her developmental processes was slower since a year later she reported significant development in her life.

The attributes of the personal processes included defining the process axis, the dominant attribute, roles that developed in the group, social roles that developed while constructing the group totem pole, internal psychological roles that developed while creating a personal puppet theater and were embodied through the heroine puppet and the taboo puppet – the name of the presentation that is a personal puppet show production, its description and a description of the process. These processes were unique for all the participants and at the same time shared components of content. The attributes were transitions and changes, identity and taboo, that were common to all. Collectivism and individuality, the internal and the external, loss and development were common to the three axes of the process. The process axis of one participant included the first two components.

All the participants related during the workshop and the interviews thereafter to four components of the workshop as generating change and development – the group, the creative processes, the group totem pole, and the personal puppet theater. They all related similar levels of importance to the components.

The participants referred to the group component as generating change according to several criteria: The group structure and composition, involving the participants and mutual feedback, experimenting with

shared work and the development of roles in the group. The creative processes were considered according to several categories: from chaos to shape, control and containment, movement between the conscious and the unconscious, and playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity, and transitions, release, impulsiveness, catharsis and tribalism.

In reference to the process of constructing a group totem pole they noted the components of: group identity, personal and group taboo, conflicts, social consciousness and social roles. They noted several attributes of creating a personal puppet theater as a factor generating change – internal roles, personal identity and transformation, taboo and containment, consciousness, control humor and catharsis, and personal integration.

The participants afforded meaning of change to the categories of consciousness and self-perception that included creativity, authenticity, control and emotional expression, significance and self-actualization, that included the intra-personal, interpersonal, domestic and occupational domains. One participant (Miki) reported minor change at the end of the workshop and significant developmental change during the following year. Only four of the participants referred to the occupational domain, mainly as regards thought for the future. A year later, this category enjoyed sweeping consideration. It also included changes in the work realm and a transition from work to studies and thoughts regarding the future. Apparently, during this year, intrapersonality developmental processes matured and enabled actualization in the occupational realm as well.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The objective of this study was to discover and understand the processes of change and development amongst women at the mid-life stage. These processes were examined through an ongoing group dramatherapy workshop in which eight women at the mid-life stage participated and included creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater.

Two levels of meta-reality - the group and the personal - were explored. Meta-reality included three levels of reality that were characterized through verbalization, behavior and art. Examination using triangulation of these levels of reality raised the group and personal processes of change and development occurring during the workshop. These were validated in interviews conducted on the conclusion of the workshop and the year thereafter, in which these processes were found to continue. This verifies the research hypothesis that maintains ideas, experiences, stories and artistic expression are manifestations of the human consciousness that takes part in the dramatherapy workshop, and in the process of change and development through structuring the personal and group reality.

The workshop provided an experiential framework during which the conditions for the evolution of processes of change and development were created for the participants.

It afforded a rite of passage for women at the mid-life phase. This verifies the research hypothesis that claims that a dramatherapy group can help women to cope with that stage. It can be a reference and mutual support group; it can afford an enabling space, in which the conditions for change amongst the participants exist. Van Gennep (1960:11), who coined the term rite of passage defines it as a community ritual. He emphasizes that this ritual accompanies groups in the community in change in social status, in age, place or stage in the life cycle such as birth, sexual maturity, marriage and death.

The attributes of a rite of passage are manifested in the workshop that lasted several months. The participants were all at the mid-life stage and defined themselves as such. The workshop included activities and assignments that were manifested symbolically, and were connected to coping with conflicts of social and personal taboo and affording space for the development of internal and social roles necessary at this time.

The method employed was dramatherapy with attributes and structure as a rite of passage (Jennings, 1995b; Jones, 1996; Pitruzzella, 2004). Each dramatherapy session included three stages of the rite of passage, as defined by Turner (1969:88).

The first stage was separation from daily life, the second was the transition from the daily reality to a reality characterized by inverting the existing rules and defined as the liminal space in which transformation can occur. The workshop entailed transitions between daily and dramatic reality, that included the creative processes.

They were characterized in symbolic expression and in the release from norms, and enabled involvement with the taboo substance. The creative processes in the dramatic reality stirred consciousness, revealed meaning and created transformation at the emotional, psychological and social levels.

The third stage is assimilation and unification that are manifested in the workshop in the presentation to the audience by participants and with their cooperation. The personal and group processes were integrated through artistic expression and celebrating achievements on the conclusion of the workshop.

Five axes of development were employed in the workshop and comprised the group processes. This was the plan of action that afforded the structure for the rite of passage and included the content, dramatic, artistic, group and personal development axes. The ritual was divided into six phases, each of which included a relative stage of each axis.

## Structure of the rite of passage

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Dramatic development</b>	<b>Artistic development</b>	<b>Group development</b>	<b>Personal development</b>
Phase one	Transitions and change	Exposition	Self-presentation	Engagement	Myself in the world
Phase two	Collectivism and individuality	Conflict	Group totem pole	Differentiation	Myself and the group
Phase three	Identity and taboo	Complication	Creating a personal puppet theater	Individuation	Personal journey
Phase four	The internal and the external	Climax	Personal puppet show	Intimacy	Climax and catharsis
Phase five	Loss and development	Untying the knot	The path	Mutuality	Achievements
Phase six	Transition and change	Close	Celebration	Closure	Separation

The issues, as manifested in the content axis, are compatible with the attributes of the mid-life stage, as per the review of the literature. The dramatic development axis expresses the quality of the experience that is compatible with the dramatic event. The artistic development axis affords symbolic experience in a liminal space, typical of the rite of passage. The artistic vessels enabled expression of the participants' needs during this period. These include introspection, movement between the conscious and the unconscious and *vice versa* as a way of rediscovering the self, experimenting with social and psychological roles and taking steps towards reevaluating the identity and personality integration and reassessing life.

The group development axis describes the development of the relationships in the group, in which an intense feeling of community developed accompanied by a strong and direct connection to the feelings of amity, partnership and equality between the participants. These attributes are compatible with Turner's (1969:88) definition of community feeling that is created in a situation of ritual that he defines as *communitas*. The personal development axis depicts the process of each participant during the workshop.

All the participants exhibited personal processes of change and development. These occurred according to the personal development axis and included attributes similar to those of the content axis – transitions

and change, identity and taboo, collectivism and individuality, loss and development, the internal and the external. The level of dominance of the attributes varied. Transition and change, and identity and taboo were found to be dominant in all the processes. Furthermore, another dominant attribute was found on the process axis for all the processes. Collectivism and Individuality, loss and development, the internal and the external were common to all three processes.

One participant noted two dominant attributes. This hints at a relatively more complex process compared to that of the other participants. The distribution of the attributes was equal and no correlation between these distributions and domestic situation or age were found. However, the distribution of diverse attributes in the process axis were found to be connected to personal development that was identified as a key issue during the workshop. Coping and processing the conflicts and events connected to the key topic led to development.

The issues and conflicts that were manifested in the personal processes whose attribute was identical, differed from each other, as did all the processes. The processes were characterized in the differences from each other, in the ways of coping with them and their unique attributes, although all reported a feeling of improvement.

A year later the participants, including the one person who experienced a process of change that did not bear a developmental character, reported an improvement in the quality of their lives. They added that the processes of change and development continued to occur.

The participants related to the components of the factors generating change that affected their development, including the group, creative processes, the group totem pole and the personal puppet theater. Each participant related a similar level of importance to all the components, that were included in the axes of dramatic, artistic and group development.

They also noted, as regards the group, several criteria that influenced the processes of change and development including the group structure and composition, participant involvement and mutual feedback, experiencing working together and the development of roles in the group. They emphasized the strong community quality that developed amongst them. This confirms the research hypothesis that avers that the creative processes in general and of the group totem pole and personal puppet theater in particular, are outstandingly suitable for the rite of passage and

for creating the conditions for the processes of change and development amongst the participants.

The participants noted experimenting with processes of creativity as a factor generating change. They related to several categories that affected the processes of change and development, including from chaos to shape, control and containment, movement between the conscious and unconscious, transitions, release, impulsiveness, catharsis and tribalism, playfulness, spontaneity, capability and creativity.

They further noted the construction of a group totem pole as a factor generating change. They referred to several categories that affected the processes of change and development, including group identity, personal and group taboo, conflicts, social awareness and social roles. The research hypothesis, that claims that the group totem pole is a physical representation of the conceptual and symbolic perception of the group itself, is thus confirmed. It can serve as a type of group transitional object (Winnicott, 1971:1) that psychologically bridges the first and second halves of life. Experimenting with constructing a group totem pole creates fertile ground for change and development of the social roles.

The participants noted creating a personal puppet theater as a factor generating change that influenced on their processes of change and development. They related to several categories: internal roles and personal identity, taboo, containment and consciousness, control and humor and personality integration. Their attitude verifies the research hypothesis that avers that the creative processes of the personal puppet theater can serve as a lever for the processes of change and development. The puppet can be a variation of the personal transitional object and a psychological bridge between the individual's internal and external reality. This medium facilitates concrete and externalized representation of the intra-psychic roles. Role playing allows transformation to take place that can lead to change in the psychological roles and to the discovery of new ones.

The components of the personal puppet theater afforded a self object for the participants, as defined by Kohut, (1978:60), and can be seen as the continued development of the transitional object that is part of a person's life. The self object is anything whose presence for the individual is experienced by him as generating and forming the self. The puppets that were external objects aroused the subjective experience of each participant and filled internal functions for them.



A personal puppet theater serves as a transformational object for the participants, as defined by Bollas, (2000:31), manifested in the memory of the relationship that was identified with the transformational experience of the self. The essential condition for emotional survival at any age is the existence of self objects that will offer suitable and available reactions of self acceptance. Thus the self can preserve the feeling of unity, power and harmony (Kulka, 2002).

Creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater were part of the changes of the self and of the group through coping with taboo issues. This verifies the research hypothesis that claims that these factors create conditions for coping with taboo in a contained way without the feeling of over-endangerment.

Puppets, the creative processes and creating a personal puppet show were part of the changes in the self of each participant while coping with the taboo substance that was added to those that awoke during the creative process and in constructing the totem pole.

The participants related significance of change and development to the following categories with respect to the components of change and development: Consciousness, self-perception that included creativity, authenticity, control and expressing feelings, significance, self-actualization that included the intra-personal, interpersonal, domestic and occupational domains.

This confirms the research hypothesis that relates to raising consciousness that increases the possibility of discovering meaning as components of the processes of change and development that are part of the intra-personal, interpersonal, domestic and occupational domains.

In this study, the group dramatherapy workshop, based on creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater, served as a rite of passage for women at the mid-life stage. This framework facilitated processes of change and development amongst the participants who contributed to beneficent coping with this period and improved the quality of their lives.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Mid-life is a normative development stage that occurs in the transition from the first to the second half of life. During this period there is a clear impact amongst women in diverse areas of life in the physiological the cultural and social and psychological domains. It is a transitional stage, a turning period for women and involves the need for change and development.

Western culture is familiar with rite of passage originating in primordial societies, such as are intended for adolescents coping with the transitional periods of their lives from childhood to adolescence. These include rites of passage that create the conditions for processes of change and development of those participating in it.

The professional literature does not note evidence of such a rite of passage for women at the mid-life stage. At the same time researchers and professionals mention the need for such a rite in modern society in general and their absence for women of this age, notably Bauman (2002), Flesher (1998), Granville (2000) and Matthews (1992).

The ongoing group workshop in dramatherapy that entails experimentation with creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater affords an experimental framework intended for women at the mid-life stage and as a rite of passage for them. It takes place in a setting separate from their daily life and enables them to reassess life and renew identity cohesion.

The ritual space offers introspection and includes group and personal assignments with a symbolic manifestation through creative processes. They include experimenting with social and psychological roles to handle the taboo and self-discovery.

The rite of passage has structure and components that are suitable for women at the mid-life phase facilitating processes of change and development amongst the workshop participants.

These processes arouse personal and social consciousness, help to reveal the meaning of life and contribute to improving the quality of life at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and occupational realms.

### **5.3 The contribution of the study and recommendations for further research**

The contribution of the study is to areas of academic knowledge of women at the mid-life stage and to expressive art therapy. Similarly, it offers the possibility for applying services for women at the mid-life stage in the community and in therapeutic frameworks.

The study hones the need for expanding the boundaries of the realm of adult education. It expresses the need for developing and applying the support systems, motivating and encouraging development amongst mid-life women. It emphasizes the need of women at the mid-life stage in the experiential framework, enabling them to process the impacts of the transitional period and experience processes of change and development. Such an experiential framework can be provided as a public service for women at the mid-life stage.

It further offers an experiential framework that can be included in a public array of community services provided in adult education frameworks. The experiential framework includes a unique plan of action that was developed for this study and serves as a rite of passage for women at the mid-life stage based on creative processes, constructing a group totem pole and creating a personal puppet theater.

The conclusions of the study show that the rite of passage afforded a place for the participants to process a covert crisis. This is a normative crisis typical of transitional periods in general and of women at the mid-life stage in particular. It does not enjoy legitimacy from the surroundings and therefore coping is not possible in the daily space but in a space separate from the daily setting. Participation in the rite of passage contributed to a turning point for the better in the normative crisis that is part of the transition in this period of life. It contributed to the participants' exiting the crises and to processes of change and development that began to occur amongst them during the ritual and continued during the following year.

The study was conducted amongst women with a high sense of awareness, who read professional literature and talk to professionals about issues relevant to them. Nevertheless, they felt the need for help at this period in their lives, for a framework that offers experience using non-routine languages of expression. They reported that verbal expression and the rational attitude common in interpersonal

communications did not provide an answer and did not lead them to a specific solution they sought.

During the workshop that served as a rite of passage for them, they noted that the symbolic manifestation, that characterized the diverse processes of creativity, motivated them to move from the conscious to the unconscious and *vice versa* and eventually contributed to discovering new awareness and meaning to their lives. One may assume that the impact of the rite of passage on the level of awareness for women who belong to other populations will be at least as meaningful if not more so.

Women who participated in this study live in urban Israeli society with its modern western attributes. In the framework of this rite of passage they exploited non-routine languages of expression and constructions that accompanied mankind in ancient cultures. These were processes of creativity, ritual in movement, a totem pole and expression using puppets. These types of expression facilitated a place and expression of the creativity for the participants and a feeling of tribal belonging for the group. These conditions contributed to improving the quality of the participants' lives. One may assume that these elements, that accompanied mankind since the dawn of civilization as an integral part of their community lives, are necessary still today for their presence in modern society. They contribute to motivation, support and development of the individual, despite contrasting with the western world, the rapid pace of life and the high status of the value of rationality.

Accordingly, the contribution of this study is expressed in several ways.

- It enriches the areas of knowledge as regards adult education, women's studies, therapy using expression and creativity, dramatherapy and therapeutic puppet theater for adults.
- It can offer an aid for women coping with the mid-life stage.
- It can contribute to deeper understanding of the involuntary changes experienced by women at the mid-life stage. Similarly, it can offer a perspective on the voluntary changes that can be attained at this stage.
- It offers a plan of action for the rite of passage for women at the mid-life stage.
- The realm of adult education lacks a basis of rite of passage for women at this mid-life phase. This thesis can encourage the application of the process of such institutionalization.
- It can contribute to the positive social status of women at the mid-life stage.

- It can provide a infrastructure for further studies, such as studies on
  - The further transitional stages in the later female life cycle
  - Mid-life amongst men
  - Constructing totem pole in therapy
  - Creating personal puppet shows in therapy
  - Developing a plan of action for the rite of passage to a work model in dramatherapy
  - Processes of change and development, and transitional stages that can employ plans of action or rites of passage used in this study, such as for women with a different common denominator (women who are not mothers)
  - Populations that are at different transitional stages
  - Change in professional identity and professional training programs

## Epilogue

As one of the participants wrote at the end of the workshop

I was reminded of the film, 'Calendar Girls'. We are these calendar girls. I have never yet experienced a workshop with such nudity. We have a very important assignment so we strip for it.

There are military fraternities and childhood fraternities, and I was lucky to be a member of the Friday society that dropped everything for a few hours together in a small room and strip. The outside world ceases, and we bring here the pulp and confusion of our lives, our pasts. We sit in a circle, dance, extend our hands, weave threads of empathy, understanding and containment. Yes, our hearts reach out for each other. I know what happens here, in this room, this place of purity, for the truth comes from such a deep place, so slowly, drop by drop; it's not always tasty but it's worth while. I know it will help.

I leave here emptier, calmer. I feel lucky, successful in finding the right proportions. What can a donkey, a chicken, a rag, do, a bundle on a string, a mirror, lattices, mask and magician. So without being embarrassed, I face you and take from here fragments of strength and power and mainly friends, and the sentence, 'Fear is a place where there is no love'.

Someone said to me, "Even rocks break sometimes". For years I wandered around with this poem by Dalia Rabikovitch (an Israeli poetess) in my mind. My experiences in this group encouraged my rock to begin to shatter after twenty years.

Today I feel I haven't shattered. I allowed the threatening chunk of rock within me to melt.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Open questions to the participants at the conclusion of the workshop**

1. How do you see yourself today compared to before the workshop?
2. What events were meaningful for you during the workshop?
3. What things did you discover, were honed or were validated regarding yourself and your life?
4. What role did the group and its members fill for you?
5. What role did the group totem pole play for you and how did you cope with this during its construction?
6. What occurs to you when you look at the puppets and what reminds you of the process of creating a personal puppet show and its presentation to the participants?
7. You shared your thoughts and experiences during the workshop. How would you define the process you experienced therein?
8. Did the experience in the group affect your life, and how?
9. What do you plan to do in the coming year?

#### **A year later**

10. What events occurred in your life this year that you consider important?
11. How do you see yourself today compared to the end of the workshop?
12. Do you think these events are connected to the experiences in the workshop, and how?
13. What do you plan to do in the near future?