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Mental health benefits for victims of gender violence and patients with mental disorders of critically reflecting upon violent relationships and experiencing positive ones

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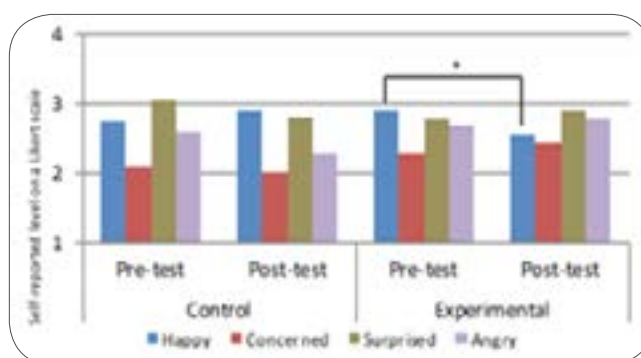
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Statement of the Problem: When human relationships are characterized by violence, negative mental health outcomes are particularly prevalent. Contrarily, quality human relationships can be lifesaving. Interventions that support critical reflection upon memories of violent sexual-affective relationships to reconstruct their associated emotions, as well as programs in mental health care that foster positive social relations between patients can be successful to prevent future victimization in the case of gender violence and promote emotional wellbeing in patients with serious mental disorders.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: In study 1, we examined among a sample of young females (n = 32) whether reading a scientific text about love modified autobiographical memories of violent sexual-affective relationships and increased the rejection of such relationships. This group was compared with a control group (n = 31). Memory reports and Memory Quality Questionnaires were employed. In study 2, we investigated with interviews and focus groups the mental health benefits in 15 patients of participating in a program that fosters positive social relations.

Findings: Study 1: Compared with controls, the experimental group in the study of gender violence had significantly stronger critical memories and an improvement in emotions that supported rejecting violent relationships.

Study 2: Patients with mental health disorders reported that friendships created in the community program helped them with feeling better emotionally. **Conclusion & Significance:** Programs that enhance critical reflection about violent sexual-affective relationships, as well as a community approach in mental health care that supports friendship can improve the emotional wellbeing of participants.



Biography

Sandra Racionero-Plaza is full professor of sociology at the University of Barcelona and Doctor Honoris Causa from West University of Timișoara. She has been the main researcher for three research projects funded by the EC under the European Research Framework Programme, achieving all of them high scientific, social, and political impact. One of these projects, INCLUD-ED, was the only study in SSHH which was included in the list of the ten success stories of the European Research Framework Programme. She has published her research in numerous journals in the fields of research methodology, health, and social sciences among others.

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