

DEPARTMENT
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SAPIENZA
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*Beyond the spiral of violence: the
proposal of an interpretative framework
to develop women's agency*

Lesson 6

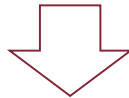
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The main purpose



To show you the proposal of an interpretative framework of the paths to follow to accompany women out of the spiral of violence, and to gain a new agency

A) An interpretative model of the processes that erode women resilience due to the experience of domestic violence or IPV



Beyond the spiral of violence

B) An interpretative model that accompany womens out of the spiral of violence



A model to build up women's agency

Data and methods



a) 10 years experience as scientific responsible of the Observatory on Women victim of violence and their children of the District/Province of Rome (2005-2015), during which:

- Implementation an Informative system supporting the network of services supporting women victim of violence
- Data collection
- Collaboration with the professionals working in the Anti-violence Centres (Cav)
- Training sessions at the International Women's House (Casa Internazionale delle donne) in Rome
- In-depth interviews to the manager of the Cav of the Province of Rome

Data and methods (2)



a) On-field research based on 3 case studies regarding 1 public and 2 private Anti-violence centres

1. Cav of the Municipality of Milan – Help to sexual and domestic violence Foundation IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico

2. Cav «Cerchi d'Acqua» s.c.a.r.l. Onlus

3. Shelter House for Mistreated - Milano (Cadmi)

A) An interpretative model of the processes that erode women resilience due to the experience of domestic violence or IPV

**Modello FCRE Functionings and Capacities
Corrosion, Resilience and Empowerment**

Beyond the «spiral of violence» of Lenore Walker



4 stages of the cycle:

- Tension activation
- Mistreatment (physical/psychological)
- Reconciliation (so called *honey moon*)
- Latency (relative calm)

- Difficulty to exit the spiral of violence
- Factors that may confuse women about the possibility for their partners to change → sense of fault, self-condamn
- Justification of the perpetrator of the violence

But there is much more than that...



The spiral of violence may act because it starts a number of further processes that consolidate the unbalanced condition of power in the couple → the so-called *corrosive disadvantages*

- The spiral of violence is feeded by:
 - **Capabilities corrosion** → corrosive disadvantages (Wolff, de-Shalit)
 - **Corrosion of *fertile functionings*** (Wolff, de-Shalit)
 - **Resilience corrosion**
 - **Adaptive behaviours** to the violent situation (McCubbin e Patterson)

The Central Capabilities Approach of Martha Nussbaum (1997, 2000, 2012)



M.N. distinguishes 3 types of *capabilities*:

- a) «basic capabilities» (fundamental capacities) innate capacities that need to be developed
- b) «internal capabilities» (internal capacities), personal condition sufficient to put in action a specific function
- c) «combined capabilities»** (associated capacities) combining internal capacities to external conditions that enable a person to do a specific action

M.N. identifies 10 central combined capabilities – open list –

The 10 central capabilities and their connection to VaW

Women suffering from violence have lost most of the capacities strictly related to human dignity:

- a) **Bodily integrity** → due to the continuous physical aggressions of the violent perpetrator, and because of the limited space left to free movement (control) → this implies also a nullified decision space about sexuality (sexual intercourse with partner)
- b) **Physical and Psychological health** → post-traumatic diseases correlated to continuous mistreatments, disabling stress conditions, suicide instigation, loss of working days → loss of independence

The 10 central capabilities and their connection to VaW

c) Emotions → impossibility to express one's own emotions and feeling without being afraid of the partner's possible reaction → anxiety, fear, de-individuation → one feels just what is fine with the partner and not for oneself.

d) Practical reason → limitation in freedom to choose and to decide on one's own life on the basis of an autonomous decision about what is good for oneself

e) Affiliation → limitations in establishing/maintaining relationships with other persons without being under control – impossibility to express freely one's own ideas

The strength of this perspective

- It leads the discourse about violence on a political and social field, drawing the governments attention to their responsibilities to create the condition to make the central capabilities freely work

Art. 3 Constitution of the Italian Republic

The Republic has the responsibility to remove the economical and social obstacles that limit freedom and equality of citizens, preventing their full development as a human being, as well as the concrete participation of all workers to the political, economical, and social organization of the Country.

È compito della Repubblica rimuovere gli ostacoli di ordine economico e sociale, che, limitando di fatto la libertà e l'eguaglianza dei cittadini, impediscono il pieno sviluppo della persona umana e l'effettiva partecipazione di tutti i lavoratori all'organizzazione politica, economica e sociale del Paese.

...continues

- It overcomes the **language of rights**, often considered as representative of a system of value almost exclusively close to the Western culture,
- **The language of capabilities is much more universal and neutral**, respecting diversity all over the world
- The approach of M.Nussbaum challenges the cultural differences at the level of international law that are often recalled to justify reservations denying equal opportunities for women and men (Nussbaum, 1997; 2000)

The main question to consider...

- a) **What women are able to be and to do in their own country?**
- b) **What are the opportunities that are available for them in order to freely choose what is good for them?**

Hence, when we are thinking about the situation of women suffering from violence, we should ask...

- ...what are the opportunities that women have in a specific society to reach their central capabilities?
- ...which tools are available to them to freely choose what being and doing for themselves?

**The point is that in many cases, even when there are laws and norms, they are just on paper, and may be difficult for women to get equal opportunities with men
(Nussbaum, 1997; 2000)**

Now focusing on our model...

Does Intimate Partner Violence constitute a risk factor activating a resilience process or on the contrary, is resilience a dynamic condition that can be modified by both protective and corrosive factors, increasing or decreasing women's capacity to cope with adverse condition of their lives?

Resilience is an adaptive process to different situations, so that it changes along with the evolution of a violent intimate relationship?

...continues

The *empowerment* process is a result, contributing to *strengthen resilience* or, in alternative, is it a *fertile functioning* that potentiate the capacities eroded by the experience of intimate partner/domestic violence?

At which stage of the process directed to re-build self-esteem, to give value to self, to gain a new autonomous space of self-determination, it may be posed?

The model FCRE

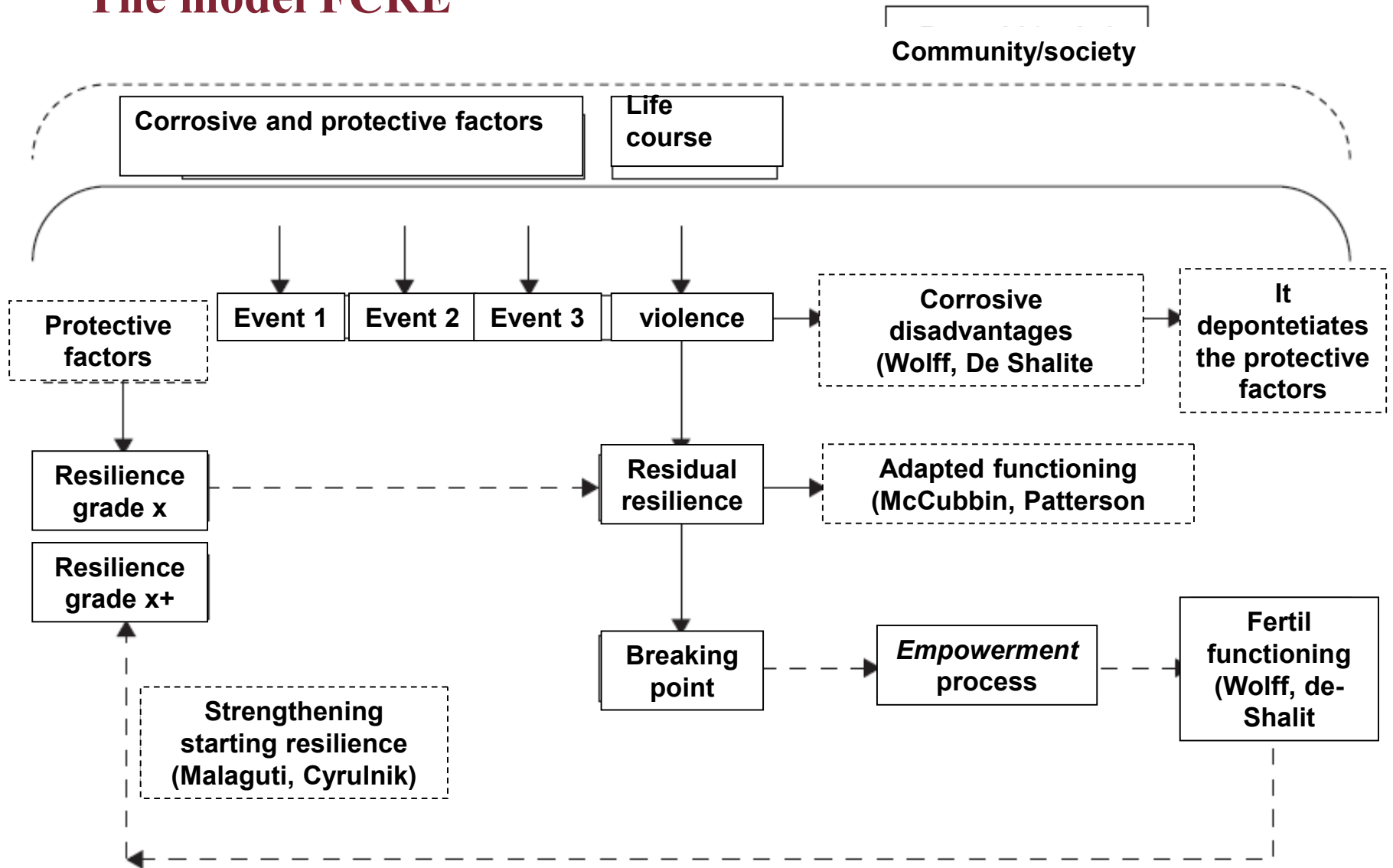


FIG. 1. Diagramma della proposta di *framework* interpretativo di riferimento.

Model advantages

- It can be used to study violence and mistreatments against women occurring also in contexts different from the violent one.

Limits

- It needs further empirical evidences related to its operationalization

**B) The model that accompany womens out
of the spiral of violence**

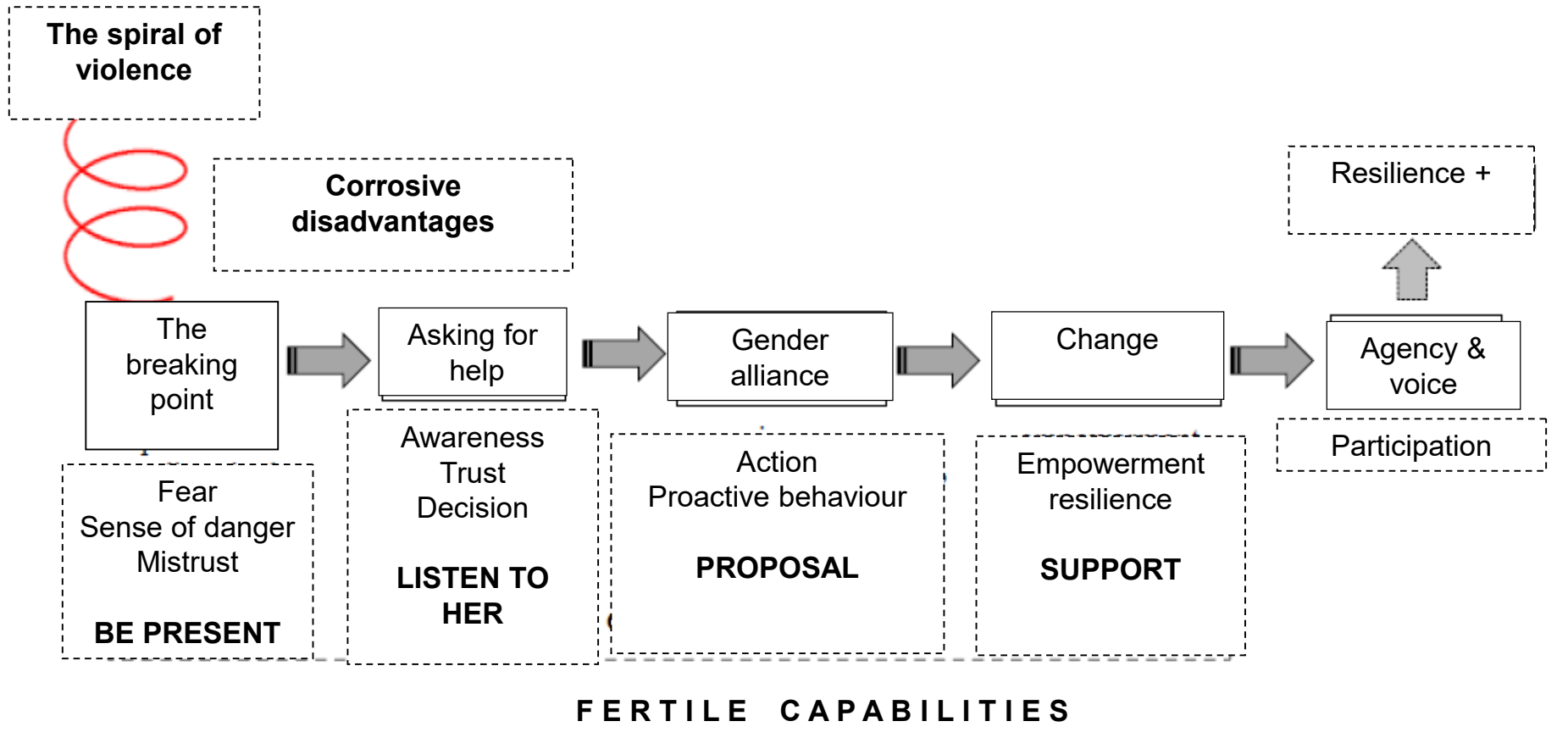
A model to favour women's agency

The model application

- In studies on methodologies to accompany women out of the spiral of violence, in conditions particularly challenging (e.g. lockdown) as well as in evaluation studies
- In the training courses directed to the professionals working in the Anti-violence centres/shelters to provide them, at a major level of abstraction, with a processual framework including all the staged of change of women along with the intervention strategies adopted by the centres
- In the team-work, to evaluate *in itinere* the services offered to women who are getting out of domestic/intimate violence

The model WAB-M

Diagram 1 – The process to exit from the spiral of violence – WAB-M Women’s Agency Building Model



Strenght points

- It offers an integrated perspective for the study of the process of getting out from violence, through the following actions:
 - *identifying the different phases the woman in need must pass through in getting out of the spiral of violence*
 - *representation of the fundamental steps to follow in accompanying women through a proposal of change*

Limits

- the need of further investigation and empirical applications to validate the operationalization of the model

Thank you!

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