

Education in counselling and in psychotherapy with an accent to scenic symbolic work

Gabriela Slaninova^{1a}, Lucie Vokalova¹

¹University of Hradec Kralove, Faculty of Education, Department of Social Pedagogy, Rokitanskeho 62, 50003, Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic

Abstract. The article is focused on education in counselling and psychotherapy with an accent to scenic symbolic work. The focus of this work with a client can be found in Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor. Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor (henceforth PBSP) is one of the therapeutic systems which address the “P” of an individual in a distinctive way. Also, it could be classified as a holistic approach. PBSP defines five basic needs – place, nurturance, support, protection and limits. One of its basic principles is the principle of the shape and the counter shape. Every emotion/action of the client is a “shape” and it requires an adequate response from outside – an adequate “counter shape”. The satisfaction of a need happens in five steps – energy, action, interaction and meaning. According to PBSP, every individual carries an inborn image of what s/he needs. In the real world, our needs are not satisfied in the ideal way, the degree of frustration and the personality of the individual are important.

Keywords: Psychotherapy; counselling; scenic symbolic work; Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor

1 Introduction

Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor (henceforth PBSP) is a psychotherapeutic approach originally from the USA, currently widespread in Europe (e.g. Nederlands Vereniging for Pesso Psychotherapie, Pesso Vereinigung Switzerland/Germany), [11]. Further in the Netherlands - Pesso Psychotherapy Association, since 1988 PBSP cooperation with RINO Noord-Holland (Institution for postgraduate education in system of mental health care – Mental Health Care), [7]. There is currently the 4th long-term and self-experience training in PBSP taking place in the Czech Republic. It consists of theoretical, practical and self-experience parts, group sessions in recommended range (therapeutic structures, in order to get a view and self-experience), PBSP format training “one to one“ and group study of

^a Corresponding author: gabriela.slaninova@uhk.cz

sources, group leadership, training, structure management with a client, intervention meetings and individual supervision. Training is completed with a final evaluation. The PBSP's contribution was presented in the year 2013 on the 4th International Psychotherapeutic Symposium at FSS MU in Brno, and in the year 2014 at INPSY organized by Psychological Institute FFMU in Brno. PBSP's conferences are held annually in Prague with the participation of lectures from the Czech Republic and also abroad (Lucká, Koblíček, Šiříněk, Winnette, Bachg). PBSP has its association based in Prague.

PBSP is one of the therapeutic systems which address the "I" of an individual in a distinctive way. Also, it could be classified as a holistic approach. Vašina, [14] says that in this approach "the body is perceived as a screen on which inner experience is displayed in the form of gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, posture...".

We can find following basic principles in PBSP – one of its basic principles is the principle of the shape and counter shape. Every emotion/action of the client is a "shape" and it requires an adequate response from outside – an adequate "counter shape". The satisfaction of needs (see below) happens in five steps:

- Energy
- Action
- Interaction
- Meaning

According to Pesso and Boyden-Pesso [8] every individual carries an inborn image of what s/he needs. In the real world, our basic developmental needs are not satisfied in the ideal way, the degree of frustration and the personality of the individual are important. The needs can be briefly described as follows. BPSP defines five needs of:

- Place
- Nurturance
- Protection
- Support
- Limits

Basic developmental needs of an individual have to be satisfied to different degrees. During the early stages of development, these needs are satisfied by the individual's relatives – the satisfaction is concrete at first and later it happens in the symbolic dimension. If the satisfaction is adequate, the individual becomes capable of satisfying his/her own needs, [8,9].

The process of satisfaction of needs becomes an experience recorded in the individual's memory. PBSP assumes that this record (map) predetermines the experience of an individual in various situations. This is a result of the natural tendency of human beings to repeat what s/he has already experienced – in PBSP this is called repeating of the old map. The goal of PBSP is to create an alternative to the old map in the form of a new map, which, beside other things, represents the possibility sphere. In relation to self-concept, this consists in increasing the awareness of one's own self-efficacy and decreasing the number of discrepancies between the self and the true self. , [7, 10].

Figures from the past and the present are represented by so-called symbols. The group members used to represent the real and the ideal figures, which helped to reveal the internalized messages from the client's life story (the scene then a there). At present, objects are used instead, especially to represent the real figures from client's life and in individual therapy and the attention is focused on ideal figures. This enables the client to focus not on the past, which was often painful, but on the symbolic satisfaction of needs by the ideal figures (see below). The client works with the "old map", observing the figures connected with his/her judgements concerning him/her and the world and s/he discovers his/her inner self. The expressed deficit in basic needs of the client is treated immediately using a corrective symbolic interaction – the corrective emotional experience balances out

the negative past experience. “Concrete and symbolic experience of e.g. the longed for physical contact is assimilated in the present bodily consciousness so that it becomes a counterweight to the negative bodily memory tracks created in the past”, [11]. The new perception and integration consists in integrating the client’s experience in his/her current self-image, expectations and feelings and it helps to use this new map instead of the old one. Also, the client can modify his/he behaviour so that it is in harmony with the relationships and the outer world. , [11].

2 Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the study

The aim of the research was to describe education in PBSP and to find out how PBSP therapists use scenic symbolic work for their clients and with what effect.

2.2 Research questions

The study allows to answer the following question:

- How do PBSP’s therapists use scenic symbolic work when working with a client and with what effect?

2.3 Research methods

Considering the research objectives, the qualitative research strategy was chosen. The method that we chose to obtain data was a semi-structures interview. This technique was chosen since it leaves a certain space for creativity and possible addition of sub questions. , [2, 6].

A method of interview was used for data collecting; the data analysis was done with the use elements of Spradley’s Domains theory. The domain by Spradley’s theory is represented by symbolic category, including at least two other categories. A semantic relationship represents features of the domains. Spradley [13] points to the fact that semantic relationships do not have to be part of common manifestation of informants.

Spradley [13] divides semantic relationship of two types:

- Universal semantic relationships – are present and repeated in every culture, include all bellow mentions types of relations:

- strict inclusion – X is a kind of Y
- spatial – X is a place in Y, X is part of Y
- cause-effect – X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y
- rationale - X is a reason for doing Y
- location for action - X is a place for doing Y
- function – X is used for Y
- means-end – X is a way to do Y
- sequence – X is a step (stage) in Y
- attributes – X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y

- Informant’s expressed semantic relationships – sometimes it is not easy to identify these relationships during ordinary speech, therefore it is necessary to have feedback control.

We have conducted interviews with 8 experienced PBSP’s therapists – 4 women and 4 men. We set criteria within the interviews, including the length of practice, education in PBSP:

- Long-term experience in the field of psychotherapy (at least 10years)
- Long-term self-experience training in PBSP completed at least 5 ago
- Practicing of PBSP's method in psychotherapeutic practice (for at least 5 years)
- Continuous education in PBSP – participation at PBSP's workshops, seminars and conferences in the Czech Republic and abroad

3 Findings

3.1. Education in PBSP

We found out, that the education of therapists and counsellors who use the scenic symbolic work with the client is performed by the form of a long-term training in PBSP. The therapists use scenic symbolic work according to the actual capacity of their clients to differ the symbolic from real and abilities of specific active imagination. The focus and effectivity of this work is in utilisation of so called stages, that represent a part of psychotherapeutic session – structures, where the client perceives sensomotoric experiences with ideal symbolic figures and he/she acquires how to be seen, accepted in relationships with significant others. The expressed deficit in basic needs of the client is treated immediately using a corrective symbolic interaction – the corrective emotional experience balances out the negative past experience. Interaction with significant others has been conveyed on a symbolic level which enables a compliance of experience of personal characteristics with personal guidelines. Effectivity of this approach is obvious – the experience is stored into the long term memory as far as the client is concerned and is able to use.

3.2. The use of PBSP for scenic symbolic work

Our following focus was to find out how PBSP therapists use scenic symbolic work for their clients and with what effect. We found out three domains:

- Domain 1 Micro-tracking as a way of awareness of attitudes and emotional accompaniment towards self.

Inner domain structure:

- voices
- a witness

Elements of inner domain structure are in relationship with the overarching concept as a part. Thus X is a part of Y.

Micro-tracking is used for externalization of attitudes and emotions of itself, [8]. These can be unconscious possibly unsuspected. The objective of micro-tracking is not only their externalization but also the most accurate designation. PBSP's therapists use two figures – a witness (who sees emotions) and a voice (which externalizes thoughts, attitudes and strategies of the client).

- PBSP's interventions have become the most abundant domain – domain 2.

Inner structure consists of elements, principles, procedures and methods which are used by PBSP therapists. In the broadest sense we can perceive the previous domain as a subdomain of this existing one, in terms of fundamental importance of micro-tracking for successful therapy initiation, later on successful direction in a therapeutic process and especially in a diagnostic potential that we have paid a special attention.

Inner domain structure is seen in the following relationship of an overarching term – X is a kind of Y:

- Possibility sphere

- Pilot
- Place holders
- Fragmented figures
- Positive figures
- Reversals, bookmarks
- Ideal figures
- Antidote
- PBSP theory
- Good timing
- Client's activation
- Narration
- Extrastructural dialog
- Work with holes in roles

Generally at the start of the PBSP therapy, thus not until the very structure, the therapist creates a possibility sphere for the client. At the same time it is customary that PBSP's therapists provide basic theoretical information about the method. Interviewed experts consider education as the basis. PBSP therapists also use an extrastructural dialog, [12]. Education is put into the introductory part by some PBSP's therapists; others educate the client continuously according to its capacity for scenic-symbolic work and possibly during a therapy session – structure.

- Domain 3 Process in PBSP as a creative approach to self-concept change.

Inner domain structure is related to the domain's name as a way or a mean for effective changes in the field of self-concept. Expressed by equation X is a way to do Y:

- Primarily positive relationship environment
- Acceptance of ideal figures
- Scenic symbolic reality
- Experience and reflection of emotions
- Designation of all parts of self
- Embedding and perception fixation

Creating a new record in the memory (using a new alternative experience by the client itself in interaction with symbolic ideal parents) takes place during fully conscious client's work, deep in memories of his/her own personal history, during ritual therapeutic session - structure. Symbolic experience (on psychomotor level – emotional, physical and intellectual) becomes an equivalent alternative to realistically perceived client's history. , [11]. The structure is such a particular equivalent of an individual's major life experience with close persons, as is so important and complex for the client that corrects or adds the incomplete picture of self. Mediated interaction with significant others represent a distinctive way allowing experience in accordance with personal characteristics with personal guidelines (consistency between self-assessment and personal standards for the presence of positive emotions), [5].

4 Conclusion

The education of therapists and counsellors who use the scenic symbolic work with the client is performed by the form of a long-term training in PBSP.

The field of intervention that is used by PBSP's therapists while working with clients indicates the potential of this method for changes in self-perception. Clients who show anxiety and depressive symptomatology in the context of discrepancy in self-concept or based on deficits in meeting the basic developmental needs come mostly with a common request to get a relief from difficulties, [1,5]. Another part of clients closely specify feelings

of inferiority, inability, low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity, blame, decrease of energy, inability to experience pleasure and feelings of worthlessness to control own life, [3,4 and 5]. The inability to maintain and to build interpersonal relationships and the tendency to require saturation of basic developmental needs from replacement subjects (e.g. partners) are very often presented. For the changes in self-concept is mainly evident a symbolic experience of saturation of basic developmental needs which takes place in scenic-symbolic space of a therapeutic session – structure. Regarding experience of a new version of interaction with close persons (parental persons, significant others) on emotional, cognitive and physical level. As far as neurological level is concerned these experiences and knowledge from the interaction of symbolic ideal figures are integrated as alternative records of implicit emotional and also explicit procedural memory.

We would mainly point to the open sphere of possibilities that represents a safe place for exploring of own self-concept. Furthermore it is important to mention the technique of micro-tracking, which is very similar and requires precision – objective of the voice character is to externalize the client's convictions and strategies, the character of witness pertains to see and to name client's emotions in the context. We consider the integration of client and symbolic ideal figures mutually in direct speech for very important.

In the conclusion we are entitled to say based on the findings of the results that the therapeutic approach of Pesso Boyden Psychomotor System can specifically regulate changes in the self-concept towards increasing of self-evaluation, self-acceptance, self-confidence and correction of a picture of oneself and self-regulation in the sense of congruence of perception and manners. Interaction with significant others has been conveyed on a symbolic level which enables a compliance of experience of personal characteristics with personal guidelines.

Acknowledgment

This article reports results of the project Specific research realized under the name “Využití scénicko-symbolické práce v poradenské praxi (s akcentem k tématu Holes in Roles)” [“The use of scenic symbolic work in counselling practice (with an accent to topic of holes in roles)”] at the Faculty of Education at the University of Hradec Králové in 2015.

References

1. Balcar, K., Úvod do studia psychologie osobnosti [Introduction to study psychology of personality]. Chrudim: MACH, (1991).
2. Hendl, J., Kvalitativní výzkum: základní teorie, metody a aplikace [Qualitative research: basic theory, methods and applications]. Praha: Portál, (2008).
3. Higgins, E., T., Development of self-regulatory and self-evaluative processes: Cost, benefits, and trade-offs. In M., R. Gunnar & L., A. Sroufe (Eds.), Self-processes in development: The Minnesota Symposium on Child Development. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, (1991).
4. Higgins, E. T., Self-Discrepancy theory: What patterns of self-beliefs cause people to suffer? In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology. New York: Academic Press, (1989).
5. Higgins, E. T., Self-Discrepancy: A Theory Relating Self and Affect. Psychological Review, 94, 319-340, (1987).
6. Miovský, M., Kvalitativní přístup a metody v psychologickém výzkumu [Qualitative approach and methods in psychological research]. Praha: Grada, (2006).
7. Perquin, L., A specialization in Psychotherapy. In A. Pesso & L. Perquin (Eds.), *Capita selecta Pesso Boyden system psychomotor therapy*. Amsterdam: [S.N.], (1997).

8. Pesso, A., Introduction to Pesso System/Psychomotor. Available from: <http://www.pbsp.com>, (1984).
9. Pesso, A., Working with Suicidal Clients. In A. Pesso & Crandell, J. (Eds.). *Moving Psychotherapy. Theory and application of Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor therapy*. Cambridge: Brookline Books, (1991).
10. Pesso, A., In Ch. Caldwell *Getting in Touch: A Guide to Body-Centered Therapies*. Wheaton: Publishing House, (1997).
11. Pesso, A., Boyden-Pesso, D., & Vrtbovská, P., Úvod do Pesso Boyden system psychomotor [Introduction to Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor]. Tišnov: SCAN, (2009).
12. Šiřínek, J., Pesso Boyden Psychomotorická Terapie v individuální, klinicko-psychologické praxi [Pesso Boyden Psychomotor System in individual clinical psychological practice]. *Psychosom.* 12, 8-24, (2014).
13. Spradley, J., P., *The Ethnographic Interview*. United States: Wadsworth Group/Thomas Learning, (1979).
14. Vašina, L., *Klinická psychologie a somatická psychoterapie [Clinical Psychology and Somatic Psychotherapy]*. Brno: Neptun, (2002).