Person-Centred Therapy and Psychodynamics: Irreconcilable differences?

Grant Bardsley
MSc. Counselling Psychology
Keele University
• Embeddeness of psychodynamics in PCT
• PC objections to PD
• Contemporary PDT and my own experiences
• Potential extension of PCT repertoire
PD influence on emergence of PCT

Otto Rank

“...especially are roots of client-centered therapy to be found in the therapy of Rank...”

(Rogers 1951:4, in de Carvalho 1999)
... Roger's articulation of personality change was substantially in accord with the goals and even metapsychological language of the then-prevailing psychoanalytical world: “greater integration; less internal conflict, more energy utilizable for effective living; change in behaviour away from behaviour generally regarded as immature and toward behaviour regarded as mature” (p95.). Indeed, these phrases reflect concepts embedded in both classical psychoanalysis (e.g., Freud’s “structural” and “hydraulic” models) and object relations theory (e.g., Winnicot’s notions of independence).

(Farber 2007: 290)
Embeddedness of PD in PCT

- Introjection
- Denial
- Projection
- Splitting
- Transference
- Regard complex

Edge of awareness

Mearns and Thorne propose a reconfiguration of the notion of the self to include subconsciously or edge of awareness material, even that which is not yet accepted by the person as part of their self-concept.

(Mearns & Thorne 2000: 175)
Overlap of PCT/PDT interventions

Troemel-Ploetz's linguistic analysis:

*The linguistic properties of these (person-centred) interventions are just those that can be shown in effective interpreting, restructuring, and paradoxical interventions of other (psychodynamic) forms of psychotherapy.*

(1980: 256)
'Spontaneous response' from Brodley

...why do you have the suspicion of yourself? [manifest content]...What I am speculating is... you had an illness that was out of your control...and it was dangerous for you. ... And what is a natural human feeling under these circumstances?...It's wanting to have control... And so, you started scrutinizing yourself...wishing that... you could have some control instead of just being this...victim...Do you think that might...be the origin?...You weren't trying to do anything to yourself, you were trying to get control [latent content]. (1987:appendix B)
Objections to PDT

- Directive
- Client disempowerment – therapist as expert.
- Externalization of locus of evaluation
- *Unbridled power...without possibility of contradiction* (Mearns & Thorne 2000:176)
Contemporary PDT

Relational, interpersonal, intersubjective approaches from Kohut, Gill & Stolorow (Kahn 1996):

- Importance of empathy
- Interpretations as offerings
- Subject to rejection by client
- Therapist fallibility
- Insight as arrived at rather than imposed
Personal experience

- Interpretation
- Dreamwork
- Transference
Extension of PCT repertoire?

Client autonomy paramount but *Functional non-directivity* (Mearns & Thorne 2000) may allow extension to range of interventions:

Jeri (client): Okay, Dave – tell me what I should do – should I take this job or not?

Dave (therapist): Take it. Ring them now before they change their minds. It's a great job.

Jeri [pauses]:...No, it doesn't feel right...I don't know what's wrong about it yet...but it's not right.

(Mearns & Thorne 2000: 191)
A place in PCT for...

- Empathic interpretation linking past to present
- Consideration of transference phenomena
- Dreamwork
References


