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A background graphic consisting of a dense network of small, light-colored dots connected by thin, light-colored lines, creating a complex, interconnected web-like structure.

Actualisation Beyond the Individual: Learning in self- organising systems

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Actualising Tendency

A tendency 'to actualize, maintain and enhance the experiencing organism'

(Rogers, 1951, p.487)

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- Growth and learning tendency
- Constructive, individualised and socialised

Individuals and Groups

Individuals and Groups

Context – things can support or interfere with the actualising process

- Environment, biological processes, social context

Belongingness

- Social Baseline Theory (James Coan)
- Belongingness Theory (Baumeister and Leary)

Person-Centred Theory

- Need for positive regard

Incongruence

- Self-Concept

Incongruence

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- "Why this division? How is it that a man (sic) can be consciously struggling toward one goal, while his whole organic direction is at cross-purposes with this?" (Rogers, 1963, p.15)

Incongruence


- Self-Concept
- "Why this division? How is it that a man (sic) can be consciously struggling toward one goal, while his whole organic direction is at cross-purposes with this?" (Rogers, 1963, p.15)
- Bifurcation of the Actualising Tendency
- Actualisation of the Self Concept - "Self Actualisation"

Self Actualisation

- "The satisfaction or fulfillment of the actualizing tendency has become bifurcated into incompatible behavioural systems, of which one may be dominant at one moment, and the other dominant at another moment, but at a continual cost of strain and inefficiency." (Rogers, 1978, p. 248)

Self Actualisation

- "The satisfaction or fulfillment of the actualizing tendency has become bifurcated into incompatible behavioural systems, of which one may be dominant at one moment, and the other dominant at another moment, but at a continual cost of strain and inefficiency." (Rogers, 1978, p. 248)

 Is this not a contradiction?

Self Actualisation

- Competing actualising processes (Van Belle, 1980)

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- Social mediation (Mearns & Thorne, 2000)
- Self-defense potential (Merry, 2003)

"Organism-like" Groups

- Groups of organisms can themselves have organism-like properties
- See this clearly in some species, e.g. ant colonies
- Also (differently) in humans



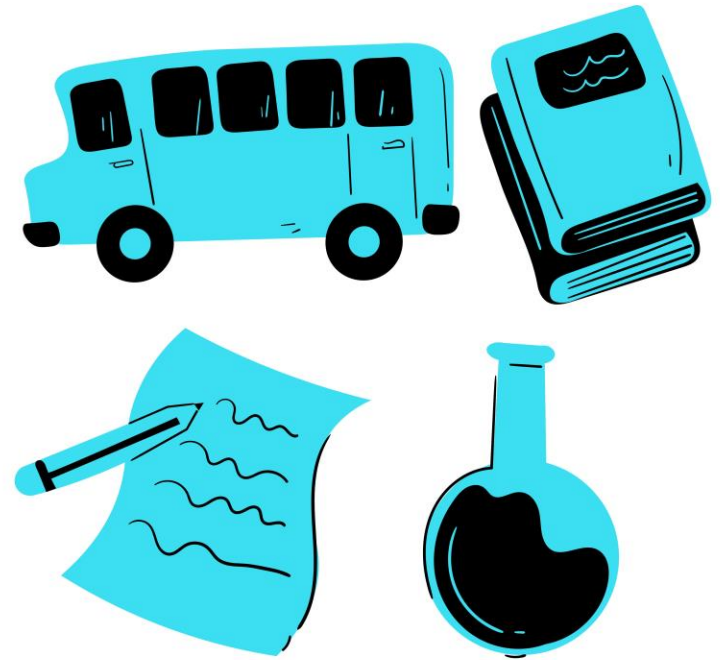
"Organism-like" Groups

- Families



"Organism-like" Groups

- Families
- Schools or Universities



"Organism-like" Groups

- Families
- Schools or Universities
- Therapy training groups
- Workplaces
- Social movements
- Nation states

Group concepts in person-centred theory

(New theory)

- "Group Concept" analogous to the Self-Concept
- Group congruence or incongruence: the degree to which a group's explicit self-understanding, norms and stated values remain open to, and accurately informed by, the lived experience of its members and its effects on its environment.
- Communal conditions of worth

Group concepts in person-centred theory

- Self concepts can help group coherence
- Similarly the need for positive regard

Group concepts in person-centred theory

- 'Group Actualisation' - maintenance and enhancement of the group
- Tension between individual and group actualising processes:
 - groups reward some experiences and expressions while discouraging others;
 - individuals internalise group-level conditions of worth;
 - belonging becomes conditional on maintaining the group-concept;
 - the group then appears coherent precisely because its members have learned not to symbolise certain experiences.

So in some circumstances, group actualisation can promote individual incongruence.

Group concepts in person-centred theory

Conditions which might describe more open or more rigid and defensive groups

- Defensive groups: rigid roles, suppressed dissent, performative belonging, shame, anxiety.
- Open groups: feedback, dissent, responsiveness, unconditional positive regard between members

Group concepts in person-centred theory

A fully functioning group might be one that:

- remains open to the experience of its members;
- can receive disconfirming feedback without defensiveness;
- allows differentiation without expulsion;
- updates its group-concept in response to lived reality;
- supports both belonging and autonomy;
- recognises its effects on wider ecological and social systems.

Summary

- Actualising Tendency Concept
- 'Bifurcation' to explain incongruence – inconsistent
- Human nature as individual and communal
- Proposed new person-centred theory

Some questions

- Issues of power in relation to group concept – hierarchical and more equal groups?
- What conditions might promote group congruence?
- Might we be able to explore some of these ideas with group survey data, e.g. European Social Survey, World Values Survey, PISA etc?
- For therapists or trainee therapists: might thinking about these ideas make any difference to how you view or interact with clients?

Thank you

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