

Group Therapy for Psychoses, Edited by Ivan Urlić and Manuel González de Chávez (Routledge, New York, 2019), a Book Review

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Abstract

The book "Group Therapy for Psychoses", Edited by Ivan Urlić and Manuel González de Chávez (Routledge Eds, New York, 2019) explores the use and effectiveness of group therapies in helping people suffering from psychosis. It is divided into two parts. The first part describes the historic course and creation of groups with members suffering from psychosis. The second part reveals the different approaches and methodologies applied in group work with psychosis. The synthesis of this book reflects the multidimensional contemporary view regarding the management of psychosis. Moreover, it provides clinicians with a variety of models for group therapy and enhances further development of this interesting field.

The book "Group Therapy for Psychoses", Edited by Ivan Urlić and Manuel González de Chávez (Routledge, New York, 2019) compiles the most important clinical and research studies regarding the application of group psychotherapeutic interventions in the management of psychosis, thus expanding the theoretical knowledge and hopefully promoting a more efficient utilization of the group therapeutic tool. It reflects the innovative approach and synthesis of the editors Ivan Urlić, neuropsychiatrist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist, group analyst and Professor of Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine at the Medical School, University of Split, Croatia and Manuel González de Chávez, President of the foundation for research and Treatment of Schizophrenia in Madrid, Spain and former Professor of Psychiatry at the Complutense University of Madrid.

A variety of themes are analyzed and methods applicable in everyday clinical practice by mental health professionals both in in- and out- patient institutes are suggested and thoroughly described in order to achieve better regulation, stabilization, resilience and empowerment of people suffering from psychosis.

This collection consists of the work of scientists from different countries and provides the reader with useful updated therapeutic instruments. Furthermore, it enhances research, creativity and evolution in a field powerfully increasing lately.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part presents an overview of the history, the adversities and the therapeutic effectiveness of group psychotherapies for people suffering from psychosis, whereas the second one is dedicated to the various approaches and different institutions where psychotherapeutic groups for patients with psychosis are created and functioning.

In more details, the first part of the book contains four chapters.

In the first chapter entitled 'History of group psychotherapy for patients with psychosis' Manuel González de Chávez describes the frustrating seek for group psychotherapies resulting in socialization, encouragement and humanistic support of patients with psychosis during the twentieth century lead-

ing to the current better understanding of the disease and the amelioration of the patients' struggle against isolation, depression, resignation, stigmatization and also the enhancement of their interpersonal and family relationships.

The second chapter is written by the group of authors Lina Tost, Dani Tost, Cecilio Hernández και Manuel González de Chávez and its title is 'Limitations of nomothetic procedures for group psychotherapy in psychosis: A gamified approach to Yalom's therapeutic factors Q-sort'. The difficulty of fulfilling the criteria for randomized clinical studies, resulting in the lack of clinical studies concerning the psychodynamic group psychotherapies, created the impression that they are far from effective and resulted to their exclusion from the therapeutic choices. Nowadays, the alternative idiographic approach of the psychotherapeutic research is considered equal to the biomedical research methodology; it offers to the patients the possibility of reciprocal evaluation of the therapy effectiveness and benefits.

In the third chapter entitled 'Therapeutic factors in group psychotherapy for patients diagnosed with psychosis' Ignacio García Cabeza presents the therapeutic factors contributing to the effectiveness of group psychotherapy for people suffering from psychosis as they are demonstrated by a plethora of research studies that consider the group an effective therapeutic tool.

The last chapter of the first part is written by Manuel González de Chávez and concerns the 'Creation of a therapy group for persons with psychotic experiences'. The creation of a therapeutic group for people with lived psychotic experience in institutions of mental health care is governed by important rules regarding the setting and the way of functioning. The selection of patients and the overall preparation aiming at the functioning of the group in harmony and cooperation with the institution where the group is conducted represent necessary prerequisites for the success of the group.

In the second, more extended part of the book, the applied techniques of the creation of psychotherapeutic groups for people suffering from psychosis of various specialized theoretical approaches in institutions and organisms is deployed.

A detailed description of the initial inspiration, the history, and the challenges unfolds, while their therapeutic results are analyzed.

The second part starts with the chapter '*How group psychotherapy works for people suffering from psychosis*' written by Manuel González de Chávez. The group constitutes a combination of intersubjectivities and perceived interobjectivities of its different members at the same time, becoming thus an objective reality by itself. The group interactions contribute to the communication between its members as well as the self-disclosure of psychotic experiences. In consequence, reciprocal mirror reactions and deepening of the insight on the others occur among the group members, leading to the acceptance of the subjectivity of the psychotic experiences and the integration of their new, more autonomous, realistic and stable identity.

In the next, sixth chapter of the book, the authors Maurizio Peciccia, Ivan Urlić and Simone Donnari describe the '*Transference and countertransference features in a psychological approach to patients with psychosis. The group-dynamic considerations*'. The transference phenomena and the group dynamics in groups of patients with psychosis are studied. The group – through its constant care to the primordial affective needs of the members – represents a safe basis enabling the patients to approach wealthier and more authentic self-representations and to reach further integration.

In the seventh chapter Ivan Urlić confronts the difficult issue of '*Group psychotherapy in the acute inpatient unit*'. The approach of the patient suffering from acute psychotic episodes is extremely demanding. The understanding of the psychopathology of patients with psychosis and the offering of better treatment in the acute state is crucial for the later-on cooperation between patients, therapeutic team and hospital. The recognition of the patients' needs and fears in conjunction with the group experience enhances the working alliance and supports the ability for social re-adjustment.

The eight chapter is written by the group of authors Marjeta Blinc Pesek, Bojana Avgustin Avčín, Nada Perovšek Šolinc, και Kaja Medved, and its title is '*Short- and long-term group*

psychotherapy for outpatients suffering from psychosis'. It describes the application of a modification of group therapy in outpatients suffering from psychosis. The short and intermediate groups aim at the cognitive training, family support and psychosocial interventions suitable for the onset of psychosis. They ameliorate the subjective quality of life, the compliance with the pharmaceutical treatment, and the social functioning. On the other hand, the long-term groups enhance the members' insight for their illness, the reduction of their stigmatization feelings, their confidence and independence within the society.

Branka Restek-Petrović and Nataša Orešković-Krezler in the ninth chapter entitled '*Intimacy, love and sexuality in the psychodynamic group psychotherapy for patients with psychosis*' broach important issues, neglected perhaps because of their difficulty of management. The creation of couples in psychodynamic groups is considered to be defensive and discouraged. Nevertheless, if this happens, the processing adapted by the conductor is important in order to contribute to a potentially reconstructive social process.

The tenth chapter entitled '*The ontology and phenomenology of dreaming in psychosis. A group-analytic approach with a neuropsychological perspective*' is written by Anastassios Koukis. Group analysis of patients suffering from psychosis within heterogeneous group-analytic groups is capable of contributing to the restoration of the patients' ability to dream, thus enhancing decidedly to their treatment. The dreams of the members who suffer from psychosis, like the dreams of neurotic patients, follow and express, in Foulkes's, Freud's and Klein's terms, the evolution of the group from the primordial/pre-oedipal or (for the author) ontological level (oral-sadistic level and paranoid-schizoid position) to the final current, oedipal, or phenomenological (according to the writer) level (depressive position). Even though the dreams of people with psychosis have not the emotional quality, the symbolism and the reconstructive imagination (phenomenology) observed in the dreams of people with neurosis, they have nevertheless the basic structure of the dream as far as they occur, like the neurotics' dreams, as a representation of the fantasy of the primary scene (ontology). Under these con-

ditions the group analytic group, by expressing the evolution of the primal scene from an archaic fantasy to the idea of a mature parental couple as represented by the union of the group and the conductor, enables patients with psychosis to partly have dreams in which the primal scene (ontology) is depicted with sufficient symbolization and imaginative power (phenomenology), thus reinstating their ability of dreaming. It is also of great interest the way in which the defective phenomenology of the psychotic dreaming is connected with some dysfunctions of the brain activities in a neuropsychological approach as the relevant questions posed by the author in the closure of this chapter show. Questions arise for the potential dysfunction of some brain regions and their possible correlation to the psychotic expression of the dream as well as their reconstruction through the reestablishment of the ability of patients to dream due to the therapeutic impact of the group-analytic group.

The eleventh chapter, written by Slađana Štrkalj-Ivezić is entitled '*Psychoeducation as a specific group psychotherapy for patients with schizophrenia*'. Psychoeducation as a psychotherapeutic process combines educational elements, support and sociotherapeutic approaches. Insight into illness is connected with a low level of internalized stigma and prevents any negative transformation of the self. Patients are helped to regain confidence to their ability to succeed in leading a productive and satisfactory life.

In the twelfth chapter under the title '*Groups in therapeutic communities for people suffering from psychosis*' David Kennard explains that this type of group intervention functions as a situation of interaction and experiential learning. The members' problems are visible and open for discussion, feedback and suggestions, while change becomes possible through practice. This powerful therapeutic tool offers unique opportunities for therapeutic learning.

Tija Žarković Palijan, Ana Magerle, Sonja Petković and Editha Vučić, in the chapter entitled '*The development and some specific features of group psychotherapeutic treatment in forensic units*' discuss the application of group psychotherapies with specific features in the treatment of crime offenders suffering from mental disorders. Forensic psychotherapy represents a new

discipline demanding various tasks and responsibilities from the conductor, who should remain balanced and objective.

In the fourteenth chapter under the title '*Groups in early intervention services. Group psychotherapy for patients with psychotic disorders in an early intervention programme (RIPEPP)*'; Branka Restek-Petrović, Majda Grah, Anamarija Bogović Djaković and Nina Mayer express the view that group psychodynamic psychotherapy is the method of choice for the therapeutic approach of young people suffering from psychosis and their families. This early intervention programme offers the ability to work on self-consolidation and defense mechanisms, resulting in the development of object relations and the improvement of socialization.

In the fifteenth chapter entitled '*Group cognitive behavioural therapy for people experiencing psychosis*' Tania Lecomte describes the utility of the CBTp method in helping people suffering from psychosis during their recovery period to gain empowerment and coping strategies in order to deal with their mental illness, move forward and achieve new goals.

The next chapter is written by Val Jackson and bears the title '*Multi-family groups and psychosis. A systemic approach*'. Workshops with families using structured exercises in a systemic pattern are described. This model enables the strengthening of the knowledge and the self-confidence of family members, the expansion and deepening of family relationships and the ability to design and work for the future.

In the chapter entitled '*A Moroccan multi-family group. An example of cooperation with members of a minority group*', Margreet de Pater and Truus van den Brink describe a demanding venture, realized with the cooperation of the City, mental health professionals and members of the Moroccan minority in Holland aiming at the preparation of valuable ways for the management of the Moroccan children's mental health, while considering at the same time both their cultural identity and their integration difficulties in the host country.

Chapter eighteen entitled '*The value of peer leadership in groups for persons with psychosis. A programme for recovery and community health*' is written by Larry Davidson, Anthony J. Pavlo, Thomas Styron, Susan Mao, Ruth Firmin, Richard Youins, Maria Edwards and Chyrell Bellamy. It seems that

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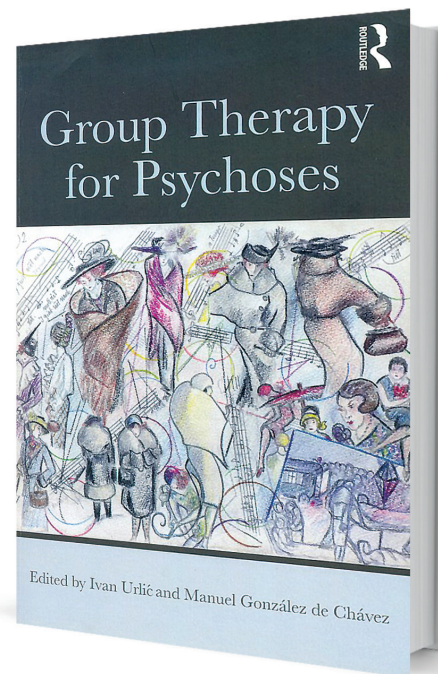
the presence of a peer facilitator in the leadership of a psychotherapeutic group constitutes a recovery model; it offers hope, accumulated experience and knowledge for the ability of survival and the concurrent overcoming of mental disease. Moreover, the paradigm of an everyday life rescued from the traumatic conditions experienced in poverty, unemployment, exposure to violence and prejudice is presented.

Olga Runciman writes the chapter under the title 'Voice-hearing groups. Empowering ourselves – The Hearing Voices Movement'. It concerns self-help groups based on the guidance of the group by a more-experienced voice-hearer.

Sheila Grandison in the last chapter entitled 'The group in arts therapies. An additional therapeutic medium for working with psychosis' suggests the deployment of arts as a therapeutic tool. The understanding of the corrective and transforming function of the arts is expanded and the research confirms their role in the support of mental health. Especially when working with traumatized individuals, whose ability of word expression and meaningful linking capacity is severely impaired, the contribution of the arts is significant. The group, through the art, helps the members to organize, to give meaning and to integrate the experience.

The epilogue is written by the editors Manuel González de Chávez and Ivan Urlić under the title 'Epilogue. The future of group psychotherapy for psychosis'. Through this book the reader voyages over a century following the birth, development and foundation of group psychotherapies for psychoses from the initial reluctance to the eventual acceptance, development and application of these specific therapies and the observation and register of their advantages and therapeutic results as well. The existence and possibility of attending such psychotherapeutic programs – in parallel with pharmaceutical treatment – by patients suffering from psychosis indicates quality of psychiatric care and offers the possibility for better understanding and management of symptoms within a social health context.

In this important collective work Ivan Urlić and Manuel González de Chávez listened and monitored in international level the contemporary pulse and the therapeutic request of people suffering from psychosis, their caregivers and the



community, assembling and classifying different relevant group psychotherapeutic considerations and clinical approaches like those presented by the participating authors.

It seems that world widely there is a tendency to use more and more the group psychotherapeutic interventions in order to achieve sufficiently successful management of psychosis. In conclusion, in this veritably remarkable book, innovative, interesting and inspiring theoretical views and clinical applications of group psychotherapeutic interventions in psychotic disorders are described. The continuous utilization of these procedures and their evolutionary enrichment with novel ideas and good successful practices derived from the scientific research and knowledge as well as the creative corroboration among mental health professionals, patients and their family caregivers may become landmarks to the increasingly effective therapeutic management of psychoses.

It is reasonably expected to incorporate group psychotherapies in the therapeutic interventions for psychosis in an individualized manner answering to the specific needs of each patient. The existence and development of group psychotherapeutic programs with the participation of people suffering from psychosis indicates a high quality of psychiatric care in a country.