Understanding Alliance Ruptures: What Do They Look Like?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

at Massey University, Palmerston North,

New Zealand.

Sara Elisabeth Rosenblatt

2013
Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
ABSTRACT

The Therapeutic Alliance (TA) has a significant impact on treatment outcome. 'Ruptures' – rifts in the client-therapist relationship – threaten TA and carry a number of subsequent risks, including: further drops in TA, interrupted therapeutic progress and a greater likelihood of unilateral client termination. Successfully recognizing a rupture may not only prevent these risks, but can provide a target for therapeutic work, and, when accompanied by successful repair, may produce TA levels that surpass pre-rupture levels. Despite knowledge that ruptures are common to treatment, research has not addressed whether therapists are skilled at recognizing and understanding ruptures. This question is thwarted by the more foundational gap in knowledge: there is no description of what a therapist should be looking to recognize.

The present research identifies a sampling of rupture indicators (72 items) using an emotion language context. These indicators are stimuli in a card-sorting task completed by two groups of participants: a New Zealand sample (N=33) and a native Japanese one (N=37). Similarity data derived from this task were analyzed using multidimensional scaling (MDS) to produce a unified three-dimensional model that sufficiently represents both samples.

The identified dimensions on which rupture indicators are likely to vary are: Interaction Type (i.e. are the indicators a withdrawal or confrontational type), Derivation of Meaning (i.e. is the indicator biologically based or does it convey a socially constructed meaning?), and Subject Focus (is the indicator directed at the other, interpersonal, or at the self, intrapersonal). Also identified in the model were 12 different clusters, or kinds, of rupture indicators (e.g. physically aggressive, verbally defiant, submissive speech content, physiological distress).

Conclusions are drawn from this analysis and recommendations follow on ways to further validate this model. Also discussed are applications of this model to enhance training programs for rupture recognition, to improve recognition ability in practice and also to facilitate consistent rupture recognition strategies for research purposes. This may precipitate future research exploring correlations between rupture incidence rates, and presentation types according to therapist and client variables.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisors, Dr. Shane Harvey and Dr. Don Baken. They helped me tremendously through this whole process: from brainstorming for ideas; through helping develop realistic and feasible goals; to being patient and supportive with all of my questions, unanticipated doubts and confusion. Without their guidance and reassurance, this project would not have come together in a way of which I’m proud. Dr. David Bimler was effectively my third supervisor, a service for which I’m grateful. He not only conducted the statistical analyses to interpret my data, but he also offered considerable time and energy to ensure I was able to understand and give justice to his efforts.

I also want to thank the students who participated in Emotion Practice In Research (EPIC) for their contribution in this project. Through our meetings, I gained a valuable research support community with mutual interests, and left nearly every meeting feeling motivated and energized to continue.

As most researchers know, it is not an easy task to recruit participants. I have been lucky to have a wonderful group of friends and colleagues, without whom I would not have been able to beg enough people to donate the time involved. In my efforts to reach the Japanese community, I was put in touch with Hiroyasu Tsumakura. Hiro spent a substantial amount of time and effort to prepare quality translations for my research, and also to help with recruitment strategies. Several staff members at International Pacific College, members of the Japanese Association of Palmerston North and others in the local Japanese community also generously donated their time to participate in this research.

Finally, I want to express my love and appreciation for my family. My brother Michael taught me that it’s not success if you don’t have fun getting there. My brother Jaime helped instill my competitive drive. My mom always made sure I had the encouragement and the capability to do what I needed to do, and my dad, who was awesome and only wanting me to do what makes me happy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3D</td>
<td>Three-dimensional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>American Psychological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM</td>
<td>Agnew Relationship Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPD</td>
<td>Borderline personality disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANCORR</td>
<td>Canonical correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBT</td>
<td>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOPA</td>
<td>Grouping, opposites, partitioning, adding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>Hierarchical cluster analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>International Pacific College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPCHEC</td>
<td>International Pacific College Human Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANOVA</td>
<td>Multivariate analysis of variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDS</td>
<td>Multi-dimensional scaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSS</td>
<td>Method of successive sorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUHEC</td>
<td>Massey University Human Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSQ</td>
<td>Post Session Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R/R</td>
<td>Rupture and repair [cycle]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRS</td>
<td>Session Rating Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Therapeutic alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLDP</td>
<td>Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAI</td>
<td>Working Alliance Inventory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Alliance

Ruptures

The Present Research

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The Alliance

What is the Therapeutic Alliance?

Components and structure.

Measuring the Alliance

Common measurement tools.

Intra-dyad differences.

Alliance and Outcome

Alliance and Process

Implications of alliance as a process variable.

Alliance and Early Termination

Therapist Variables Influencing Alliance Quality

Correlations with Professional Variables

Implications for Training

Ruptures

A Longitudinal Model of TA

Therapeutic Value

Process

Alliance building

Treatment focus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roadblocks to Therapeutic Change</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes and Precipitants</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution (Means of Repair)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupture Profile Correlations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates of identification</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy in identification</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural factors hindering recognition</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic hurdles</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Techniques</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Training and Experience</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Missing Link</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emotion Connection</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions: From Feeling to Expressing</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with Emotions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and Recognising Emotions</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Is Emotion Recognition So Difficult?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Advantage of an Emotion-Based Definition of Ruptures</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Research Needs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifics of This Research</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER THREE

Method | 43

| Item Generation | 43 |
| Approach | 43 |
| Databases, Terms and Parameters of Search | 44 |
| Article Inclusion Criteria | 45 |
| The Search Results | 45 |
| Web of Science | 45 |
| Academic Search Premier | 45 |
| Article representativeness | 45 |
| Supplemental Searches | 46 |
| Article Review | 46 |
Iterative reflection of domain coverage ................................................................................... 47
Descriptor List Narrowing .............................................................................................. 47
First iteration ........................................................................................................................ 47
Second iteration ................................................................................................................ 48
Third iteration .................................................................................................................... 48
Fourth iteration ................................................................................................................ 48
Expert consensus .............................................................................................................. 49

Objective Mapping Task .................................................................................................. 50
Participants ........................................................................................................................ 50
New Zealand .................................................................................................................. 50
Japanese .......................................................................................................................... 50
Materials .......................................................................................................................... 50
New Zealand .................................................................................................................. 50
Japanese .......................................................................................................................... 51
Translations ..................................................................................................................... 51
Procedure ........................................................................................................................ 52
New Zealand .................................................................................................................. 52
Japanese .......................................................................................................................... 53

Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 53
Data Transformation ....................................................................................................... 53
Map Development and Verification ............................................................................... 54
Map Stability .................................................................................................................. 55

CHAPTER FOUR
Results ........................................................................................................................ 56

Statistical Analysis ............................................................................................................ 56
The Raw Data .................................................................................................................. 56
Data Analysis .................................................................................................................. 57
Hierarchical cluster analysis .......................................................................................... 58
Multi-dimensional scaling ............................................................................................... 60
Consistency Between Samples ....................................................................................... 61
Canonical correlation (CANCORR) ................................................................................ 62
Procrustes distance ......................................................................................................... 63
Cophenetic correlation .................................................................................................... 63
Combined Solution ......................................................................................................... 64
Reliability .......................................................................................................................... 64

Map Interpretation .......................................................................................................... 64
Clusters ............................................................................................................................. 65
Dimensions ....................................................................................................................... 68
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion ................................................................................................................... 76

Important Findings ......................................................................................................... 76

The Importance of Quality Indicators ........................................................................... 76

A Model of Rupture ......................................................................................................... 76

Clustering ....................................................................................................................... 77

Dimensions ...................................................................................................................... 79

Model incongruities ........................................................................................................... 81

Implications and Applications of This Research ........................................................... 82

Training, Supervision and Professional Development .................................................. 83

Multicultural competency ............................................................................................... 84

Professional Practice ....................................................................................................... 85

Research Applications ..................................................................................................... 87

Limitations ....................................................................................................................... 87

Item Selection .................................................................................................................. 88

Item Validation ................................................................................................................ 90

Sorting Data Limitations ............................................................................................... 91

External Validity Concerns ............................................................................................. 93

Future Directions ............................................................................................................ 95

Validation ......................................................................................................................... 95

Avenues for Future Research .......................................................................................... 95

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 97

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................... 99

APPENDICES ............................................................................................................. 108
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Item Generation References ................................................................. 109
APPENDIX B: Item List ................................................................................................ 113
APPENDIX C: New Zealand Participant Packets ...................................................... 115
APPENDIX D: Pre-translated Revisions for Japanese Packets ............................... 122
APPENDIX E: Japanese Participant Packets ............................................................. 129
APPENDIX F: Low-Risk Ethics Confirmation, New Zealand Sample ..................... 137
APPENDIX G: Low-Risk Ethics Confirmation, Japanese Sample ............................. 138
APPENDIX H: New Zealand Sample Dendrogram .................................................... 139
APPENDIX I: Japanese Sample Dendrogram ............................................................ 141
APPENDIX J: Dimensional Loadings ........................................................................ 143
APPENDIX K: Item Proximities to Origin ................................................................. 146
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1
Cluster Composition and Meaning ................................................................. 66

Table 2
Cluster Comparisons Between Solutions ......................................................... 68

Table 3
Dimension Labels .......................................................................................... 70

Table 4
Clusters Grouped by Octant .......................................................................... 73
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.
Combined sample dendrogram with preliminary clustering descriptions....................... 60

Figure 2.
Scree plot of stress; versus dimensionality for Japanese, New Zealand and combined
samples: ....................................................................................................................................... 62

Figure 3.
Visual representation of the Withdrawal (X+) hemisphere, Octants 1-4, including major
clustering..................................................................................................................................... 71

Figure 4.
Visual representation of Confrontational (X-) hemisphere, Octants 5-8, including major
clustering..................................................................................................................................... 72