

AGORATHERAPY

bringing gestalt therapy into the squares*

David Cebrián Tarrasón, PhD - Creativity Manager

Gestalt Therapy Institute of Castellón (Spain)

Initial hypothesis

Given the current situation of liquid society (Bauman, 2000; Spagnuolo Lobb, 2013), adopting Paul Goodman's political angle (Francesetti, 2012), **agoratherapy** (therapy in open space) is proposed, this is, bringing gestalt interventions, into open places, either in nature or a quiet area of a city park. The aim is to **increase own awareness and self-support of the assistants**, especially who are developing **egotism contact interruptions** as an open space eases to contact with the surprises of the environment.

Data creation

The activity began on November 5, 2013 and 9 sessions were conducted (Figure 1). On October 3, 2014 the activity is returned and 23 sessions more were held until 3 June 2015 (Figure 2). Subsequently, the sessions have continued developing, but are not considered for this research.

In total, **42 people (23 women and 19 men) were attendees of the sessions aged between 24 and 60 years**. 60% of these attendees had never done group or individual therapy.

Agoratherapy is conducted in a central square in the city of Castellon (Spain) on Tuesdays at 20h. Sessions are held on a weekly basis and with a duration of 1h-1h30 each, except on some specific weeks and during the summer season.

The proposed development for each session is based on ground rules of Feder (2008), considering that once logged in, if someone on the street is about to participate is welcomed and being able to join after explaining the initiative and having told how the person is. Moreover, any participant is free to log out when he or she decides.

Methods

This study is a qualitative exploration study, undertaken following psychotherapeutic intervention. The framework for the study has a group phenomenological approach using a group member-checking process. The rationale for the choice of this method is phenomenological-hermeneutic approach where, through narrative language, meanings and significances are sought, in order to understand people and phenomena in their lived experience.

Thus, at the end of each session each participant brings one summary sentence and the participant only comes back if he or she has received a therapeutic benefit.

1st year

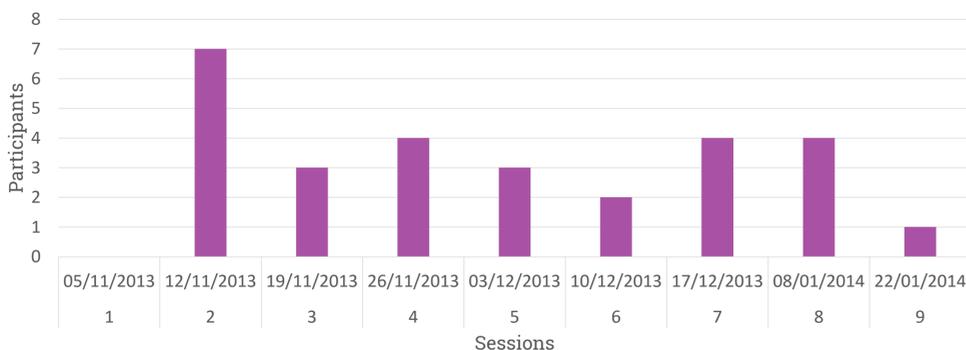


Figure 1: Participants per agoratherapeutic session in the first year.



Figure 4: Group of Agoratherapy (Picture date: 7/11/14)



Figure 3: At the beginning (Picture date: 5/11/13)

Results

The first year (figure 1) was an observation of the phenomenological field into the square (Figure 3) while one to six participants came. **It was observed both an anomie and social anesthesia** (Vázquez, 2009) as it was received little contact by the people walking down the street (the vast majority of people were not turned to me and some people even didn't make eye contact with me).

The second year (figure 2), a circle from 6 to 18 people takes the initially proposed development (Figure 4). **This group is consolidated** creating a Facebook group on November 26, 2014 and another in whatsapp (October 14, 2014). They use these groups to communicate, debate and discuss, and nowadays those remain open and functional.

16 different people walking down the street participated spontaneously, relying mainly how they were, returning only one of them to other sessions. At the session 10 and 16, some different foreign people also participated although they did not understand Spanish.

Regarding the comments by the assistants, all the feedback brought from them at the end of the sessions has been positive. One participant who began attending in October 2014 said that had found it **"a social awakening has been as agoratherapy brought to me a new way to have social relationships, from a sincere listening, authentically sharing and being able to let myself go completely."**

2nd year

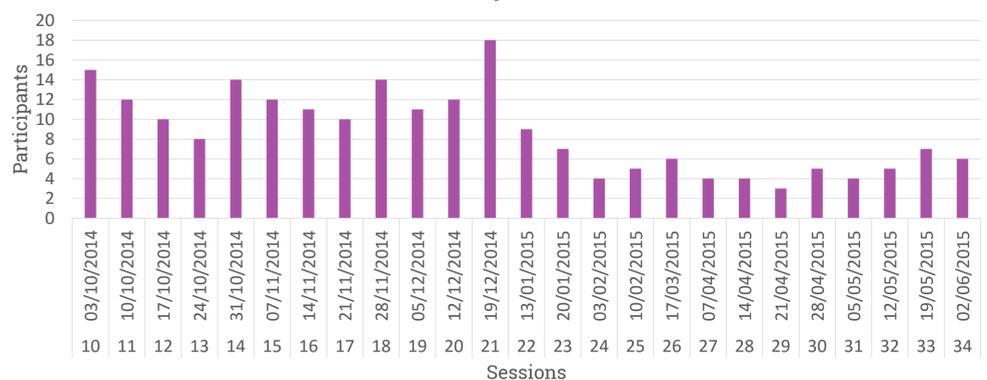


Figure 2: Participants per agoratherapeutic session in the second year.

Discussion in the context of current research literature

Francesetti (2012), based in some thoughts of Paul Goodman (1960), expresses that **it is important to find ways to make psychotherapy accessible to more people**. Agoratherapy is one way to it and the experience assures it.

Spagnuolo Lobb (2003) tell us that **"the freer our senses are, the more we can openly perceive the field, the more we are able to adjust creatively"**. Thus, when a therapy is developed into a square, the field is essential as our senses are open to any unpredictable situation that could happen. Under this circumstances, **the contact is something really unique and could be understood that is the creative integration of experience** (Bloom, 2011).

Finally, without arriving to the complex experience of Copsy (2013), **agoratherapy brings an open space to practice psychotherapy in an alternative and different way**.

*Acknowledgements

I thank the Young Researchers Award Subcommittee who has evaluated this project and suggests to develop it into a more structured research project. This has provided insight and expertise that greatly assists the research.

Contact Info: David Cebrián Tarrasón – Castellón (SPAIN) david@derpilgrim.es +34 601 023 703