

Considerations on the relationship between two manual therapy methodologies and body image

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Introduction

The construction of identity is determined by awareness and understanding of one's own body.(Campana e Tavares, 2009), Body Image is likely to be considered as the mental representation of body identity, which is, in turn, structured and influenced by physiological, psychological, cultural and social aspects (Schilder, 1999). Certain specific methods and techniques of body approach seek to understand the person beyond physio pathological aspects, mainly focusing the individual that inhabits the body under treatment. People usually go under manual therapy in order to fight stress, anxiety, body pains and posture adjustments The purpose of this study is to present two manual therapy methodologies which see the individual in a more integrated way and reflect upon the role of those methodologies in the Body Image development process. "Muscle and Joint Chains and GDS (Godelieve Denys Struyf) Techniques" and "Motor Coordination" were chosen, according to theoretical knowledge and professional experience.

Methodology

This study follows two steps: 1. Presentation of the history, concepts and principles of the techniques known as "Muscle and Joint Chains and GDS Techniques" and "Motor Coordination". 2. Considerations on the relationship between these two manual therapy approaches in the Body Image development process.

Muscle and Joint Chains and GDS Techniques. The Muscle and Joint Chains and GDS Techniques method was developed by Godelieve Denys-Struyf in the 60s and 70s in Belgium. Godelieve graduated in Fine Arts and Physiotherapy and later specialized in Osteopathy. She believed that each body has a different reaction to the same pathology and did not quite agree with the "prescriptions" given by the academic community at the time. So, she understood that each pathology is associated to the individual's global drive or

impulse. This drive determines chosen or preferred gestures which, in turn, would build a particular psycho corporal typology. Based on these body attitudes, she suggested five human typologies (body drawings) characterized according to the osteomuscular arrangement of human bodies. These typologies were not permanent neither related to value aspects, as they simply depict certain moments in a person's life. Godelieve also highlighted that there are no good or bad techniques but proper and individually adapted prescriptions. In order to do so, professional training to LOOK at the other's way, movement and attitude is mandatory. The expression "Muscle Chains" refers to the joint and muscle system followed by the aponeurosis in an organized way which unifies the body from head to toe. These chains establish psychoneuromuscular groups that behave according to each one's body, gesture and posture expression. When these groups lose flexibility, permanent muscular tensions are created which force the conjunctive tissue and damage the joints. In other words, according to GDS, thoughts and emotions get the body to promptly react to an action or expression even when it is hidden, and, thus, developing tension lines throughout the body. These lines will be used to categorize a typology. So, the body is a means of communication, and its gesture and posture messages must be interpreted by the look of the therapist, who establishes both verbal and non-verbal dialogs. (Denys-Struyf, 1995). This is a prophylactic and curative treatment method which involves posture reading, the way and gesture that the body uses to set the limits for the psychomotor and physiological area which will define the proper approach for a particular motor system. Its goal is to allow the body to function pleasantly, taking each one's typology into consideration. It uses a variety of techniques such as bone and joint adjustments, moulding, accommodation of muscle tensions (accordage), procedures which include isometric contractions and stretching, deep (mechanic) or shallow (energetic) massages, and mainly reflective, dynamic and psychobehavioral massages which lead to the construction of a closer to the actual body image. Finally, the GDS approach facilitates the use of psycho corporal preventive strategies and contributes for the cure of the "sick" organism.

Motor Coordination (S. Piret and M.M.Béziers)

This method was created in France, also in the 60s and 70s, when there was a transition from the body – machine concept (body and mind dichotomy) to living body. In the 60s, the body culture became a trend in Europe. Body care industry, biometrics, refined diets and plastic surgery had great development. In physiotherapy, exercises which can free “stuck” mechanisms, that is, muscle tensions which limit or even block specific movement extension, are created. However, it was bound to fail due to the lack of an integrated view of the body as a place of exchange and relation. On the other hand, psychologists and psychiatrists failed to notice that some behavioral problems or attitudes presented by their patients could be partially explained by a faulty motor coordination and thus, required an approach that would go beyond psychic or pharmacological treatment. Therefore, it was easy to understand that motor disabilities implied knowledge in other areas besides human anatomy and physiology. So, the motor coordination method is created. It emphasizes the importance of the patient’s participation in the therapeutic process so that he can change the image he has of his own body and, therefore, adding his own contribution to finding a new way of using it. According to Piret and Béziers (1992), after collecting results of studies done with babies, there is a movement, included in a variety of normal movements, considered a basic movement in human anatomy, which she called “Fundamental Movement”. She presents as a principle of Motor Coordination that essential movements (such as grabbing and walking) are based on the rolling over and straightening up of the body, which are parts of the movement (tension, orientation, complexity, balance and unit) and an essentially human characteristic. In order to stand still, proper balance is much more necessary than great muscular strength, because for the balance to happen spontaneously, placing the muscles in an appropriate position is more important than strengthening them up. This method involves manual skin and muscular stimulation procedures, overlaid elliptical movements supported by the biomechanics of the fitting and sliding of spherical joint elements and positioning which places the muscles in a length status right for the balance function. Repetition of movement (either active or passive) is another important aspect, when the goal is to stimulate a more accurate sensorial image of the movement. After this, the movement emerges spontaneously, with low energetic waste and more harmonious.

Considerations on the relationship between the “Muscle and Joint Chains and GDS Techniques” and “Motor Coordination” in the Body Image development process.

This study tries to summarize two body intervention methodologies which focus on the subject. Their perspective stimulates a better knowledge of an individual’s own body and the perception of its limits and possibilities. People who have experienced these body practices describe a better awareness of themselves and realize they are their own body guides. A study done in patients with non-specific low back pain showed persistent improvement after a 6-month treatment with GDS (Arribas et al, 2009). The professional’s ability to LOOK, welcome and recognize the subjectivity within human specificity provides the subsidy to establish an individualized way of TOUCHING. This opens communication in a tonic language eliciting sensations and perceptions which will make up new representations. The success of these methodologies is closely related to a specific and varied group of professionals who act directly on the body, mainly on the movement area, providing countless benefits to every aspect the individual belongs to.

Conclusion

An individualized approach and teacher’s/therapist’s training are important aspects that should be taken under consideration while searching for the development of body image in a context of body practices which use the previously mentioned approaches.

References

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