

The Therapeutic Alliance in a
Triadic-Bilingual Setting

Olga Boss-Prieto, Yves de Roten, Abdelhak Elghezouani,
Alexandra Madera, Jean-Nicolas Despland
University of Lausanne

The therapeutic alliance is now considered as the most important element to determine the therapy success. However, not much is known about its nature and role in a cross-cultural frame. Our objective is to study the alliance in a triadic intercultural frame where there is a therapist and a client who speak a different language but are able to interact thanks to an interpreter who translates and plays the role of cultural mediator. We developed a questionnaire given to all participants (therapists, clients, and interpreters) which measures: (1) the different representations associated with the notion of therapeutic alliance, and (2) the level of alliance between each participant). The clients (N = 9) were all from Albanese origin. The results showed that the 3 groups give a different meaning to the alliance: based on relationship and ethics for the therapists; based more on assistance and change for the clients. The interpreter stands in-between. Moreover, therapists tend to evaluate the level of their alliance differently than the clients and the interpreters. The communication and dynamics of the dialogue in the triadic and bilingual setting are discussed as well as the mediating role of the interpreter in the construction of the alliance in a cross-cultural frame.

Key words: Alliance; cross-cultural communication; triade