Question 3

The role and function of the therapist in FOC and SOC

First order thinking therapists describe what is happening inside the system from an outside position as an objective. They can create change within a system, thus they assess and attempt to change behaviour relative to their background and then diagnoses and tries to restore the health. The therapist is seen as the expert and he/she sets the goals as mandated by his/her theory and treats the “real” problem, which is the underlying structural flow or faulty processes built into the system (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). In contrast to this, the second order therapist is part of that which is to be observed and hence may only describe the combination of observing systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

An example of a first order approach to therapy is the structural approach. Structural therapy relies on action, here the therapist uses himself/herself as a tool to transform the family system (Baron, 2007). The therapist’s place in the family is that of one who is to modify and repair rather than that of an educator (Minuchin, 1974). A therapist’s behaviour becomes part of the context of the family system, thus the therapist and the family join to form a new, therapeutic system which now sets the context for the behaviour of its members (Minuchin, 1974).

Second order cybernetics focuses on the creation of the contexts of their worlds. The context that is being focused on is change, rather than change on the system. The therapists create a context where change can occur, but cannot change the people. An example of a second order approach to therapy is a therapeutic framework. Understanding and rapport between a client and therapist reaches a summit when reality is negotiated that highlights resources and choices for solutions (Baron, 2007). An awareness of the influence of bodily states for conversation is important in many second-order approaches. Bodily states that show care, trust, sharing and active listening promote reflection as a process of meaning reconstruction (Griffith & Griffith, 1992).

Thus in first order approaches the therapists seek to make objective observations, assess, diagnose and then intervene. A prediction from this theory is made and tested by making another isolated objective observation (Baron, 2007). The second order
reciprocal change in themselves, families would not be pathological (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

Question 5

Critical ethical concerns raised about FOC and SOC

First order cybernetics concerning ethical practice has a list of do’s and don’ts. Confidentiality and contracting are some of the ethical principles that are raised by the ethical code of conduct. Therapists are expected to live and practice by these ethical codes and not to exceed the bounds. First order approaches are known for their categorisation of healthy and unhealthy. It is necessary to avoid pathologising the family by use of labels. First order approaches run the risk of assuming that they have access to the truth (Baron, 2007). By labelling, one might fall into the trap to stereotype, which is exceeding the bounds of the ethical code.

Second order cybernetics concerning ethical practice deals a lot with language and conversation. It relies heavily on language as a means of therapy. Therefor the choice of words are very important as well as the use of gender stereotypes. To appreciate and respect one another are greatly valued. Here the therapist’s reflections of self-behaviour are emphasised. Second order ethics values participation and the meaning of it. We must reflect on our impact of our actions on others, and acknowledge our differences. This allows us to behave ethical towards each other which can lead to maintaining a good relationship and help us realise the consequences of our actions.

Therefore second order ethics is more inclusive (PYC4808, 2017). We have to strain against labelling people in a specific manner. The ethical approach from second order cybernetics aims to have ecological awareness. It emphasises the use of ethical language and how to use this language to create a reality.