

seminars: the building of the therapeutic relationship

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ABSTRACT

This communication presents a specialized preventive career intervention – the Career Self-Management Seminar (CSMS; Taveira et al., 2006 – forms A and B). This intervention is designed to promote graduate students' transition to Master and PHD degrees and/or to the work-market (version A); or the transition to a new job/position of PHD students and research grant holders (version B). Both versions of the Seminar promote self-reflection and career exploration, and life-career decision-making and planning skills, in the context of group career counselling sessions. Special attention is given to the building of a solid and strong helping relationship. The focus on the quality of the counselling relationship is associated with the concern of promoting positive emotional attachment, necessary to students engagement in career exploration and change; and also, to prevent clients' drop out from the seminar (e.g., Taveira, 1997; Gelsø & Cárter, 1985; Horvath & Luborsky, 1993; Horvath, 2000). The clients' reactions to CSMS helping relationship were measured twice along the intervention A with 36 undergraduates (12 men and 24 women, mean age=22,89), and the intervention B with 34 graduates (11 men and 23 women, mean age=27,59). The quality of the career exploration process of participants was also observed in both groups, before and after the intervention (pre and post-test moments). A brief analysis and discussion of these results is presented.

Keywords: Transition, therapeutic relationship; psychodynamic perspective

INTRODUCTION

The therapeutic relationship

The therapeutic relationship is not always a very clear defined concept in literature (Elvins & Green, 2008). Basically, it seems to be a complex, mutual and professional link established between client and his/her psychologist and which involves a series of characteristics related to understanding, reinforcement, therapist's adherence, competence, warmth and empathy, for instance, in order to maximize the likelihood of gathering accurate and comprehensive information to help the client (Follette, Naugle & Callaghan, 1996; Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003).

Building a solid and a strong relation between client and psychologist involved in a therapy seems to be very important as it can promote security in exploration, among other desirable behaviours. In fact, literature relates the therapeutic relationship to the declining of drop out and to client's change results (in a 30 to 50% of the variation) (Gelsø & Cárter, 1985; Horvath & Luborsky, 1993; Follette, Naugle & Callaghan, 1996; Horvath, 2000; Crits-Christoph, Gibbons & Hearon, 2006).

SEMINAR'S CHARACTERISTICS

The Career Self-Management Seminar (CSMS, version A and B, Taveira et al., 2006)

CSMS-form A – CSMS-A creates opportunities for students to increase understanding about their life trajectory and work character, the ability of life-planning and decision-making, as well as, their knowledge about opportunities for advanced training and employment in the preferred business sector. It is designed to all students of intermediate years of 1st and 2nd Bologna's cycles. It comprises a total of 9 weekly sessions of 120 minutes each. Participants are divided in sub-groups of 8 to 10.

CSMS-form B – CSMS-B invites participants to increase their self-knowledge and awareness about opportunities for advanced training and job creation and attainment. It also provides opportunity to reflect about the ability of life-planning and decision-making, while maintaining a positive view towards future. It is designed for all students attending the intermediate years of the 3rd Bologna's cycle. It consists of 6 weekly sessions of 120 minutes each, performed in small groups (4 to 7 participants).

CSMS-form A	Session number 0		Getting started
	Part A	Session number 1	My personal career history
		Session number 2	My career self
		Session number 3	My career decisions
	Part B	Session number 4	Alternative 's exploration
		Session number 5	My specific career decision
	Part C	Session number 6	Planning my decision
		Session number 7	Reflection about career developmental process
		Session number 8	Ending the process

Table 1: CSMS-A Structure

CSMS-form B	Session number 0		Getting started
	Part A	Session number 1	Personal, social, educational and professional history
		Session number 2	Skills, values and personal and professional roll's inventory
		Session number 3	Defining a life project
	Part B	Session number 4	Planning and anticipating the life project
		Session number 5	Ending the process

Table 2: CSMS-B Structure

EVALUATION METHOD

The CSMS (forms A and B) comprises a pre and post-test multidimensional career exploration assessment (CES; Career Exploration Survey, Stumpf, Collarelli & Hartman, 1983; see tables 3 and 4) and a two-moment counselling process evaluation, during the seminar (CRS; Client Reactions System, Hill, Helms, Spiegel, & Tichenor, 1988; see table 7). In the first case, clients must complete a 53 likert type response items, measuring 12 different consistent career exploration dimensions. In the second case, clients read a list of 21 items, describing counselling affective reactions and are asked to sign all of those which better translate the way they have felt during the seminar session under evaluation.

Main results in exploration with the following sample:

Sample	N	Sex		Mean (SD)	Age
		Men (%)	Women (%)		
CSMS - A	40	29 (72,5%)	11 (27,5%)	22,42 (2,06)	20-29
CSMS - B	40	18 (45%)	22 (55%)	27,52 (3,87)	22-39

Subscales	Mean Score	Pre-test		Post-test		t	df	Sig.
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Employment Outlook	9	7,85 (1,85)	9,68 (1,93)	4,78	39	.00		
Certainty of Exploration Outcomes	9	6,4 (2,56)	7,6 (3,15)	2,70	39	.01		
External Search Instrumentality	12	41,4 (5,09)	43,53 (5,36)	2,13	39	.04		
Internal Search Instrumentality	30	16,75 (2,48)	17 (2,32)	.54	39	.59		
Importance of Preferred Position	9	9,4 (2,12)	9,55 (2)	.38	39	.71		
Self-Exploration	12	17,25 (3,44)	19,4 (3,55)	3,64	39	.00		
Environment Exploration	15	11,15 (3,6)	15,88 (2,73)	9,48	39	.00		
Intended-Systematic Exploration	6	4,88 (2,33)	6,48 (2,05)	4,77	39	.00		
Amount of acquired Information	9	8,13 (2,12)	10,55 (1,68)	8,68	39	.00		
Satisfaction with Information	9	8,38 (2,25)	10,6 (1,86)	6,64	39	.00		
Exploration Stress	16	15,48 (4,77)	14,73 (4,34)	-1,01	39	.32		
Decision Stress	20	20,25 (5,97)	17,18 (5,99)	-3,69	39	.00		

Subscales	Mean Score	Pre-test		Post-test		t	df	Sig.
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Employment Outlook	9	8,1 (2,73)	9,75 (2,22)	4,34	39	.00		
Certainty of Exploration Outcomes	9	7,2 (2,78)	8,4 (2,85)	3,77	39	.00		
External Search Instrumentality	12	15,53 (3,22)	16,35 (2,99)	2,02	39	.05		
Internal Search Instrumentality	30	36,98 (6,01)	43,55 (5,98)	9,79	39	.00		
Importance of Preferred Position	9	9,98 (2,47)	10,38 (2,60)	1,26	39	.22		
Self-Exploration	12	14,83 (4,89)	18,73 (5,48)	4,27	39	.01		
Environment Exploration	15	11,2 (3,96)	12,88 (3,57)	5,6	39	.00		
Intended-Systematic Exploration	6	5,2 (1,99)	8,48 (1,78)	1,1	39	.28		
Amount of acquired Information	9	9,46 (2,08)	10,58 (1,91)	4,64	39	.00		
Satisfaction with Information	9	9,45 (1,91)	11,23 (4,73)	2,35	39	.02		
Exploration Stress	16	11,6 (4,27)	14,25 (4,14)	3,7	39	.00		
Decision Stress	20	19,15 (7,75)	19,49 (7,26)	.35	39	.73		

Table 3: Socio-demographic data

Table 4: Exploration dimensions in CES (CSMS - Form A)

Table 5: Exploration dimensions in CES (CSMS - Form B)

Main results in Client's Reactions with the following sample:

Sample	N	Sex		Mean (SD)	Age
		Men (%)	Women (%)		
CSMS - A	36	23 (63,9%)	13 (36,1%)	22,89 (3,75)	19-40
CSMS - B	34	11 (32,35%)	23 (67,65%)	27,59 (4,17)	22-42

Table 6: Socio-demographic data

Table 7: Main results in the Client Reactions System

Client reaction	CSMS A (N=36)			CSMS B (N=34)		
	Session 2 Frequency (%)	Session 8 Frequency (%)	Cochran's Q (I)	Session 2 Frequency (%)	Session 5 Frequency (%)	Cochran's Q (I)
1. Understood	36 (100%)	30 (83,3%)	6* a)	30 (88,2%)	28 (82,4%)	.667 a)
2. Supported	32 (88,9%)	28 (77,8%)	2,67 b)	18 (52,9%)	23 (67,6%)	1,923 a)
3. Hopeful	27 (75%)	28 (77,8%)	111 b)	15 (44,1%)	23 (67,6%)	4,571* a)
4. Relieved	21 (58,3%)	19 (52,8%)	333 b)	15 (44,1%)	10 (29,4%)	1,923 a)
5. Negative thoughts or behaviors	17 (47,2%)	19 (52,8%)	400 b)	10 (29,4%)	15 (44,1%)	3,371 b)
6. Better self-understanding	27 (75%)	28 (77,8%)	111 b)	23 (67,6%)	25 (73,5%)	5,2 a)
7. Clear	21 (58,3%)	27 (75%)	2,571 a)	19 (55,9%)	24 (70,6%)	1,471 b)
8. Feelings	19 (52,8%)	17 (47,2%)	333 b)	12 (35,3%)	8 (23,5%)	2 b)
9. Responsibility	16 (44,4%)	19 (52,8%)	818 b)	5 (14,7%)	5 (14,7%)	.000 b)
10. Unluck	12 (33,3%)	18 (50%)	2,25 b)	9 (25,9%)	5 (14,7%)	2,667 b)
11. New perspective	15 (41,7%)	18 (50%)	474 a)	9 (26,5%)	9 (26,5%)	.000 b)
12. Educated	17 (47,2%)	20 (55,6%)	1 b)	18 (52,9%)	22 (64,7%)	1,333 a)
13. New ways to behave	10 (27,8%)	17 (47,2%)	3,769 b)	6 (17,6%)	12 (35,3%)	2,571 b)
14. Challenged	17 (47,2%)	13 (36,1%)	1,6 b)	14 (41,2%)	15 (44,1%)	.091 b)
15. Scared	1 (2,8%)	0	1 b)	0	0	-----
16. Worried	0	0	-----	0	0	-----
17. Stuck	0	0	-----	0	1 (2,9%)	1 b)
18. Lacking direction	0	0	-----	0	0	-----
20. Misunderstood	0	0	-----	0	0	-----
21. No reaction	0	0	-----	1 (2,9%)	0	1 b)

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

As table 4 and 5 stands, generally, students improve the exploration results from a pre to post test moment. The main and significant changes are related to Employment Outlook, Certainty of Exploration Outcomes, External Search Instrumentality, Self-Exploration, Environment Exploration, Intended-Systematic Exploration (in CSMS-A), Internal Search Instrumentality (in CSMS-B), Amount of acquired Information, Satisfaction with Information and Decision Stress (which decreases in CSMS-A).

In client's reaction system, understood (in CSMS-A) and hopeful (in CSMS-B) are the reactions that changed in a way that is significant. However, most positive reactions increased from session 2 to session 8 or 5 (CSMS-A or B) and the negative reactions diminished or vanished from time A to time B.

Therefore, it seems possible to conclude that during the seminar clients increase their relaxation, appreciation, security, self-knowledge, knowledge of specific and important information and strategies relating to the practical solution of their career problem(s), among other things. Results of this study evidence the co-existence of positive career counselling relationship and constructive change in university students career exploration.

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