

ANDREW THOMPSON,
University of Oregon;

ROBERT ZIMMERMANN,
University of Winnipeg.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF SINGLE INTERVIEW CLIENTS

In counseling and in psychotherapy it is generally considered undesirable to have a large portion of single-interview clients. It is reasoned that if a client returns he must have liked the first interview, whereas if he does not return it might be because he was offended and/or that he did not think that his needs were being met. It is acknowledged that there are some clients for whom a single interview contact is sufficient, but it is clear that not all single interview contacts are of this sort. If we could identify the particular desires and needs of each client it might be possible to change the counseling situation in ways that would encourage return of those clients who could profit from it, and also make the single interview more complete for those for whom one interview is probably sufficient.

The purpose of this study was to compare the individual goals of single-interview clients to the goals of multi-interview clients to determine if there were discernible differences. The goals were selected independently by the clients and by their counselors.

A previous study using the same diagnostic instrument, but only the clients' responses, contrasted 49 clients who returned for the first regular counseling interview to 21 clients who participated only in the brief intake interview (Knudson, 1967). The two groups did not differ in the total number of goals checked, but there were some differences in the frequency of response to particular goals. A significantly higher proportion of non-returnees checked "an educational objective" as one of their goals (21/21 to 38/49). Other differences were not significant but were consistent with a general orientation of non-returnees to vocational-educational concerns, whereas the returnees were more apt to check goals involving resolution of uncertainty, increased independence and decrease of tension and anxiety.

METHODS

The subjects consisted of 315 clients and 27 counselors of the University of Oregon Counseling Center. This represents about 87% of the client case-load during a five month period. Twelve of the counselors were advanced practicum students, the rest were interns or members of the regular staff.

The basic measuring instrument was a goal checklist consisting of 43 goals listed under 6 headings: Vocational-Educational, Self-Development, Social, Family, Physical, and Emotional. The clients were instructed to check "any goal which you feel is important for you to attain." The counselors checked "any goal which you think is appropriate for the client." The actual body of the checklist was identical for both clients and counselors, only the instructions differed. The clients completed their forms before

the initial interview; the counselors did so after the interview. Both clients and counselors completed repeat forms after every third interview and at the end of counseling. Counselors did not have access to client forms. The data comparing initial to final interviews is reported elsewhere (Thompson & Zimmermann, 1968).

The clients were sorted into four categories according to sex and number of interviews: a) single interview males (C1M), b) multi-interview males (C2M), c) single interview females (C1F), and d) multi-interview females (C2F). The counselors (therapists) were sorted in accordance to their clients' classification (T1M, T2M, T1F, T2F). The proportion of clients and therapists in each category who responded to each goal was computed and then combined into Male versus Female (clients), C1 versus C2, and T1 versus T2 categories. The significance of the difference between these three sets of comparisons was determined by a test described in Walker and Lev (1953). Only differences which were significant at $< .01$ level were considered. Also a gross index of overall rate of responding was provided by computing the mean number of goals each sample checked. Differences between these means were determined via a two way Anova using an unweighted means analysis, which permits interpretation of interaction. Separate Anovas were computed for C and T means.

RESULTS

It was readily apparent that clients checked far more goals for themselves than did their therapists (Table 1). This would be expected, since one could hardly expect therapists to be aware of all the concerns of a client on the basis of just one interview, or indeed many interviews. One would not so readily predict, however, that the therapists of multi-interview clients would check almost 70% more goals than the therapists of single interview clients ($T2=7.6$, $T1=4.6$). This was significant at $< .01$ level (Table 2). This result cannot be attributed to just a few goals since 14 of the 43 T1 vs T2 comparisons reached significance. In only one of these comparisons was $T1 > T2$; on the other 13 goals T2 exceeded T1.

TABLE 1
Mean Number of Goals Checked by Each Sample

Sample ^a	C1M	C2M	C1F	C2F	T1M	T2M	T1F	T2F	C1	C2	T1	T2
N	87	95	65	75	87	95	65	75	152	170	152	170
Mean	9.4	12.6	12.2	12.7	4.4	7.6	4.9	7.6	10.6	12.7	4.6	7.6

a

C = client 1 = single interview form M = male
T = Therapist 2 = initial form of multi-interview client F = female

on the individual goals, three of which corresponded to significant T1 vs T2 comparisons. One problem was that 5 males responded to all 43 items, thus in effect invalidating their forms. Four of these males were in the multi-interview category. Excluding these 5 further reduces the difference between the C1 and C2 means, but introduces a significant sex difference at the .05 level. That is, the typical female client checks more goals than the typical male client.

TABLE 2
Anovas of Mean Number of Goals Checked by Each Sample

Client Anova					
Source	DF	MS	F	P	
Sex	1	1.802	1.82		
No. of Interviews	1	3.506	3.54	.10	
Interaction	1	2.095	2.11		
Error	320	.991			
Therapist Anova					
Source	DF	MS	F	P	
Sex	1	.069	.30		
No. of Interviews	1	9.012	39.22	<.0001	
Interaction	1	.102	.45		
Error	320	.230			

There were no significant differences between the means of the single and multiple interview clients, or between the male and female clients (Table 2). There were only 4 C1 vs C2 comparisons that reached significance

Table 3 lists the specific goals in which there were significant differences between the single and multi-interview clients and their therapists. A greater proportion of C1 and T1 subjects checked "knowledge of ways to reach my vocational goal" (Goal 1) than did the C2 and T2 subjects. This is doubly significant in that this is the only goal in which either C1 or T1 exceed C2 and T2. The C2 and T2 subjects more frequently checked "decreased tension, anxiety" and "more interest in daily activities, fewer periods of boredom or depression." Inspection of the other goals also indicates that the more miserable a client is, or appears to be, the more likely he is to return for a second interview (examples: C2 > C1 on "better control over thoughts, emotions", and T2 > T1 on "reduction of feelings of guilt"). These results are consistent with the study on intake interviews referred to previously (Knudson, 1967).

TABLE 3
Goals Which are Responded to Differentially by Single and Multiple Interview Clients and Their Therapists

1. Knowledge of ways to reach my vocational goal					
C1M=62%	C1F=74%	T1M=65%	T1F=51%	C1=60%	T1=59%
C2M=51%	C2F=40%	T2M=36%	T2F=41%	C2=46%	T2=38%
2. Decreased tension, anxiety					
C1M=32%	C1F=42%	T1M=21%	T1F=20%	C1=36%	T1=20%
C2M=50%	C2F=57%	T2M=40%	T2F=43%	C2=54%	T2=41%
3. More interest in daily activities, fewer periods of boredom or depression					
C1M=31%	C1F=23%	T1M=3%	T1F=12%	C1=28%	T1=7%
C2M=43%	C2F=40%	T2M=24%	T2F=25%	C2=42%	T2=25%

Four goals differentiated between the combined male and female samples. Female clients were more apt to be seeking "more independence of judgment and action" (CF=41%, CM=27%), "wider scope of interests and activities" (CF=31%, CM=14%) and "more sensitivity to the needs of others" (CF=31%, CM=19%).

Therapists of male clients were more apt to check "better grades, graduation" than TF therapists (TM=34%, TF=17%). These results may reflect a conflict between academic concerns and other activities with the female clients tending to give priority to academic concerns, and being uncomfortable with their choice, while male clients tend to make their therapists uncomfortable by not placing a high enough priority on academic progress.

DISCUSSION

The major finding of this study was that therapists of multi-interview clients checked 70% more goals than therapists of single-interview clients, whereas the number of goals checked by C1 and C2 clients did not differ significantly. One way of interpreting this discrepancy would be to argue that the multitude of appropriate goals is more accurately perceived by the therapists than by the clients, themselves. However, this would indicate: a) that the checklist is more valid for therapists, and b) that the therapist is capable of diagnosing most, if not all of the appropriate goals on the basis of a single interview.

An alternate hypothesis is that the therapist, and not the client, makes the decision—either overtly or covertly—that the client should or should not return. Then he either encourages or discourages the client from returning—again, either overtly or covertly. A review of the particular goals that were responded to differentially by single and multi-interview clients and their therapists would indicate that the more miserable the client is, or appears to be, the more likely he is to return. Vocational-educational goals are more characteristic of C1 clients and therapists, whereas goals specifying relief from emotional distress are more characteristic of C2 clients and therapists. Perhaps most counselors, at least in this sample, tend to communicate real interest and concern only if the client is in obvious distress; and they indicate such interest on the goal checklist by checking a relatively large number of goals. One way of testing this hypothesis would be to investigate whether the C1 clients were more apt to have felt a lack of responsive interest on the part of their counselor. A follow-up study is planned which will include solicitation of this kind of information.

REFERENCES

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LES CARACTERISTIQUES DISTINCTIVES DES CLIENTS
AYANT RECU UNE SEULE ENTREVUE

A. THOMPSON et R. ZIMMERMAN

Plus de 300 clients et leurs 27 conseillers ont complété un questionnaire permettant de déterminer ce que chacun considérait comme les objectifs appropriés à poursuivre par le client. Les clients ayant reçu une seule entrevue (C 1) et leurs conseillers (T 1) furent ensuite comparés eux clients ayant reçu plusieurs entrevues (C 2) et à leurs conseillers (T 2). Le principal résultat fut que les conseillers T 1 indiquèrent 70% plus d'objectifs que les conseillers T 2, mais on ne trouva pas de différence correspondante entre les deux types de clients.

Pour interpréter ce résultat, on a suggéré que le questionnaire était plus valide pour les conseillers que pour les clients, ou encore que le nombre des objectifs indiqués par les conseillers était un indice de leur intérêt pour le client.