THEORETICAL STUDY OF THE MOTIVATIONAL UTTERANCES ISSUED BY THE THERAPIST IN SESSION

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¿WHAT IS MOTIVATION? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STUDY MOTIVATION IN THERAPY?

- The concept of motivation is one of the great classics in Psychology and its use explaining the behavior of people has spread to everyday language. For that reason it is among common terms that people use to understand or predict people’s actual or future behavior.
- Traditionally, motivation has been understood as being located within the person, which could explain some behaviors and have a causal role for overt behavior change. In general, motivation is inferred from observing people’s behavior (at best) or, especially, their responses in an interview or questionnaire, to immediately become the causal explanation of that behavior.
- In the field of Clinical and Health Psychology, the Transtheoretical Model of Change and the Motivational Interviewing approach the study of motivation following this line of conceptualization. In contrast, the Analysis of behavior has developed the concept of establishment operation, which refers to environmental stimuli or operations that temporarily alter the functions of subsequent stimuli and the likelihood of subsequent responses. This concept allows the study of motivation without using inferences or cognitivist terms.
- From this point of view the study of motivation in therapy would have to be carried out by the analysis of the effects of certain utterances of the therapist on the client’s behavior. Specifically, we propose that the therapist’s motivational verbalizations focus on those descriptions by the therapists about stimuli situations that are, have been or will be a consequence of the client’s behavior.

How has motivation been studied?

From Clinical and Health Psychology

- Transtheoretical Model (MTC)
- Motivational interviewing (MI)
- Handbooks on therapeutic skills and coping with client’s resistance in therapy

From the Analysis of behavior

- Skinner: three-term contingency and the influence of precedent variables on reinforcement
- Kantor: dispositional factors
- Michael: motivational operations establishment + abolishing operation

Our proposal: How to study motivation?

Our theoretical proposal is based on Michael’s concept of motivational operation: a change in the environment or the person that temporarily alters the functions of the stimuli and the parameters of a learned response into a sequence that remains constant. Unlike Michael, we assume that motivating operations alter functions when we can observe changes in the functionality of the elements of a given sequence for which no operant or Pavlovian processes can be considered. Moreover, it is important to note that the motivating operation cannot be considered an explanatory concept but a descriptive one.

VERBAL BEHAVIOR is the main activity that occurs during therapy and through which they are applied treatment techniques. We have been working on it several years.

VERBAL STIMULI

In the clinical context: Study of the therapist-client interaction (SISC-CYT)

SISC-MOTIVADORAS-T
(Motivation is used by the psychologist to facilitate changes out of session).

• The consequences should be described.
• The verbalization must contain at least one of the elements described in a personalized way.
• Only those consequences of dysfunctional behavior from the start of treatment are considered motivational. (Time)

Study will allow to advance our knowledge of how to motivate the client in therapy.

Motivational operation (contextual variable)

These verbal stimuli specify contingencies and focus on the CONSEQUENCES.

HOW TO STUDY THE MOTIVATIONAL VERBALIZATIONS?

HOW TO CLASSIFY MOTIVATIONAL VERBALIZATIONS?