

Assignment brief

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria 2018-19

Sample number: 2

Unit title: Counselling Theory – PS1/3/AA/05G

Overview of assessment task

In 1000 words (+/- 10%) write an essay to show that you understand the nature of the Client-Counsellor relationships in the Person-Centred, CBT and Psychodynamic Theoretical Approaches. You will be required to consider the case study provided and respond appropriately as to how the therapeutic relationship operates within each theoretical approach, and the impact this may have on the client. In order to do this, you need to evaluate the client-counsellor relationships in the three different approaches. To achieve this you, you will need to explore the limitations and strengths of the therapeutic relationship in each approach and impact this may have on the client.

Case Study – Marys Story

Mary was referred by her family doctor because she was feeling depressed. She has had bouts of depressions since she was 15 years old – she is now 51. The current bout began about six months ago. As well as being on anti-depressants, she is also on hormone replacement therapy.

Mary was first married at 17 and has three sons from this marriage. She divorced when the children were in their mid-teens. She now lives in Canada, where the three children also live with their families.

Mary remarried a few years after her divorce, to Robert who has an adult daughter from his first marriage. Mary claims that she feels guilty towards her own children for depriving them of their father and also towards her step-daughter for splitting up their family – although this had already happened by the time she met Robert.

Mary's father died ten years ago, she still grieves for him. Towards the end of his life her father went into a nursing home as he was terminally ill. She feels guilty about this and thinks she should have looked after him. After his death, there was a major family argument which has to some extent been healed, although Mary still feels hurt and the relationship with her sister is still very difficult.

Mary's mother died several years ago, she describes her childhood relationship with her mother as 'good' but her father she described as 'domineering and at times quite harsh'.

Both her husbands she also described as being 'domineering'. She finds it very difficult to speak about her problems with Robert – she experiences him as critical and says he puts her down. He was made redundant two years ago and they had to move into a smaller house, which Mary says does not feel hers. She normally works

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full time for an estate agent but currently due to her depression, is on sick leave. Outside of work, she had few friends and does very little.

During the first session, Mary reported feeling very down, continually tired and having problems with her sleep. She wanted help to change things so that she could stop feeling guilty and miserable all of the time. She was very concerned about her relationship with her husband and seems afraid that this was failing too.

She presented as a very quiet, gentle lady, almost apologetic when she was talking about her wants and needs. She seemed to expect the counsellor to do all of the work, through questioning and giving advice. Mary was open to talking about these expectations and came to realise that magic wands were not on offer from the counsellor, although it was unclear if whether this realisation was genuine or out of compliance and desire to please.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
3. Understand the nature of the client-counsellor relationship in different theoretical approaches to counselling	3.1. Evaluate the client-counsellor relationship in three different approaches

Grading Descriptors and Components 2018-19

Sample number: 2

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GD 1: Understanding of the subject

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. demonstrates very good understanding of the different perspectives or approaches associated with the area of study</p>	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. demonstrates excellent understanding of the different perspectives or approaches associated with the area of study</p>

GD 2: Application of knowledge

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>a. makes use of relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theories <p>with either</p> <p>b. breadth or depth that goes beyond the minimum required to Pass</p> <p>and</p> <p>c. very good levels of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis 	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>a. makes use of relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theories <p>with both</p> <p>b. breadth and depth</p> <p>and</p> <p>c. excellent levels of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis

GD 7: Quality

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>b. puts forward arguments or ideas which are generally unambiguous but which are in a minor way limited or incomplete</p>	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>b. puts forward arguments or ideas which are consistently unambiguous and cogent</p>

Assignment 2 - The Client-Counsellor Relationship in
the 3 main approaches to counselling

The therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and client is highly important across all counselling theories. It is necessary for the client to be able to talk to their counsellor and confident that any information they reveal will remain confidential. A good counsellor/client relationship can be especially important to those clients who have previously struggled to form or maintain relationships in their lives.

(Counselling-directory.org.uk, n.d.)

A good relationship between the client and counsellor was key to the Carl Rogers person centered approach to counselling. Rogers believed that it was necessary for a therapeutic relationship to be formed where the therapist can empathize with the client and for the client to achieve the goal of self-actualization.

In the case study a therapeutic relationship between Mary and the therapist would be important as Mary had had difficulties maintaining relationships in her life. She described her relationships with her father as 'domineering and at times quite harsh'. Mary also described having difficulties in her relationship with her husband Robert and finding it difficult to speak about her problems with him. Mary may find it difficult to talk about her problems unless she feels stable and confident in a relationship. Therefore there would need to be a good therapeutic relationship between herself and the therapist. For Mary to achieve the goal of self-actualization it is necessary for the therapist to express and communicate empathy and unconditional positive regard towards her. This is the key part of developing a therapeutic relationship between Mary and the therapist. In person centered theory, the therapy is led by the client and focuses on current events and difficulties in the client's life. It is important for the therapist to show congruence throughout the therapy and be genuine towards the client. In the person centered approach it is important that there is a strong relationship between Mary and the therapist, as Mary has to be willing to engage in the therapy and be willing to talk about her problems with the therapist. Unlike other theories in the person centered approach it is important that

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the client sees the therapist as genuine and on an equal level to themselves, the therapist has to allow the client to see them as they truly are (McLeod, 2015). The client/counsellor relationship in the person centered theory is warm open and genuine.

In the psychodynamic approach first theorised by Sigmund Freud, the counsellor is the expert and acts as an interpreter to bring unconscious thoughts into the client's conscious mind. Psychodynamic therapy focuses largely on the clients past experiences and the impact that these experiences have on the client and their current lives. In the psychodynamic approach the client counsellor relationship is not as warm and genuine as the person centered theory. The counsellor does not show the same amount of congruence or empathy towards the client, this is necessary for transference to take place in the session. The client counsellor relationship may suffer from difficulties as the therapist has the power in the relationship and is viewed as the expert in the psychodynamic theory.

In the case study Mary described her father as domineering and also describes both her husband as domineering, stating that she finds it difficult to talk to him about her problems. This could affect the client-counsellor relationship as Mary may view the therapist as an authority figure and relate to her counsellor in a way that resembles her childhood relationship with her father, this could include signs of fear, anxiety and anger (Counselling-directory.org.uk, n.d.). This shows that transference is taking place in the therapy. Transference plays a key role on psychodynamic theory and is important for clients to understand how their relationships in earlier life form how they see people in their current lives. Psychodynamic theory suggests that to keep feelings and memories in the unconscious part of their mind people develop defence mechanisms. Clients in psychodynamic theory are encouraged to talk about their deep emotions and feelings that have been pushed into the unconscious mind. Once these vulnerable feelings and thoughts are brought into the conscious mind the client can process them and the defence mechanism begin to reduce or resolve (Goodtherapy.org, n.d.). It is necessary for the client to have a good

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relationship with their counsellor as they feel that they are able to talk about their own vulnerable feelings which is important for the therapy to be successful.

In Cognitive behavioural therapy the therapeutic relationship can be seen as “important but not all-important” (Neal and Davies, 2000) this shows that while it is important to have a good client-counsellor relationship it is not the main reason for change in this type of therapy. In cognitive behaviourist therapy the counsellor is viewed as having expert knowledge on the subject and understanding the psychological thought processes, whereas the client is seen as an expert in their own thought process. This means that the relationship between the client and therapist is one where the client is viewed as on an equal level with the counsellor. In cognitive behavioural therapy the aim is to recognition faulty thought processes, this can often be carried out by using Socratic questions these are questions designed to help a client reach a response of their own accord, (Kennerly et al, 2017). In the case study, Mary says she feels guilty towards her step daughter for splitting up her family although this had already happened when she met her husband, in this case the therapist may ask why Mary believes this was her fault. This type of question challenges Mary’s irrational thought process and can make her challenge and reconfigure her own thought process. The therapeutic relationship is important in this type of theory is it is important that the client does not feel nervous and is able to talk about their difficulties in life.

To summarise the therapeutic relationships has a major influence on the three main types of therapy. Although the client-counsellor relationship differs in each of the approaches it is still a main component in the success of the therapy.

References

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