

EMPIRICAL PAPER

Generic change indicators in therapeutic processes with different outcomes

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper analyzes the relationship between ongoing change and final outcome in therapies carried out in natural settings with 39 clients. **Method:** Ongoing change was assessed through generic change indicators (GCIs), an observational method designed to label the content of change moments by selecting one specific GCI from the sequence of 19 that covers from more rudimentary and low complexity to more elaborated and complex changes. These GCIs can also be grouped into three broad stages of change, according to their level of complexity. Productivity indicators were generated to account for the number of GCIs (total and grouped by stage) adjusted by the length of therapy and the respective individual production of GCIs. Outcome, in turn, is understood as the final result of therapy and was measured by Lambert's Outcome Questionnaire (OQ 45.2). **Results:** Using the Reliable Change Index of this measure, which qualifies the difference between initial and final scores, therapies were grouped into "good outcome" and "poor outcome" cases. Findings indicate that therapies with good final outcome show a greater presence of Stage III GCIs during the process. Furthermore, in these therapies there is a significant association between Stage I GCI productivity and the productivity of Stages II and III GCIs. This is not the case for poor outcome cases, where results show a greater productivity of initial stage GCIs, mostly in the second half of therapy and no relation of this productivity with Stage II and Stage III GCIs. **Conclusions:** Results support the relation of ongoing change and final outcome. Possibilities for the clinical use of GCIs, specifically for monitoring ongoing therapies, are discussed.

Keywords: process research; brief psychotherapy; generic change indicators; outcome

Introduction

The conceptualization of the evolution of therapies along stages has a long history in psychotherapy research. In fact, researchers in this field have developed different models to describe the therapeutic process, defining it as a successive progression of stages that lead to psychological change.

In this article, we evaluate the usefulness of one of these models, the Generic Change Indicators (Krause, 2005; Krause et al., 2006, 2007), for the identification of specific characteristics in the progression of change in therapies that show different final outcomes. For this purpose, we distinguish between ongoing change, measured through a sequence of 19 Generic Change Indicator (GCIs), and

outcome, evaluated through Lambert's Outcome Questionnaire OQ 45.2 (Lambert et al., 1996). Previous studies, using the difference between initial and final scores, have established the Reliable Change Index (RCI) for this questionnaire in several countries, including Chile (de la Parra, von Bergen, & del Río, 2002). According to this procedure, therapies can be classified as "good" versus "poor" regarding outcome, depending on whether they reach the RCI. Through relating GCIs to these outcome categories, the aim of this study is to provide empirical information about their validity as a measure of ongoing change.

This association between process change indicators and final outcome would constitute a basis for