

Establishing Culturally Competent Practice: Effects of Control-Enhancing Psychotherapy on Depression and Anxiety for African American Outpatients

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This study explores the effectiveness of Control Therapy with African American outpatients living in an urban setting and presenting with depression and/or anxiety. Research into what makes for culturally competent psychotherapy indicates that structured yet context-sensitive approaches are best. While not widely known, Control Therapy includes these features within a very engaging and client-driven format, and as such stands as an exciting and promising approach. Shown effective with White samples, it has until now not been tested with African Americans.

Nine outpatient clients volunteered to receive a 10- to 12-week course of Control Therapy and complete several assessments, including the Shapiro Control Inventory (SCI). The SCI provided data about each client's overall sense of control and about the strategies (or modes) a client uses to gain greater control. The investigator hypothesized that after treatment, clients would show reductions in self-reported depression and anxiety with concomitant increases in overall sense of control.

These hypotheses were supported. Analyses included repeated-measures analysis of variance, the Friedman test, and the Sign test. For anxiety and overall sense of control, the ANOVA's showed statistical significance. ANOVA results for depression approached significance. Only for anxiety did the Friedman Test show significance. On the very conservative Sign Test, results for all three variables approached significance.

In addition, the investigator hypothesized that at pre-test, the nine clients would show higher mean scores on two modes for gaining control (Negative Assertiveness and Negative Yielding), when compared with similar clinical groups, primarily White, which are reported in the SCI test manual. Through analyses using the one-sample z test, the study clients were found to be not significantly different from their White peers; however, patterns in the broader SCI results suggest African Americans may seek personal control in important ways that are different from Whites.

This research has direct relevance for counselors working with African Americans and other People of Color living in urban communities. Suggestions are made for further research into the effects of Control Therapy, the interpretation of the SCI, and the ways in which diverse groups may approach issues of personal control in their lives.