

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**The expectations of experienced and novice
clinical psychologists regarding course of change
for clients undertaking successful cognitive
behavioural psychotherapy.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand

Amber Fletcher
2011

Abstract

The present study explored the expectations of both experienced clinicians and clinical psychology students when predicting the course of change for both a depressed client and an anxious client undertaking successful cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Experienced clinicians and clinical psychology students were asked to complete a task based on case study scenarios. A specially designed graph enabled participants to plot scores for three separate measures: an inventory for mood, an inventory for symptoms and a behavioural record of activities.

The course of change in psychotherapy, whilst being an important component to understanding the process of outcome in psychotherapy, has received little attention from researchers. Although there has been a growing emphasis on the need to measure outcomes and provide feedback, a unified understanding of the course of change has not been identified. A number of theories have suggested stages of motivation and an individual's likely process of assimilating problematic experiences, however these are largely based on group data, and do not take into account individual characteristics. This study therefore aimed to explore the course of change expected in successful CBT (the dominant theoretical orientation used amongst New Zealand clinicians) to identify the expected change patterns between clinicians and students, and their meaning. It also aimed to identify relationships between mood, symptom and behaviour during the therapeutic process, and determine key aspects that act as a basis for future research in this area. Findings showed that overall participants predicted a gradually declining linear progression, although differences in variance and trends were found between and within the clinician and student groups. Limitations, implications and future directions of this study are also discussed.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express sincere gratitude to my supervisor Ian Evans for both his support and his ability to instil motivation in me. I also thank him for giving me the opportunity to expand my clinical knowledge through this research, which has introduced me to theories and concepts that will continue to assist me in my future clinical career.

To all those who took time out of their summer break to complete their tasks, I thank you profusely. Your responses were not only essential, they were interesting and thought provoking, enabling me to complete this thesis with enthusiasm.

I also owe a huge thanks to Helen Page, Harvey Jones and Melanie Robertson who went above and beyond their duties to help out a seemingly lost and struggling student. Also to my talented fellow students Liz and Karen, who helped me along this academic challenge by answering any questions I had and offering support selflessly. Another debt of gratitude is owed to Sophia Walter, who took time out of her own research, study and work to review my thesis and provide me with insightful feedback.

Thanks also to my friends and family who have always been supportive. In particular, Phillip, I am so thankful for your constant support and encouragement to achieve my potential, it has ensured that I have kept at it even on the down days. Amanda, whose optimism and enthusiasm constantly inspires me; I appreciate you more than words can say for ensuring my sanity and having faith in my ability to succeed. To my mother, Joyce, for always supporting me and listening to my complaints and frustrations, even in her own time of peril, I thank you.

Without all of your contributions, this research could not have been completed.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	v
Introduction	1
History of Change Research	6
Importance of measuring outcomes.....	6
The importance of feedback.	7
Theories of change in psychotherapy.	11
<i>Clinical significant change: What counts as change?</i>	11
<i>Three phase model.</i>	16
<i>Assimilation model.</i>	18
<i>Predictive models of change.</i>	21
<i>Client change in CBT.</i>	24
<i>Insight and motivation: influence on change.</i>	29
<i>Other considerations in the study of change in psychotherapy.</i>	31
Present Study	37
Method	41
Ethics.....	41
Participants.....	41
Procedure and Materials.....	42
‘Mr T’.	43
<i>CBT for depression.</i>	44
<i>Negative affect schedule.</i>	45
<i>Beck Depression Inventory.</i>	46
<i>Self-monitoring of positive activities.</i>	47
‘Ms S’.	48
<i>CBT for anxiety.</i>	48

<i>The Penn State Worry Questionnaire</i>	49
<i>Beck Anxiety Inventory</i>	51
<i>Percentage of daily activities completed</i>	52
Additional questions	53
Analysis.....	53
Results	55
Participant Characteristics	55
Expectations of change across successful CBT	56
Expected change in a depressed client.....	57
Expected change in an anxious client.....	61
Change patterns between mood, symptom, and behavioural measures.....	64
Expected change at session 12	66
Motivation and Insight cues	71
Participant comments	71
Discussion	73
Limitations	79
Implications for clinical practice	81
Future Directions	83
Conclusions	85
References	87
Appendix A: Client Change Task – Paper Form	101
Appendix B: Client Change Task – Electronic Form	109

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Differences between clinicians and students in their overall BDI-II predictions of BDI-II scores.....	57
<i>Figure 2.</i> Expected change in therapy for a depressed client - Clinician 4	58
<i>Figure 3.</i> Expected change in therapy for a depressed client - Clinician 7	59
<i>Figure 4.</i> Expected change in therapy for a depressed client - Student 12.....	59
<i>Figure 6.</i> Expected change in therapy for a depressed client - Student 3.....	60
<i>Figure 7.</i> Expected change in therapy for a depressed client - Student 6.....	60
<i>Figure 8.</i> Expected change in therapy for an anxious client - Clinician 3.....	62
<i>Figure 9.</i> Expected change in the treatment of an anxious client - Clinician 1	62
<i>Figure 10.</i> Expected change in the treatment of an anxious client- Student 9.....	63
<i>Figure 11.</i> Expected change in the treatment of an anxious client - Student 12.....	63
<i>Figure 12.</i> Expected change in the treatment of an anxious client - Student 8.....	64
<i>Figure 13.</i> Mr T's expected change - Clinician 6.....	66
<i>Figure 14.</i> Expected mean change at session 12: Mr T and Ms S.	67
<i>Figure 15.</i> PANAS-NA score at session 12, three month follow up, and six month follow up.	69
<i>Figure 16.</i> BDI-II score at session 12, three month follow up and six month follow up.	69
<i>Figure 17.</i> Activities at session 12, three month follow up, and six month follow up. ..	69
<i>Figure 18.</i> PSWQ score at session 12, three month follow up, and six month follow up.	70
<i>Figure 19.</i> BAI score at session 12, three month follow up, and six month follow up. .	70
<i>Figure 20.</i> Percent of activities at session 12, three month follow up, and six month follow up.	70