THE EFFECTS OF VIDEOTAPE PREPARATORY INFORMATION
ON CLIENTS' EXPECTATIONS, ANXIETY
AND PSYCHOTHERAPY OUTCOME

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to determine the effects of videotaped preparatory information on the accuracy of clients' expectations about psychotherapy, state anxiety, and psychotherapy outcome using a Solomon four-group design. The relationships among these variables were also investigated. One hundred and thirty-eight adult clients attending for their first psychotherapy session with a clinical psychologist participated in the research. Clients were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition where the preparatory video was seen prior to the session, or to the control condition where clients followed usual clinic procedure and waited to be seen prior to their first session. Half of the clients completed both pre- and posttest measures while half completed posttest measures only. At the end of the first session, symptom severity and target complaint measures were completed by the psychologist. After two months, or at the completion of treatment if this occurred sooner, follow-up measures were completed by both clients and psychologists. The results confirmed that clients who viewed the video had more accurate expectations about psychotherapy and experienced a significant reduction in state anxiety when compared to control group subjects. These differences were not maintained at two month follow-up. Expectations did not mediate the effects of preparation on state anxiety. In addition, at follow-up there was significantly greater improvement on only one of the ten outcome measures for the group viewing the preparatory video. To conclude, the video preparation had immediate effects on the accuracy of clients' expectations and reduced state anxiety. The relationships between these variables were not as hypothesised and need further clarification. Longer-term effects of the preparation on psychotherapy outcome were almost nonexistent. It is argued that long-term effects may be difficult to detect because they are relatively small and most studies which incorporate alternative treatments in their design have insufficient power. Changes in the accuracy of clients' expectations and state anxiety which occur naturally over the course of psychotherapy may also contribute to the lack of consistent long-term benefits being found as result of pretherapy preparations.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract....................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements.................................................................................................... iii  
Table of contents ...................................................................................................... v  
List of tables and figures .......................................................................................... viii

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the introduction ............................................................................... 1  
1.2 Is psychotherapy like going to the dentist? ......................................................... 1

## CHAPTER 2 GREAT EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Clarifying terms ..................................................................................................... 5  
2.2 Theoretical background ....................................................................................... 6  
2.3 Disconfirmed role expectations in psychotherapy ............................................... 8  
2.4 Manipulation of expectations ............................................................................. 9  
2.5 Types of expectations manipulated ................................................................... 10  
2.6 Manipulation strategies ...................................................................................... 12

## CHAPTER 3 THE EFFECTS OF PREPARATION AND EXPECTATION MANIPULATION ON PSYCHOTHERAPY PROCESS AND OUTCOME

3.1 Previous reviews ................................................................................................. 14  
3.2 Preparation and expectation manipulation in child psychotherapy .................... 16  
3.3 Preparation for adult outpatient psychotherapy .................................................. 17  
3.4 Persistence of preparation effects on expectations .............................................. 19  
3.5 Preparation, expectations and anxiety in psychotherapy .................................... 21

## CHAPTER 4 INFORMATION PROVISION AS PREPARATION FOR STRESSFUL MEDICAL PROCEDURES

4.1 The "Work of Worry" ......................................................................................... 25  
4.2 Procedural versus sensory information ................................................................ 26  
4.3 Dispositional factors as moderator variables ...................................................... 28  
4.4 The effects of information provision on anxiety ................................................. 29  
4.5 Information provision, expectations and anxiety .............................................. 32  
4.6 Summary ............................................................................................................ 34

## CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN RESEARCH USING PREPARATORY INFORMATION

5.1 Subject selection ................................................................................................. 37  
5.2 Design problems ............................................................................................... 38  
5.3 Manipulation checks ......................................................................................... 38  
5.4 Placebo groups ................................................................................................. 38  
5.5 Measurement problems .................................................................................... 39  
5.6 Other deficiencies ............................................................................................. 40
CHAPTER 6 THE PRESENT STUDY

6.1 Recapitulation and aims ............................................. 42
6.2 Definitions of expectations and anxiety ................................. 43
6.3 Hypotheses .................................................................. 44

CHAPTER 7 METHOD

7.1 Research Settings ................................................................. 45
7.2 Ethical issues ....................................................................... 45
7.3 Subjects .............................................................................. 47
7.4 Therapists .......................................................................... 49
7.5 Research design overview ...................................................... 50
7.6 Preparation and pilot work ...................................................... 52
Developing the procedure ......................................................... 52
Standardizing the procedure ...................................................... 53
Assignment to groups ................................................................ 54
7.7 Procedure .......................................................................... 54
7.8 Videotaped information .......................................................... 56
7.9 Instruments .......................................................................... 58
State-Trait Anxiety Inventory- Version Y (STAI-Y) .................... 59
7-item Situation-Response Inventory of Anxiousness (SR7) ... 61
Psychotherapy Questionnaire (PQ) ........................................... 63
Hopkins Symptom Checklist-21 (HSCL-21) ............................. 63
Target Complaints (TC; Therapist Target Complaints, TCT) ...... 64
Brief Hopkins Psychiatric Rating Scale (BHPRS) ......................... 67
Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire-8 (CSQ-8) ...................... 68
7.10 Service utilization measures .................................................. 69
Dropout ................................................................................. 69
Attendance measure ............................................................... 70
7.11 Statistical analyses ............................................................... 70

CHAPTER 8 RESULTS

8.1 Data screening and missing values ............................................ 73
8.2 Hypothesis 1 ....................................................................... 74
8.3 Hypothesis 2 ....................................................................... 79
8.4 Improvement over the course of psychotherapy ......................... 81
8.5 Hypothesis 3 ....................................................................... 83
8.6 Hypothesis 4 ....................................................................... 87
8.7 Hypothesis 5 ....................................................................... 89

CHAPTER 9 DISCUSSION:
THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF PREPARATION

9.1 Effects of preparation on accuracy of expectations .................... 92
9.2 Effects of preparation on state anxiety ..................................... 94
9.3 The anomalous pretest effect .................................................. 94
9.4 Clinical versus statistical significance ..................................... 97
9.5 Testing the mediating relationship ......................................... 100
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Characteristics of participants ................................................ 48
Table 2 Data collection schedule....................................................... 52
Table 3 Means and standard deviations of Psychotherapy Questionnaire posttest scores by treatment and pretest factors ................................................ 75
Table 4 Pre-posttest means and standard deviations on the Psychotherapy Questionnaire ................................................ 76
Table 5 Means and standard deviations of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory state scale posttest scores by treatment and pretest factors ................................................ 77
Table 6 Pre-posttest means and standard deviations on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory state scale ................................................ 77
Table 7 Means and standard deviations of the 7-item S-R Inventory of Anxiousness (SR-7) posttest scores by treatment and pretest factors ................................................ 78
Table 8 Pre-posttest means and standard deviations on the 7-item S-R Inventory of Anxiousness (SR-7) ................................................ 79
Table 9 Means, standard deviations and univariate F-tests on outcome measures from entry to follow-up ................................................ 82
Table 10 Means, standard deviations and univariate F-tests for video and control groups on HSCL-21, STAI-Y2, BHPRS, CSQ-8 and number of visits ................................................ 84
Table 11 Means, standard deviations and univariate F-tests for video and control groups on target complaint measures ................................................ 85
Table 12 Frequencies and chi-square values for treatment by dropout status ............... 86
Table 13 Correlations between pretherapy state anxiety and therapy outcome measures ................................................ 88
Table 14 Means, standard deviations and univariate F-test of treatment effects for posttest and follow-up Psychotherapy Questionnaire scores ................................................ 89
Table 15 Means and standard deviations of state anxiety measures at pre, post and follow-up administrations ................................................ 90

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Diagram of research design and procedure .................................. 51