



Exploring the therapeutic alliance in EFT when addressing race and cultural differences.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the therapeutic alliance in EFT when addressing race and cultural difference between a non-white client and a white therapist. This quantitative study will survey 100 non-white clients receiving therapy from a white therapist. Subjects will participate in 10 sessions of therapy with a white therapist practicing EFT. Half of the clients will see a traditional EFT therapist, while the other half will see an EFT therapist who has gone through specialized training in cultural attunement. Using a modified Helping Alliance Questionnaire (Luborsky, et al. 1996), with additional questions concerning race and culture, we will measure the therapeutic alliance at the end of the ten sessions. We hypothesize that the therapeutic alliance will be stronger with the white therapists who address race and power differentials with non-white clients, which leads to effective EFT.

INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Racism is a chronic stressor in minorities and affect their relationships in a powerful and negative way (Nightingale, et al., 2019), so it needs to be addressed in couples' therapy.
- ❑ EFT has mainly been studied with white middle-class participant in North America (Lesch, et al., 2018).
- ❑ Studying EFT with only white middle-class participants does not provide valuable information pertaining to how non-white people would respond to expression of emotion (Lesch, et al., 2018).
- ❑ EFT has very limited research when looking at couples of diverse populations, including multicultural couples which include the systemic effects of racism (Nightingale, et al., 2019).
- ❑ If EFT is used on diverse populations without addressing clients' cultural and racial experiences, it could inflict harm on the client (Nightingale, et al., 2019).
- ❑ EFT training advocates joining with the client in their world, by validating their lived experience, but the training is lacking when addressing cultural context that differ from your own, especially if the client is of a minority and the therapist is presenting as non-minority. Therapeutic alliance is stronger when white therapists address race and power differentials with non-white clients. Without overcoming the demographic differences, we assume, EFT would be highly ineffective. (Nightingale, et al., 2019).

PRIMARY AIM AND HYPOTHESES

- ❑ Research Question: Does cultural attunement training effect the therapeutic relationship for EFT therapists working in cross-cultural relationships?
- ❑ Hypothesis: The therapeutic alliance will be enhanced when white EFT therapists have received cultural attunement training to address race and power differentials with non-white clients.

METHODS

Participants

- ❑ **Participants:** Non-white clients, over the age of 18, seeking therapy from white EFT therapist.
- ❑ **How/Where Recruited:** Partner with International Center for Excellence in EFT (ICEEFT) training facilities and their trained therapist. For this study, all therapists must be white and see non-white clients. Half of the participating therapists must be willing to go through specialized cultural attunement training.
- ❑ **Exclusion Criteria:** All therapist in this study must be white and have not previously gone through cultural attunement training but must be well trained in EFT. Half the therapists will receive a cultural attunement training from us. All clients must be non-white.
- ❑ **Sample Size:** 100 non-white clients receive therapy from an EFT therapist who is white. Half of the clients will see a traditional EFT therapist, while the other half will see an EFT therapist who has gone through specialized training in cultural attunement before therapy study begins.

Procedures

- ❑ Cultural attunement training will be done by W. Tali Hairston and be given to half the therapists for a two-day intensive. This training will involve broaching the topic of ethnicity and race in appropriate ways, keeping in mind our accountability to power as therapists.
- ❑ After 10 sessions of therapy both the control group and experimental group will be given the modified Helping Alliance Questionnaire (Luborsky, et al. 1996), with additional questions concerning race and culture.

MEASURES

- ❑ The Helping Alliance Questionnaire will be given to each patient in the experimental groups and the control group. This questionnaire will include the original nineteen statements which use a scale, of one through six, to measure the way the patients feel and think towards their therapist to help comprehend their rapport or alliance. The scale is as follows: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Slightly Disagree, (4) Slightly Agree (5) Agree, (6) Strongly Agree.
- ❑ We will add three additional statements concerning race and ethnicity. The statements are as follows: (1) At times I feel my therapist understands the hardships I go through as a minority, (2) My therapist is concerned about the effects of systemic racism, (3) My therapist realizes that we do not hold the same culture, but respects, understands, and praises the uniqueness. Every question must be answered in order to use for the study.

RESULTS

- ❑ Results of the modified Helping Alliance Questionnaire with both groups will be analyzed by a paired sample t-test with means. The mean of each group will then be evaluated to see if the p value is statistically significant, and the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Discussion

Social Implications

If, as we hypothesize, the therapeutic alliance with non-white clients is enhanced when white EFT therapists have received cultural attunement training, then non-white clients will likely result in a major social implication. This social implication would be rooted in the outcome of EFT. These outcomes include secure attachment bonds, significant cognitive changes, significant emotional changes, significant behavioral changes, significant interpersonal actions, demonstrates knowledge that individual is worthy of love and care, and demonstrates confidence and competence (Johnson, 2004).

Clinical Implications

Our study aims to broaden the field of EFT by extending the research of diverse (non-white) clients and the need to address cultural and racial experiences in therapy. Our hope would be that this research could address the need for a cultural attunement training to be required within EFT certification. This hope is from our hypothesis that clients will feel a deeper alignment to their EFT therapists after these therapists have completed comprehensive cultural attunement therapy. Since EFT cannot be effective without a strong therapeutic alliance, and since a therapeutic alliance is stronger when white therapists address race and power differentials with non-white clients, we hope that this research will help overcome the demographic differences that would make EFT highly ineffective for this clientele.

Implication for Future Research:

We believe that studying the relationship between white therapists and non-white clients deserves a deeper understanding when looking at cultural attunement training and how it impacts the therapeutic alliance. The results of this study may suggest the need for providing all EFT therapists to go through intensive culturally attunement training as well as continual education in this area.