RESPONSE EXPECTANCY VERSUS RESPONSE HOPE IN PREDICTING DISTRESS
A BRIEF RESEARCH REPORT

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Abstract: A recent line of research suggests that response expectancy [i.e., expectancy for nonvolitional outcomes (e.g., relaxed)] and response hope [i.e., hope for nonvolitional outcomes (e.g., relaxed)] may be two different constructs. Despite the vast literature regarding the impact of response expectancies on nonvolitional outcomes, little is known about the impact of response hopes on nonvolitional outcomes. The aim of this brief research report is to investigate the interrelations between response expectancy and response hope in generating distress during an exam situation. As expected, results show that response expectancy directly predicts distress; also, as expected, a discrepancy between response hope and response expectancy is a strong predictor of distress. Theoretical and clinical implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: response expectancy, response hopes, distress

Introduction

The role of cognitive factors (i.e. expectancies) in learning (e.g. Tolman & Honzik, 1931) and the production of behavior (Rotter, 1954) has long been recognized, but the impact of such cognitive factors on nonvolitional outcomes is a much more recent theoretical development. Kirsch (1985) was perhaps the first to explicitly theorize on relations between what individuals expect and their experiences of seemingly automatic responses. He termed such beliefs concerning nonvolitional outcomes, “response expectancies”, and explicitly hypothesized that response expectancies are: sufficient to cause nonvolitional outcomes; not mediated by other psychological variables; and self-confirming while seemingly automatic. Since that time, the literature has grown to support the strong role of response expectancies as a psychological mechanism for producing nonvolitional outcomes in three areas of research: (1) placebo effects (Montgomery & Kirsch, 1996, 1997; Price, Milling, Kirsch, Duff, Montgomery, & Nicholls, 1999); (2) effects of hypnotic suggestion (Montgomery, Weltz, Seltz, & Bovbjerg, 2002; Schoen-