

**Review of Research on How the Ethnicity of Counselors and Clients are
Factors to Consider in the Counseling Process
8-Hour Project for Spring 2006 Research and Evaluation Course
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Introduction

This review will cover research that has looked at the ethnicity of counselors and clients and how it has influenced the outcome of the counseling. This review includes eight articles which are included in an appendix in the order discussed. The order of the articles is also chronological starting with the oldest research and continuing to the most recent. Some of the articles refer to earlier articles that are included in this review. In these cases it was interesting to see the issues develop. I will present a review of each of the eight articles individually with comments included regarding a specific analysis of the article. Although some references to other articles may appear in the individual review of a research article, most comments bringing together my impressions of these eight articles as a group will be saved for the concluding statement.

Counseling Negro Pupils: An Educational Dilemma

This article was from 1960 and it appeared to be about the first attempt to get into this area of racial differences between counselor and client. It is interesting to note how the terminology changed over years as later articles never used “Negro” as an identifier. The term “Black” has evolved as the appropriate term through the civil rights movement in the 1960’s. This article stated that no text book or research journal had information in this area which accounted for the lack of literature review. The article did mention one 1951 article on psychiatric interviews with Black clients that did lend support for the research done in this article.

The purpose of the study was to determine if racial differences between White counselors and Black students contributed to the lack of success of Black students in school counseling situations. If such a correlation was found, an additional purpose of the article was identified to try and determine why this was the case and what could be done to correct the problem.

Since this article was at the start of the research on the topic, it did not feed off of other research to try and extend a theory in a certain direction. The hypothesis stated was in the form of a question: “Can Caucasian counselors attain positive results in counseling Negro pupils?” (Phillips, p. 504) The researcher indicated that past results have shown the White counselor had not been successful up to the time of the article.

The sample used in the study was quite small: twelve 17 year old Black male students. Six students saw White counselors and six students saw Black counselors. The study did not go into detail of how they were chosen, but it did appear considerable effort went into trying to eliminate other extraneous variables by having other characteristics the same for the students. They all had uncooperative attitudes. They were all able to do 12th Grade work and pass without effort or study. They were all from middle class families with parents that were supportive and actively involved with the school. No mention was made if releases were signed.

The procedure used was to have the students in counseling for one time a week for up to 40 minutes per session if needed. At the end of the period of study the White counselors convened, compared notes, and determined what barriers they encountered in

the counseling sessions especially the problems of developing rapport with the Black students. A direct observational method was used by having the counselors record their observations in notes.

The results described appear consistent with what we know today about the interactions that are possible between White counselors and Black clients. It can be understood that these failings were even more pronounced in 1960, the time of the study. The review of the White counselor reports show that certain factors prevented rapport building which was needed to reach these students. The White counselors lacked knowledge of the student's sociological and psychological pattern of behavior. The White counselors also had a stereotyped conception of the student. The Black student had a distrust of the White counselor and White culture which would not allow him to completely express himself. Also, the White counselor could not determine even when the rapport had been established.

In the discussion of the case, the research did not have any other research to compare its results to. The study also did not talk of limitations of the study or direction for future studies. It is clear there were limitations as the sample was very small and no evidence existed of replication. The researcher did, however, discuss the implications of the study and how it answered the question they were looking for. The study identified the White counselors (in 1960) did not have an understanding of how their Black clients saw the world and were too often misdirected by their stereotyped preconceived notions about their clients. The Black student, aware of his negative position in society, found it difficult to express himself freely. The research called for White counselors to strengthen

their weakness by understanding their prejudices and by understanding their Black client's world view. This appears to remain today as an issue to focus on as counselors are becoming more multiculturally competent.

In summary, although there are limitations to the study, the end results and conclusions appear to hold true. The lack of critical comparisons can be excused because there was not much of anything to compare it to. The limitations of the research were evident, however, and the researcher did nothing to disclose them.

Black and White Students' Attitudes Toward White Counselors

Right from the start, this article's review of the literature gave me pause in considering the validity of the study. The study outlined two schools of thought on whether White counselors could adequately counsel Black students. What caught my attention was that one article it quoted indicated that White counselors were *unable* to counsel Black students. What was noteworthy to me was the article that was quoted was the first article I review in this paper. Although Waldo Phillips, the author of that article, was clear in saying White counselors had not done a good job counseling Black students and that they needed to change what they were doing, he never stated in the article (as was quoted by the authors of this study): White counselors "can never achieve the degree of understanding which is necessary for adequately counseling blacks." This is a very strong statement to misquote. I read over the article two more times and never saw those words. Even if Waldo Phillips or someone else made that statement, it was not made in

the article cited. This made me question the reporting of the entire study.

The purpose of the study was clearly defined and related to the studies outlined in the literature review. The importance of good counseling for Black clients is indeed critical and an important reason for study. The study did not have a stated hypothesis; it was focused on trying to develop a hypothesis or to see which side of the literature review outlined was more accurate.

The sampling was admittedly small. Fifty students were randomly selected by category out of a senior class of 474 students at a large integrated inner city high school. The fifty students were split by gender in half (25 of each) and in proportion to the make up of the school racially (40 White students, 10 Black students). All students had visited their counselor at least 3 times and all of the counselors were White. Although the sampling appears to represent the class at that high school, there is serious question about the external validity as to how the findings would translate to other schools in the United States. The students were asked to respond to 12 attitudinal types of items on a Likert scale. It appears that after selection, the students only needed to fill out this survey. The evaluating instrument was therefore self-reporting using the Likert scale questionnaire. The reliability is questionable as mentioned by researchers. They acknowledged that the instrument was crude and it was made more unreliable with the small sample size and the relatively few counselor-student interactions.

The results did show that Black students felt that the White counselors were less helpful and held them in a less favorable light than did the White students. The margin was significant but not large. The more telling finding was that all the students,

regardless of race, did not have an overwhelming favorable attitude toward the counseling situation. This may indicate problems with the counselors relating to students as a whole, or maybe that the counselors at this school were not very responsive.

In the discussion, the researchers were open with the limitations of their study and questioned its external validity. The researchers did call for future studies to show *how* White and Black counselors could serve Black students better. The study made no assertion or support for the assertion that White counselors were not capable of counseling Black students.

I thought this study had limited value. Its inaccurate presentation of a quote was disturbing from the start. The limitations are evident, but the end result appears accurate. Black students (at least at the time of the study in 1971) benefited less than White students from White counselors who were not very in tune with the Black student's cultural perspective.

Relationships of Trust and Racial Perceptions Toward Therapist-Client Conditions During Counseling

In this article the researcher did give an overview of previous studies that dealt with counselor-counselee relationships between individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, but indicated how those studies were distinct from this study as they did not consider an important factor in this relationship. This factor was the counselee's level of trusting in general.

The purpose statement was a bit unclear because of the language used, but its

purpose appeared to be to provide statistical support to show how trust issues may be more of an issue than race when the counselor of either race is empathetic to their client. The hypothesis of the study was that the counselees who had the same trust level would show identical behavior toward the counselor-counselee relationship regardless of the race of either party. The researcher did a good job of showing how this hypothesis was important to the discussion.

The sample was determined by taking the 100 males who signed up for a course (65 White, 35 Black) and giving them a test to determine if they were a high truster (HT) or a low truster (LT). Then six high trusters and six low trusters were selected from each racial group for a total of 24 participants. This sample of participants, while relatively small, does appear to represent the characteristics of the participants that they were looking for. Each therapist (2 Black and 2 White) were each given a low truster and a high truster from each ethnic group. The subjects were pre-tested, involved in 5 counseling sessions, and given a posttest. Again, although the numbers were not large, they did distribute the counselees in each of the groups to test their hypothesis. The instruments used were the Rotter Interpersonal Trust Scale and two forms of the Barrett-Lennard Inventory Scale. The numbers were quite confusing and I needed to trust their assessment of the correlations they offered.

The analyses of variance were used to show the relationships between the groups. The results suggested that counselor race was an insignificant variable during one on one communication between therapists and clients of same or different ethnic groups. An unusual finding was that it appeared counselors of a different race produced greater

change with clients of a different race (e.g. Black counselors communicated more fully toward the opposite race than toward Black counselees). The results also showed that high trusters of both racial groups believed counselors, regardless of race, could adopt another person's frame of reference. The low trusters of both racial groups, however, believed that White counselors could not adopt another person's frame of reference. The researcher did do a good job of putting difficult to understand statistical results into meaningful statements.

The discussion did not really get into the limitations of the study or where more research is needed. It does do a good job of summarizing what it had found. The researcher indicated although the subjects may come into the therapy with questions about how a therapist from a different ethnic group would relate to them, in the end, after 5 counseling sessions, the counselees experience a positive change due to direct encounters with therapists who demonstrated warmth and concern about them.

Although this study seems limited to me by its size and lack of replication, it does enter into the equation a variable that is very valuable to consider. The trust factor is an important consideration to include when determining the effectiveness of therapeutic relationships.

Minority Identity Development and Preference for Counselor Race

The literature review in this article was very brief. The researchers primarily stated that research has been on both sides in determining whether Black clients prefer Black counselors.

The purpose statement was clearly displayed. The purpose was to determine if a relationship exists between stages of identity development among Black clients and their preference for counselor race. The article did a good job in explaining the Minority Identity Development (MID) model to set up a description of their purpose and hypothesis. This section, like the entire article, was very well written and easy to understand.

The hypothesis was also clearly set out. Based on the MID model, they believed most Black clients in the Conformity stage would prefer a White counselor; most Black clients in the Resistance and Immersion Stage would prefer a Black counselor; and most Black clients in the Synergetic Articulation and Awareness stage would express indifference with regards to the race of the counselor.

The sample was composed of volunteers who signed up at a recruitment booth at colleges and universities staffed by a Black experimenter. This sample had few Conformity stage participants which may have been related to the location of the booths in higher educational settings. The procedure was to give the 160 participants a series of questionnaires to determine their MID and to test their counselor preferences. The procedure appears good for their objective. The instruments used to measure the MID was clearly defined. The reliability of the instrument was not described. The questionnaires used “forced choice” questions which seem to be a good way to get the participant to avoid the middle ground.

The results were as they had been hypothesized for the participants in the Resistance and Immersion stage and for the participants in the Synergetic Articulation

and Awareness stage. There were not enough participants in the Conformity stage to test that hypothesis. It was noteworthy that their hypotheses were hit right on target. As we have discussed in class, however, this direct hit might have been a strong reason why this article was chosen for publication.

In the discussion the researcher was up front about some limitations such as the participants trying to give socially desirable responses. But the study did demonstrate, with the strong correlation, that it would be beneficial to have more Black counselors available. This would be especially true for those clients in a stage of MID where there was a strong preference for a Black counselor so that these individuals would not avoid seeking assistance from a counselor if the only option was a White counselor.

I thought this article was very good. It was clear, easy to read, and the instruments and the purpose were clearly described. The primary limitation was in the selection of the sample and a lack of statistics to show the reliability of the instruments used.

The Relationship of the Racial Identity Attitudes of Black Men to Perceptions of “Parallel” Counseling Dyads

Like most things in this article, the literature review was long, in great detail, and very difficult to understand. The researchers did cover the area quite thoroughly and they covered a key concept of the stages of White racial identity and Black racial identity.

The purpose statement gives an example of how the article was written and how it was difficult to understand. “The purpose of the current study was to use a vicarious

participation counseling analogue (Munley, 1974) to examine the effects of Black male surrogate clients' racial identity attitudes on their perceptions of one type of counseling dyad described by Helm's (1984b) model, the parallel dyad." That is a mouthful. What I believe it means is that they tried to get Black males to witness counseling going on between a Black client and a White counselor who had racial identities on the same level – and then describe what they saw in that counseling session. The researchers "hypothesized that racial identity attitudes would predict surrogate clients' perceptions of counselor credibility, cultural competence, and their session evaluation reactions."

The sampling was 52 Black male undergraduate students who were offered extra credit for their participation in the study. The procedure involved the participants filling out questionnaires to determine their racial identity attitudes scale. The participants then listened to one of two 15 minute audio taped counseling sessions between a White counselor and a Black client. When listening they were told to view the counselor from the client's perspective. Immediately after listening to the tape, the participant was asked to fill out another questionnaire about their perceptions of the counselor's behaviors. This seemed like a good way to go about getting the information they needed, but I did not understand why they listened to an audio tape and did not use a video tape unless they were trying to exclude consideration of nonverbal signals. The instruments used were the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale, the Counselor Rating Form, the Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory, and the Counseling Reactions Inventory. These instruments

appear appropriate for what the researchers were looking to discover.

The study used an analyses of variance and a multivariate analysis of variance to interpret the results. It was difficult to follow and I only started to figure out what was being said when the researchers got into the discussion area.

The discussion section was not easy to follow either, but it did seem to indicate that they found as they hypothesized that the Black participants emotional reaction to the White counselor they heard on the tape was predicted by their racial identity attitudes. The researchers did acknowledge the study's limitations and the need for other research, for example, in each of the other counseling dyad types. The main implication they tried to point out was that it is not only important for a White counselor to know how a Black client views their racial identity, but it is also important for the White counselor to understand how he or she views their own racial identity as a factor in the counseling relationship.

This article was long and difficult to understand. I am sure most of this is due to my own lack of familiarity with the terminology, but the researchers could have communicated in a better manner. This study seemed to echo other studies by making a call for increased education on multicultural factors in the counseling relationship. The study did focus on an aspect of the counseling relationship that appears important, although I had not considered it before their presentation of the issue.

A Study of Muslim Asian Women's Experiences of Counseling and the Necessity for a Racially Similar Counselor

This article and research was very different from the other articles in its style and was an example of a qualitative study. The researcher's literature review was quite lengthy, but included much commentary and background to describe the reason for why the study was conducted.

The researcher described that the purpose of the study was to begin the exploration of how the whole "package" of a counselor (including age, culture, language, and approach to counseling), and how this whole "package" can influence the therapeutic relationship and the process of counseling between a client and a counselor with the same race and gender. As a qualitative study, this research did not really have a hypothesis but was trying to test and challenge other theories that existed.

The sample was four former clients of the researcher who were all Muslim Asian women. Obviously this sample is small, but it allowed for in depth analysis. The procedure involved a questionnaire sent out for each participant to fill out and return in a supplied pre-paid envelope. The instrument used was a questionnaire that consisted of both open ended questions the participants could elaborate on and closed forced response questions. This seemed to be a good choice to be able to flush out the participant's feelings at times, but to get focused answers that needed to be drawn out for the study.

The results appeared to show that what mattered more to these Muslim Asian women was the kind and warm empathetic qualities of the counselor over and above any

racial or cultural qualities. Although admitted briefly, the researcher did not discuss much about the limitations of the study or what areas might need more research. The researcher seemed to overemphasize the influence of this study.

I thought the study was a good way to test the theories that were out there regarding racial issues between a client and their counselor. But there were limitations in size and in the personal relationships the researcher had with all the participants which could have influenced their responses. Additionally, gender appeared to be a potential important factor for these subjects but was not discussed much.

Therapist Perceptions of Ethnicity Issues in Family Therapy: A Qualitative Inquiry

The literature review in this study was quite extensive and outlined how multicultural counseling and training has been getting increased attention in the last two decades. The purpose of the study was to identify different themes emerging in the field of family therapy related to issues of ethnicity. And this study also did not have a hypothesis. It was a qualitative study which was trying to elicit from a group of respected family therapists a list of themes that were emerging and could be identified for further study.

The sample was 29 of 40 presenters at the 25th Annual Conference for Texas marriage and family therapists. Twenty-four of the sample were from ten states and the other five were from foreign countries. Of the 24 therapists from the United States, 21 were White, one was Black, one was Mexican, and one was Asian. The cultural make up of the participants was obviously a limitation. The participants were contacted 60 days

before the conference and a meeting was arranged. At the meeting a member of the research team interviewed the participant on selected themes and questions. These interviews were analyzed and similar and diverse themes were recorded and compiled. The researchers analyzed the data with an ethnographic content analysis which is a design that incorporates qualitative methods.

The results were a list of themes identified by these therapists which provided suggestions for future studies and educational efforts. The discussion acknowledged the limitations of the study, but suggested that themes produced indicated a number of areas that new research is needed. One of its primary assertions is that training new counselors to be multiculturally competent has been going on for some time now (the article was from 2001) and it is important to determine if the methods being used are effective or not.

For its purpose, I thought the article was fairly good. It is concerning that if one was trying to identify ethnic issues in family therapy your sample would include more than token representation of non-White ethnic groups. This study did demonstrate a good example of the use of qualitative research to bring up issues that need to be explored in greater depth.

Counselor Ethnicity, Counselor Nonverbal Behavior, and Session Outcome with Asian American Clients: Initial Findings

The literature review in this article mainly covered other research that involved counselor nonverbal behavior in general. As was stated in the research, no other study had tried to identify how the nonverbal behavioral differences between European

American counselors and Asian American counselors influence session outcomes with Asian American clients. Before reading this article I had not considered the influence of nonverbal behavior of therapists.

The study had two purposes. The first was to use an existing study to identify differences between nonverbal behavior of European American and Asian American counselors and to group these differences into categories. The second purpose was to see how these different categories of nonverbal behaviors influenced the outcome of counseling with Asian American clients.

The researchers hypothesized that Asian American counselors would display less nonverbal behaviors. The researchers then hypothesized that the frequency of these behaviors would be significantly and positively correlated with the client ratings of session positivity and session arousal.

The sample included 30 Asian American volunteer clients (17 men, 13 women) in an undergraduate Asian American Studies course at a large West Coast university. The volunteers had one video taped session with a counselor on a career related issue. They were counseled by either an Asian American counselor or a European American counselor. There were 5 Asian American counselors and 5 European American counselors and they each had 3 clients. All the counselors were female doctoral students. These video tapes were reviewed by judges who identified nonverbal behaviors based on the analysis of previous research on what constituted nonverbal behaviors. The participants were then evidently given a questionnaire on how well they perceived the session had gone. There is a description of the results, but it is not indicated how the

questionnaire was administered. The instrument used was a subscale of the Session Evaluation Questionnaire to determine the participant's feelings on the counseling experience.

Although the statistical analysis of the results was difficult to decipher, the end result appeared to match the hypothesis. European American counselors had more nonverbal behaviors including smiles and postural shifts than Asian American counselors and there was a positive correlation between these behaviors and client perceived session positivity and session arousal.

To the researchers' credit, they were very up front about this study just beginning the research in this area. They acknowledged limitations such as there may be an accompanying verbal behavior that went along with the nonverbal behavior that was more of a factor in determining the positive therapeutic result.

As a study that was breaking new ground, I thought it was useful. There are obvious limitations due to the size of the study, demographics of the participants, and unaccounted extraneous variables, but it is helpful that this research identified these limitations and called for additional research to address those limitations. It seems to me this would be the proper way to break new ground.

Conclusion

I found this project to be a very useful exercise in understanding the development of ideas and the fine tuning of ideas through research. It was interesting to see how ideas and theories developed over time with each progressive research article fine tuning,

pointing out errors, or cleaning up extraneous variables. In this series of articles, I was initially surprised that I did not find more opinions that claimed a client with a certain ethnic background *was only properly served* by having a counselor with the same ethnic background. The more articles I read I was able to see how the race of the counselor was only one variable and how other variables proved to be more relevant to the quality of the counseling experience. The racial variable, as was shown, can be rendered not as important when the counselor was culturally competent and displayed overt signs of empathy and caring for the client.

Each article had its value and enriched my understanding of the topic. It was useful that some were qualitative to flesh out directions for study and some were quantitative to narrow the study and factor in consideration of certain variables. This exploration of the research made me consider variables I had not previously considered such as nonverbal actions by the counselor and the importance of the client's perception of their own racial identity.

Although each article had its value, the exercise helped to develop the skill of critical analysis of research articles. When one looks at each section of the article and critically analyzes it, the defects are easier to spot. The defects that are noticed can then be described as to how it might influence the validity of the study. Although some articles are quite cumbersome to read, the value of a well documented article which assists in development of important ideas that a counselor can incorporate into their practice to better serve their clients is well worth the effort and is essential to quality service.

