Ministry College Students' Attitudes Toward Psychological Help Seeking

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Minority College Students' Attitudes Toward Psychological Help Seeking

(TITLE)

BY

Kiesha Ford

THESIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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Minority College Students’ Attitudes Toward Psychological Help Seeking

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Running head: SEEKING PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP
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Abstract

The present study examined two major variables: a comparison of Minority and White student’s attitudes toward psychological help seeking and the influence of ethnicity on student’s preference of counselor ethnic characteristics. It was expected that 1) Minority students would have a more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than Whites students; 2) Minority college students would prefer to see a counselor who is older, belong to a minority group, the same race, the same gender, the same socioeconomic status and have an university degree; 3) female students would have a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than male students, and 4) Minority college students who have a strong acculturation to their culture will have a more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than those minority students who have a weak acculturation. One hundred and twenty-four subjects from several cultural and service organization completed the Fischer and Turner (1970) Pro-Con Attitude Scale and a personal information form. It was found that Minority students had significantly more negative attitudes toward seeking help that White students; female students had significantly more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than male students; individuals’ commitment to their culture did not influence whether one had more of a positive or negative attitude toward seeking psychological help. Finally, no specific characteristic for counselor preference was viewed as important.
Attitudes associated with seeking psychological help for different segments of the population has been a widely researched topic for over the past forty years. One segment examined by researchers is the increasingly ethnic diverse population of college students on American campuses. The total White enrollment in a 4-year college during the fall of 1976 was 86.6% which decreased to 80.2% by the year 1992; however, there was an increase rate of enrollment for minorities (Blacks, Hispanics and Asians) from 13.4% in 1976 to 19.8% in 1993 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994). These increase numbers for minorities on college campuses have an effect on whether the mental health services provided by campus officials are effective and appropriate to meet the needs of a diverse population.

Clary and Fristad (1987) reported that only 34 (12%) of 286 college freshman they surveyed visited the school counseling center at least once during the academic year. The authors concluded that this finding is “consistent with previous research in that seeking help from mental health professionals is an infrequent occurrence (p. 181).” This is particularly true for the population of college students who are Black, and Hispanic/Mexican Americans (Davis & Swartz; 1972; Gibbs, 1975; Kysar, 1966; Fager, 1973; Perez, 1975; Sanchez, 1981 and Sue, 1973). There has been conflicting findings about Asian (international) students use of college counseling centers.

Surdham and Collins (1984) found that international students “tend to use counseling or health services as much as their American counterparts (p.45 ).” In addition, Ebbin and Blankenship (1986) reported relatively frequent use of these facilities by international students. However, Adelegan and Parks (1985) found that international students prefer to seek help from other international students or from family members in their native country. Some explanations for the under utilization of counseling centers by minorities on campuses and the minority public in general has focused on differences in attitudes toward seeking psychological help among Whites and minorities. Whether Blacks, Hispanics/Mexican-American and Asian minority groups have more negative view of seeking psychological help than Whites, and if ethnic groups preference of counselor characteristics and acculturation affects one’s attitude toward seeking psychological help.
Seeking Psychological Help

Review of the Literature

Attitude toward seeking psychological help

In their article, "Relationships Between Ethnicity, Conceptions of Mental Illness and Attitudes Associated with Seeking Psychological Help," Hall and Tucker (1985) examined the relationship between ethnicity, conceptions of mental illness, and attitudes associated with seeking psychological help among school teacher in Alachua County. They hypothesized that these variables (ethnicity, concepts of mental illness and attitude toward psychological help) are “related and the relationships are independent of other demographic variables (p. 907 ).”

Five-hundred and thirteen subjects (321 Whites and 192 Black) were randomly selected from a pool of 1,300 full-time employed teachers from the Alachua County School Board of Florida. Subjects were given the Fischer and Turner Pro-Con Attitude Scale, the Nunnally Conception of Mental Illness Questionnaire, Vignette case examples, and a demographic information sheet.

The Fischer and Turner Pro-Con Attitude Scale (1970) assess attitudes toward seeking psychological help. This scale has a five-point likert format with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The higher the rating the more positive the attitude is toward seeking psychological help. The Nunnally Conception of Mental Illness Questionnaire (Nunnally, 1960) has a five-point likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The higher the rating the more misconception there is about mental illness. Lastly, the vignettes were used to investigated opinions concerning 1) “culture of the therapist versus culture of the client, 2) private practice versus commentate mental service. 3) problems types and the efficacy of seeking treatment, 4) race of the therapist versus race of the client and 5) socioeconomic difference between the client and therapist( p. 910-911 ).” At the end of the questionnaire, subjects were asked if they had used psychological services in the past.

The results were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression and regression coefficient. It was found that race as a variable in attitude toward seeking psychological help was not statistically significant; however, race was a significant factor in one’s concept of mental illness.
The White teachers had lower scores than Black teachers which indicated “less stereotypic conceptions of mental illness (p. 913 ).” Furthermore, race was a significant variable on three of the items on the vignette: dealing with the issue of opinions about the usage of mental health facilities. Whites were more likely than Blacks to agree with counseling for a child’s problem; Blacks were more likely than Whites to agree with socioeconomically different and mixed race client-therapist sessions. Finally, there was a significant difference between the two races in the amount of psychological help in the past. In the sample 27.4% of the Whites teachers sought psychological help compared to only 14.45% of the Black teachers.

Fischer and Cohen (1972) examined the relationship between help-seeking attitudes and demographic variables (social class, educational level, religion and college major) within a sample of high school and college freshman students. They formulated two hypothesizes regarding the relationship between help-seeking attitude and socioeconomic class. The first was that “subjects from upper-class families hold more favorable attitudes than subjects from lower-class families, particularly among high school and beginning college students and secondly that the orientation to professional help becomes more positive as education increases (p. 70 ).”

There were 989 subjects (487 males and 502 females) coming from various educational backgrounds. The sample included high school, evening college, nursing, and university students. Subjects attitude toward seeking psychological help was measured by the Fischer and Turner Pro-Con Attitude Scale. Subjects were also given a demographic sheet that contain questions about the subjects age, level of education, academic major, religious background and social class.

The results were that social class background was not found significantly different in the sample. Social economic status did not influence help seeking attitudes; however, individuals education level was found to be significant. The attitudes of college juniors and seniors about seeking psychological help were more positive than either college freshmen or sophomore or high school students. Furthermore, college freshmen and sophomores had more of a positive attitude seeking psychological help than high school students. It was also found that Jewish subjects had a
more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than Catholics or Protestants. Lastly, individuals who were social majors, especially psychology majors, had a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than other disciplines.

In their article, "Cultural Mistrust, Opinions about Mental Illness and Black Students Attitude Toward Seeking Psychological Help from White Counselor," Nickerson, Helms and Terrell (1994) examined the relationship between Black students opinions about mental illness and their attitude toward seeking help from White counselors. There was a total of 105 Black undergraduate students from a predominately White University (Southwestern region of the U.S.) in the study. The group consisted of 54 females and 51 males. The subjects filled out the Cultural Mistrust Inventory (Terrell and Terrell, 1981), the Opinions about Mental Illness Scale (Cohen and Struening, 1962), the Help-Seeking Attitude Scale (Reid and Gundlach, 1983) and a background information questionnaire.

The Cultural Mistrust Inventory (CMI) measures the extent to which Blacks mistrusted Whites. The CMI contains 48 items to which subjects respond to using a 7-point Likert-type scales raging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7). The Opinions about Mental Illness Scale (OMI) was developed by Cohen and Stuening in 1962 to identify opinions about the cause, description and prognosis of mental illness. The original scale contained 51-items that were scored using a 6-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (6).

The Help-Seeking Attitude Scale reflects non-White cultural values or beliefs. The scale contains 40-items (using a 4-point likert scale) that assess concerns about seeking psychological help. The authors modified the scale in order to assess attitudes related to the subjects’ expectations of being seen by a White therapist. The instructions were changed so that the subject assume that they were going to see a White therapist.

The Reid-Gundlach Social Service Satisfaction Scale (R-GSSS) was initially used to assess a client’s overall satisfaction with social services. The original scale contained 34 items that used a 5-point likert type format. The measure yields three subscale scores: a) relevance of service ("the social agency will help me as much as they can") b) impact of service ("things have gotten
better since I’ve been going to the agency”) and c) gratification with service (“I always feel well treated when I leave the social agency”). The authors modified the scale (R-GSSS) for the purpose of the study. They modified the instructions to have the subjects assume that they were seeking help from a mental health clinic staffed primarily by whites and the verb tense of the items was changed from the present tense to the future tense to assess subjects expectation of counseling experience with white therapists.

Four hierarchical multiple regression was used to analysis the data. In the analysis, Help Seeking Attitude Score and three subscale measuring anticipated satisfaction with services provided by white therapist (the R-GSSS.. relevance, impact, and gratification subscales) were used as criterion variables. The subject’s gender was used as a co-variant and entered at the beginning of each regression analysis. Help-seeking attitudes, participant gender, cultural mistrust, and social restrictiveness opinions about mental illness were all predictive of help-seeking attitudes as measured by HSAS. However, in the other three models, only cultural mistrust was the significant predictor of help-seeking attitudes as measured by scores of the scores of the subjects’ anticipated satisfaction with service. Therefore, the hypothesis that cultural mistrust would predict help-seeking attitudes was supported by the findings, however, opinions about mental illness and gender were not predictive of such attitudes.

Fischer and Turner’s (1970) primary goal for their study was to construct a scale which “sampled an attitudinal domain corresponding to many factors that can affect an individuals decision to accept or seek professional counseling for psychiatric treatment, the stigma surrounding psychiatric care, and his ability to introspect and to disclose feelings (p. 80 ).”

There were a total of 960 subjects, 492 females and 468 males. Subjects were students from high school (78), nursing school (166), summer college (145), extension and community college (236), a male liberal arts college (113), and university students (222). The following scales were used besides the attitudinal scale: The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (1960); a biographical information form, containing three questions about what type of personal problems they had, how the person dealt with it and if professional help sought; a
20-item version of the F scale (authoritarianism) (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Stanford and Levinson, 1960); Rotter scale of Internal versus External locus of control (Rotter, 1966), the Rotter’s scale of Interpersonal Trust (1967) and a semantic masculinity-femininity scale.

The attitude scale was written by several clinical psychologist. The scale contained thirty-one items. Two examples of the questions are, “If I believe I was having a mental breakdown my first inclination would be to get professional attention” and “There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his conflicts and fear without resorting to professional help.” The 31-item questionnaire was given to 78 high school and 19 nursing students, who were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement using a 4-point likert scale. A factor analysis of the attitude scale was conducted and four factors emerged from the analysis. These factors are the following: I- Recognition of personal need for professional psychological help (8 items), II- Tolerance of stigma associated with psychiatric help (5 items), III- Interpersonal openness regarding one’s problems (7 items) and IV- Confidence in the mental health professional (9 items). The final attitudinal scale has 29-items (The Fischer and Turner’s Scale of Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH)). This scale contains 11 positively and 18 negatively stated items in a 4-point likert format. The scale is scored reverse (negative items), with high scores representing positive attitudes toward receiving help. The subjects also filled out a Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. The result indicated a significant sex difference when an item analysis was done. Females tended to endorse all items except the statement “It is probably best not to know everything about oneself,” in the direction that is favorable to help seeking.

The results for the biographical information questionnaire was obtain from a sample of 531 nursing and college students. About 9% of the subjects had seen or where currently seeing a professional about personal or family problems. Males and females who had sought psychological help scored higher on the scale than those who had not sought psychological help.

The last hypothesis examined was the certain personalities would have significant relationship to help-seeking attitudes, and therefore explaining the variance in the measure. To
analysis this the authors used the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, the Authoritarianism Index by the F scale (high F person is described as conventional, hypocritical, submissive), Rotter's scale of Interpersonal Trust (trust in social institutions and professionals), the Internal-External control measure scale and the masculinity scale. Only the Internal-External and F control measures correlated significantly with attitudes for both males and females. Furthermore, subjects who were high on authoritarianism and external tended to endorse negative attitudes. Lastly, social desirability and trust correlated positively with help seeking attitudes. However, this was true only for male subjects. Masculinity was not related to attitude scores in both groups.

Tedeschi and Willis (1993) designed a study to investigate the “attitudes of female and male international students toward counseling compared to the attitudes of female and males Caucasian students native to the U.S. (p. 47).” Tedeschi and Willis presented to one hundred and fourteen undergraduate students volunteers (30 Asian men international, 36 Asian men, 26 native Caucasian women and 22 native Caucasian men) a questionnaire that requested nationality, age, gender, preferred counselor characteristics (older than client, belong to a minority group, same race, same gender, same socioeconomic status, has an university degree), preferred source of help for personal problems (university counseling center counselor, academic/foreign student advisor, faculty member or dean counselor in private practice, counselor in community agency, religious leader, parent, other relative, friend or nobody), and attitudes toward professional help (Fischer and Turner’s scale of Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH)).

There were no gender or ethnic difference for the ranking of the sources they would seek first if they had a personal problem to discuss. Asian international students indicated that having a counselor of the same ethnicity was more important of all the counselor’s characteristics than the Native Caucasian students. Native Caucasian women reported more positive attitudes toward counseling than the other three groups. Women more often reported the need for help than men.

For the subscale Need, only the main effect for gender was significant $F (1, 110) = 14.63$ $p < .001$. Women more often reported the need for help than men. Stigma subscale, native Caucasian women were more tolerant of possible stigma than the other three groups ($F (1, 110) =$
6.36, p< .05). Confidence subscale, native women expressed more confidence in mental health practitioners than did the other three groups.

Dadfar and Friedlander (1982) attempted to identify demographic and experiential variables influencing international students' attitudes toward seeking psychological help. There were 300 subjects in the study. The sample was stratified by continent (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America). Subjects completed the Fischer and Turner’s (1970) scale of Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) and a personal data form that requested country of origin, age, sex, length of time in the United States, educational status, and the nature of help previously sought for a personal or emotional problem.

The authors factor analyzed the ATSPPH because they believe that the underlying domain would differ in American (reported by Fischer and Turner, 1970) and international students. Principal-axis factor extraction and oblique rotation resulted in three clearly defined relatively independent factors. Factor 1 (Confidence/ Appropriateness) refers to one’s trust and faith in the professional and to consider psychological treatment as an appropriate means for solving emotional problems. Factor 2 (Stigma/Privacy) is the social stigma and the invasion of privacy associated with psychological treatment. Factor 3 (Coping Alone) was composed of several items from Fischer and Turner’s Factor I (Recognition of Personal Need for Professional Help) and Factor III (Interpersonal Openness).

Analysis revealed a significant continent effect on total ATSPPH score, however sex and the interaction were non-significant. Scheffe multiple co-comparison showed that Western attitudes (European and Latin) was more positive than non-western attitudes (African and Asians). However the Latin sample attitudes did not significantly exceed European attitudes.

Finally, a MANOVA was done using the composite scores on the three factor (Confidence/Appropriateness, Stigma/Privacy, and Coping Alone) to discriminate between individual who have not had psychological help in the past from those having had contact in the U.S. versus outside the U.S. versus both. The non-contact group scored the lowest on each dimension. Highest scores on Confidence/Appropriateness and Coping Alone were by subjects
who sought help both within and outside the United States, yet high scores on Stigma/Privacy were from the group of individuals who sought help in their native countries. Attitudes among the subject was not related to length of time in the United States.

Different Ethnic Groups Preference of Counselor’s Characteristics and Acculturation to Mainstream Culture in the United States

Ponce and Atinkson (1989) examined the effects of counselor ethnicity, subject’s acculturation, and counseling style on the “perception of counselor credibility and influence that Mexican-Americans subjects hold (p. 204 ).” A 3x2x2 factorial design was used which included three levels of subject’s acculturation (low, medium, high, two levels of counselor ethnicity (Mexican-American or Anglo-American) and two levels of counseling style (directive and non-directive) . The subject completed an acculturation rating scale and then were given photograph of a counselor, and a script of counselor session. The photo and description were used “to vary the counseling ethnicity and the counseling script was used to vary the counseling style (p. 204 ).” Then subjects rated the counselor’s credibility and their willingness to seek psychological professional help from a counselor. The low acculturation category contained 72 subjects, the medium-acculturation category contained 41 subjects, and the high acculturation category had 56 subjects.

Two three-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAS) were computed using Wilk’s Lambda criterion. The main effects for both counselor ethnicity and counselor style were found to be significant as well as the interaction effect for these two variables. The results for the CERS scale was the following: the counselor received higher ratings when identified as a Mexican-American than when identified as an Anglo-American. Furthermore, for the four dimensions the counselor received higher ratings when using a directive counseling style than when using a non-directive counseling style.

Finally, a MANOVA was computed on the information from the adapted personal problems inventory. It was computed on the personal/social and the academic/career items as the two dependent variables. High ratings were given to the counselor when he was identified as a
Mexican-American and to the directive counseling style. This preference for an ethnically similar counselor held across subjects level of acculturation.

Atkinson, Furlong, and Poston (1986) compared black subjects’ preference for counselor race with preference for other counselor characteristic (counselor sex, religion, educational background, socioeconomic background attitudes and values personality, and age). Another purpose of the study was to determine if blacks subjects preference for counselor characteristics are a “function of expressed level of commitment to black culture (p. 327 ).” There were 128 subjects (42 black men and 86 black women). Each subjects were given a two part survey. Part 1 requested the following demographic information: sex, ethnicity, occupation, age and parents’ annual income. Subjects were also asked if they a) “ever seen a counselor for academic vocational, or personal counseling and b) to indicated their commitment to Anglo-American and Afro-American culture (strong for both, strong Anglo-American and weak Afro-American, weak Anglo-American and strong Afro-American , or weak for both) (p. 327 ).”

On part 2 of the survey questionnaire required respondents to make choices between two counselors given characteristics related to education (more/similar), attitudes and values (similar/dissimilar) personality (similar/dissimilar), ethnicity (similar/dissimilar), sex (same/opposite), socioeconomic status (similar/dissimilar), age (similar, older), and religion (similar/dissimilar) . Furthermore, each characteristics was paired with each of the other characteristics for presentation.

The categories for culture commitment was collapse into two: strong commitment to Afro-American culture (n = 83) and a weak commitment to Afro-American (n=45). The rank order of preference for those with strong commitment to Afro-American culture was nearly identical with the total rank order more education (selected 76.8% of the time. The most frequently selected counselor characteristics was more education (selected 73.9%), followed by similar attitudes (64.5%), older (62.9%) and similar personality ( 61%). Similar ethnicity was selected 54.8% of the time and ranked 5th as a characteristic of choice and dissimilar ethnicity was selected 38% of the time and ranked 15th of the 16 characteristics.
Atkinson and Gin (1989) hypothesized that “Chinese-, Japanese-, and Korean-American university students who strongly identify with their ethnic culture would have relatively negative attitudes toward mental health services whereas those who are more acculturated would have relatively positive attitudes toward mental health services (p. 209).”

There were 263 Chinese-Americans (126 men and 127 women), 185 Japanese-Americans (77 men and 108 women) and 109 Korean-Americans (61 men and 48 women) in the study. There were three parts to the questionnaire. Part 1 asked for demographic data (sex, age, ethnicity, birthplace, parent’s birthplace, parent’s birth place and class standing). Part 2 was a modification of the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale. This scale has 21 items, multiple choice questionnaire that covers language, identity, friendship, behaviors, generation/geographic history, and attitudes. Low, medium and high scores reflects low, medium, high levels of acculturation. Part 3 was the Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Help Scale.

The more acculturated Asian-American students in this study were more likely than less acculturated Asian-American students to recognize personal need for professional psychological help, to be tolerant of the stigma associated with psychological help and to be open to discussing their problems with a counselor.

Finally, Gordon and Grathan (1979) looked at the effect of four client classification variables (racial self-designation, sex, race, and previous counseling experience) on a group of Whites, Blacks Puerto Ricans, and other disadvantage client’s preference for a counselor of the same sex, same age, and same social class background.

Clients were asked to give information about their racial self-designation, age, sex, father’s occupation and mother’s occupation, birth order, family size, and previous counseling experience. There was also a rating scale that contained four counselor-preference characteristics (same sex, same race, same age and previous counseling experience) using a 6-point scale (likert scale). There were 81 males and 113 females in the study. About 61% of the sample reported that previous counseling experience had been helpful or very helpful, only 14% reported that the
experience had been somewhat helpful. Five percent of the sample previous counseling experience had not been helpful and 16% of the sample had no previous counseling experience.

Same-race preference

The four one-way analyses of variance indicated that there was no difference among the group for same-race preference. The grand mean indicated a tendency within the total sample to agree that they would prefer help from a helper who was the same race.

Same-sex preference

There was no significant difference among the disadvantage group. The grand mean of the groups indicated that the sample agreed slightly that they would prefer a helper of the same sex.

Same-age preference

There was a significant difference among the group in same-age preference. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Whites tend to agree slightly that they would prefer a counselor who is close in age to them whereas the group designated others, composed of Chinese, Spanish Americans and Native Americans tend to agree with the item.

Same Socioeconomic status

Female tended to agree while men tended to only agree slightly that they would prefer a helper of the same socioeconomic status background. Furthermore, individuals who felt that counseling had been slightly helpful or not helpful at all tended to agree slightly that they wanted a helper with the same socioeconomic status. However, individuals who felt that counseling had contributed to their problems tended to disagree slightly that they would prefer a helper of the same social class background.

Results indicated that while there was a slightly preference in all disadvantaged groups for a helper of the same sex, same age and same race, there was a definite preference for helper of the same socioeconomic status background.

The Present Study

The literature review suggests conflicting findings on whether there are differences between Whites and minority students’ attitudes toward seeking psychological help (Hall and Tucker, 1985;
Tedeschi and Willis, 1993; Dadfar and Friedlander, 1982). There are also inconsistent findings on whether minority students prefer to see a counselor who is the same ethnicity, same sex, and have the same socioeconomic status (Ponce and Atkinson, 1989; Atkinson, Furlong and Poston, 1986; Gordon and Grathan, 1979).

This study was designed to investigate whether there were differences between Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians college student’s attitude toward seeking psychological help, and 2) to determine if preference based on ethnicity (identical ethnicity, age, sex, etc.) influences help seeking. The importance of these issues is based on the many cultural differences which now characterize campus profiles and the general lack of diverse services provided for those populations. Hopefully, the results of the study will assist in developing more effective strategies and approaches for counseling and providing such services for diverse college student populations.

Hypotheses
1) Minority college students (Blacks Hispanics/Mexican Americans and Asians) will have a more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than will White students.
2) Female students will have a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than male students.
3) Minorities who have a strong acculturation to their culture will have a more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than those with a weak acculturation.
4) Minority college students (Blacks Hispanics/Mexican Americans and Asians) will prefer to see a counselor who is older, belongs to a minority group, the same race, same gender, same socioeconomic status, and has an university degree.

Method
Participant. The participants (n = 124) in the study were recruited from several cultural and service organizations at a midwestern public university. These groups included Alpha Phi Omega, Circle K International, Epsilon Sigma Alpha, Phi Epsilon Mu, Rotaract Club, the Multi-Cultural Student Union, Bacchus and the Minority Admission Program.
The services organizations (Alpha Phi Omega, Circle K International, Epsilon Sigma Alpha, Phi Epsilon Mu, Rotaract Club, and Bacchus) were composed mostly of white students while the cultural organizations (Multi-Cultural Student Union and the Minority Admission Program) were composed of Black, Hispanics/Mexican-American and Asian students. Fifty-three percent of the participants were White, and 47% were Minorities (see table 1). Eighty percent of the participants (n = 99) were females.

Materials. The questionnaire included the Fischer and Turner (1970) Pro-Con Attitude Scale and a personal information form. Pro-Con Attitude Scale has a four-point likert format with responses ranging from agree to disagree. The higher the rating the more positive the attitude toward seeking psychological help. The internal reliability for the scale was .85. Examples of the type of statements on this questionnaire are: “Although there are clinics for people with mental troubles, I would not have much faith in them,” “If a good friend asked my advice about a mental problem, I might recommend that he see a psychiatrist,” and “A person with a strong character can get over mental conflicts by himself, and would have little need of a psychiatrist.”

Participants also completed a personal information form (see appendix A) that assessed age, sex, race, preference of counselor characteristics (older than client, belongs to minority group, same race, same gender, same socioeconomic status and having an university degree), and history of psychological help seeking in the past.

Procedure. Questionnaires were distributed to organization presidents with the explanation of the study (see appendix B). Group presidents and members were assured of confidentiality and members either completed the questionnaire at their organization’s meeting or placed the completed questionnaire in a box locate in the psychology department.

Results

The first three hypotheses involved comparisons of scores on the Pro-Con scale. The relevant statistics are presented in Table 2.
The first hypothesis, which suggested that minority college students would have a more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than White students, was supported. A one-way analysis of variance revealed a significance difference between the minority student and Whites about attitude toward seeking psychological help; Minority students had a more negative attitude (\(M = 45.17\)) than White students (\(M = 51.48\)), \(F(1, 120) = 6.94, p < .001\).

It was anticipated in the second hypothesis that female students would have a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help than male students. A one-way analysis of variance; female students had more of a positive attitude (\(M = 50.09\)) toward seeking psychological help than male students (\(M = 42.45\)), \(F(1, 120) = 6.44, p < .02\).

The third hypothesis anticipated that Minorities who are more committed to their culture would have a significantly more negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than those with weak acculturation. This hypothesis was not supported; individuals commitment to their culture did not influence whether one had more of a positive or negative attitude toward seeking psychological help. Most (65%) individuals indicated a strong commitment to their own ethnic culture; with only relatively small numbers choosing one of the other three alternatives. Hence, for analysis participants were categorized into two groups; the first included those with a strong commitment to their own identified culture; the second included the three other responses (strong commitment to Anglo culture and weak commitment to own culture, strong commitment to both Anglo and own culture, and weak commitment to both Anglo and own cultures). No significant difference were found between these two groups \(F(1, 53) = 0.40, p > .05\). Individuals' commitment to their culture did not influence whether one had more of a positive or negative attitude toward seeking psychological help.

Lastly, the fourth hypothesis predicted that minority college students would prefer to see a counselor who is older, belongs to a minority group, the same race, same gender, same
socioeconomic status, and has an university degree. This hypothesis implies that counselor characteristics would be important to minorities. To examine this, scale responses were first collapsed into two categories. The first, “not important,” included the three negative responses (“very unimportant,” “somewhat unimportant,” “unimportant”) as well as “neutral.” The second category, “important,” included the three positive responses (“important,” “somewhat important,” “very important”). The proportions of individuals believing the characteristics are important are shown in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Next, the proportion of individuals responding “important” and “not important” for each characteristic were compared using Binomial tests. Because the hypothesis involved six separate comparisons, the hypothesis-wide error rate was maintained at .05 by using the Berferroni adjustment to determine the alpha per comparison, .008. Significant differences were found on two of the six characteristics, gender and SES. However, contrary to the hypothesis, individuals were significantly more likely to indicate that gender and SES were not important.

Eighty-five percent (n = 32) of the minority participants reported having visited a counselor. Of these, 50% had seen a counselor during the past month and 41% during the past two years. The preferred characteristics of counselors by these individuals who had personal experience with a counselor were also examined. They did not differ from those of the overall sample of minorities; that is, no characteristics were viewed as important, but gender and SES were seen as unimportant. Apparently, characteristics minorities preferred in a counselor was not affected by personal experience with a counselor.

Discussion

The first main goal of this study was to investigate minority students’ attitudes toward seeking psychological help. As expected, there was a significant difference between Minority and White students’ attitude toward seeking psychological help; Minority students had a more negative
attitude toward seeking psychological help than White students. This finding supports the view that different strategies may need to be created to involve minority students’ participation in seeking psychological help (Dadfar and Friedlander, 1982; Davis and Swartz, 1972; Hall and Tucker, 1985).

More than twenty years ago Gibbs (1975) investigated problems related to Black students’ use of mental health services at a predominantly white university. He proposed that university mental health clinics need to expand or improve on the following areas to improve black students’ use of mental health facilities: 1) “outreach programs need to be developed to meet objectives and target group within the minority population,” 2) “counseling programs within the entire student framework should be better coordinated in order to reduce duplication and to improve communications so that the problem of black students can be handled more efficiently,” 3) “efforts should be made to disseminate mental health information among the black students through weekly newspaper, student organizations, and recruitment of more black resident assistants and peer counselors,” and 4) “clinics should make an effort to increase the number of blacks and other minorities on the professional and clerical staff.”

The findings of this study would suggest that over twenty years later we may still have a difficulty in providing traditional services for minority students. Because Black college students have been found to have a wide range of problems (Hammond, 1970; Davis and Swartz, 1972) their perception of help seeking would seem to inhibit their tendency to seek necessary assistance. It may be that the Gibbs’ recommendations have not been implemented effectively at this point (although minority counselors are provided on the campus in which these data were collected) or information regarding services effectively disseminated.

David and Swartz (1972) suggested that information about psychological and other help for minorities be distributed through the use of informal techniques (radio, newspaper and minority functions). These authors stressed the importance of changing utilization of services through personalized contact. All college campuses mental health practitioners should examine the
importance of addressing minority student participation in their services through actively trying new strategies such as these authors have formulated.

The second major hypothesis focused on significant difference between male and female students’ attitude toward seeking psychological help. Male students had more of a negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than females. This finding is similar to the results of Fischer and Turner’s (1970) research with American students. In their study Dadfar and Friedlander (1982) did not find a sex difference for international students. It was suggested by Dadfar and Friedlander that male and female foreign students may hold more similar attitudes than male and female American students. This issue should be considered when designing programs to increase students’ accessibility to campus guidance, counseling and remedial programs.

It was also predicted that Minorities who were more committed to their culture would have more of a negative attitude toward seeking psychological help than those with a weak acculturation (Atkinson and Gim, 1989; Gordon and Grantham, 1979). However, no significant difference between individuals who had a strong commitment to their culture and those who had a weak commitment to their culture were found. Acculturation did not influence whether one had more of a positive or negative attitude toward seeking psychological help. One implication from this finding may be that minorities are less to seek psychological services that are more cultural specific. When creating services to increase minorities participation in seeking psychological help, practitioners should emphasis the positive gains that could be obtained from counseling and not concentrate solely on how one’s ethnic background influences their likelihood to seek psychological help.

Another variable examined in this study was whether minority students would prefer a more culturally and demographically similar counselor (identical minority, gender, ses). It was anticipated that the counselor characteristics of ethnicity and race would be particularly important to minority students; interestingly, only two of the six characteristics, gender and SES, were found to be significant. However, Minority students indicated that these two characteristics were not important and that the other characteristic were irrelevant when choosing to see a counselor. This finding contradicts previous findings that these six variables were significantly important to
minorities (Gordon and Grantham 1979; Atkinson, Furlong, and Poston 1986). Furthermore, Gordon and Grantham found that there was a definite preference for a helper of the same social class background for disadvantaged students. It may be that at this time minority students place less great importance on counselor characteristics but on the quality of care that would be provided to them. This factor was not examined in the present study and future researcher might consider inclusion of this factor.

The findings in this study must be considered in light of several limitations. There was a relatively low representation of minority student from the Hispanic/Mexican American students and Asian student population in this study. Of the 58 minority participants, only 9 (15.5%) were Asians and 5 (8.6%) were Hispanic/Mexican Americans. Since these two groups had such a low representation, it may not be correct to assume that these groups necessarily will indicate that only two of the six counselor characteristics are significantly different. Also in the present study there was not enough representation of male students. Eighty percent of the participants were females. For future research, there needs to be an equal representation from each minority group and from both genders. Since, this study was conducted on a midsize Midwestern university campus, the minority sample may not be representative of the minority population at large.

Hopefully, these findings will provide further insight into student personnel program development for minority students. Given the rapidly changing profile of the American college student continued research regarding this area should be critical.
Appendix A

Fill in the blank with the correspondent number.

Race

1. Amercian Indian
2. Alskan Native
3. Asian
4. Black, not Hispanic
5. White, not Hispanic
6. Hispanic Puerto Rican
7. Hispanic Mexican
8. Hispanic Cuban
9. Other

Sex

1. Male
2. Female

Martial Status

1. Never married
2. Married
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

Year in school

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior
5. Graduate student

Religion preference/affiliation (i.e., Catholic Jewish, Protestant)

Fill in age and major

Age

Major
I. Rank-order (1-10) the source of help that you would seek if you need to discuss a personal problem:

- university counseling center counselor
- faculty member (or dean)
- academic/foreign student advisor
- counselor in private practice
- pastoral or religion counselor
- parent
- other relative
- friend
- nobody

II. Assume that you are seriously considering seeing a counselor about either emotional or academic difficulties. As part of that consideration, think about what kind of counselor you would prefer to consult.

Rate how important the following counselor’s characteristics are to you.

1a) Counselor belonging to a minority group

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---

1b) Counselor being the same ethnicity

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---

2) Counselor having a university degree

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---

3) Counselor being the same gender

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---
4) Counselor being older than client

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---
unimportant

5) Counselor being from the same socioeconomic status as the client

very important | somewhat | unimportant
---|---|---
unimportant

III. Circle the letter which represents the best response of the degree of your commitment to cultural values.

A. Strong commitment to both Anglo and Latino/Hispanic, Asian or Afro-American cultures

B. Strong commitment to Anglo culture; weak commitment to Latino/Hispanic, Asian, or Afro-American culture

C. Strong commitment to Anglo culture; weak commitment to Latino/Hispanic, Asian, or Afro-American culture

D. Weak commitment to both Anglo and Latino/Hispanic, Asian, or Afro-American culture

IV. Have you seen a counselor in the past: month? year? two years? three years? four years? five years? over five years ago?

If so please check the following:

academic
personal
vocational
other (describe)
Appendix B

Subjects were give form A if they belong to a minority group, otherwise they were give form B.

Form A

The attached questionnaire is designed to evaluate student’s attitudes toward seeking help and assistance with problems. Your assistance is being solicited since you belong to a specific group on campus which represents a minority affiliation and the information acquired from this analysis is for a master’s degree thesis, hopefully, add to the literature regarding help seeking behavior among college students. All responses to the survey are confidential and no names are required. Only group results will be analyzed and compared.

Your cooperation in this project is considered very important and we are very grateful for your help.

Please drop the completed questionnaire in the box provided in the Psychology office, Science Bldg., room 119 as soon as possible.

Kiesha Ford
Graduate Student, Psychology

William Kirk Ph.D.
Psychology Department

If you have any questions about the survey or the project feel free to call us.

Results of the survey will be made available to your organization.

Form B

The attached questionnaire is designed to evaluate student’s attitudes toward seeking help and assistance with problems. The information acquired from this analysis is for a master’s degree thesis, hopefully, add to the literature regarding help seeking behavior among college students. All responses to the survey are confidential and no names are required. Only group results will be analyzed and compared.

Your cooperation in this project is considered very important and we are very grateful for your help.

Please drop the completed questionnaire in the box provided in the Psychology office, Science Bldg., room 119 as soon as possible.

Kiesha Ford
Graduate Student, Psychology

William Kirk Ph.D.
Psychology Department

If you have any questions about the survey or the project feel free to call us.

Results of the survey will be made available to your organization.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.5(75.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.3 (15.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ethnic group as percent of Minorities are shown in parentheses.*
Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations on Pro-Con Scale By Groups

(a)
Minority and White $^a$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45.18</td>
<td>13.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>51.48</td>
<td>13.24</td>
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</table>

(b)
Females and Males $^a$

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>50.09</td>
<td>13.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42.46</td>
<td>13.52</td>
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</table>

(c)
Ethnic commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong to Own</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other $^b$</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46.55</td>
<td>16.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$significant difference

$^b$"Strong to anglo weak to own," "Strong to both anglo and own," "Weak to own and strong to Anglo."
Table 3

Minorities’ Preference for Counselor Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Characteristics</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same ethnicity</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same gender</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than client</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same SES status</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a significant difference
Footnote

As noted, there were 58 minority participates; however, due to missing data on some measures, the $n$ for the hypotheses varied. The responses on the Pro-Con scale for two African-Americans (1 male, 1 female) were incomplete and one Asian did not respond to the item of ethnic commitment. Hence, for hypotheses 1 and 2, $n = 122$; for hypothesis 3, $n = 55$; for the fourth hypothesis, $n = 58$. 
References


