Perception of Counselors: A Function of Culture

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PERCEPTION OF COUNSELORS: A FUNCTION OF CULTURE

by

Victor I. Alvarado

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Doctor of Education

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1976
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My gratitude goes to my wife, Janice, who has given me much help and support at all times. My thanks also go to Dr. W. A. Carlson, chairman of my doctoral committee, and to Drs. R. M. W. Travers, J. Lowe, K. Bullmer, and N. Lamper for their encouragement, advice and support.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my wife and my children, who have been a constant source of pride and satisfaction.

Victor I. Alvarado
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time there was a great flood, and involved in the flood were two creatures, a monkey and a fish. Now the monkey, being agile and experienced, was lucky enough to scramble up a tree and escape the raging waters. As he looked down from his safe perch, he saw the poor fish struggling against the swift current. With the very best of intentions, he reached down and lifted the fish from the water. The result was inevitable (Adams, 1962).

Counseling, at least in its pristine form, and defined as a systematic approach to establishing helping relationships intended to promote psycho-social adjustments in behavior, carries a label that reads in big letters "Made in U.S.A." As such it is a reflection and projection of the American cultural norms of behavior.

A review of the development of counseling in America shows a prolific production of methods, models and techniques for inducing changes in behavior. This exuberance makes the observer often wonder whether this abundance is a function of superficiality or the result of highly creative minds. It is also possible to wonder whether the ephemeral nature of so many theoretical approaches

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to counseling is just another example of planned obsolescence or a functional way of adjusting to and dealing with the vertiginous changes of contemporary society. But no matter what the nature of this phenomenon might be, it appears to be a fact that counseling has made an important contribution to mental health in America.

Unfortunately, this statement does not seem to be applicable to some segments of the population. There is evidence to support the claim (Calia, 1966) that counseling has been disfunctional for some cultures or subcultures within the American society. This is probably due to the fact that many counselors, as well as other behavioral scientists, have operated under the assumption that counseling is based on inter-personal relationships, which can be considered as universals and idiosyncracies that transcend across cultures. This assumption is based on Darwin's notion that the expressions of basic emotions are evolutionary and, consequently, similar among all human beings. It appears to be an oversimplification, since evidence demonstrates (Ekman & Friesen, 1968) that this assumption holds true only when the cross-cultural transactions have been analyzed in terms of functional equivalencies across cultures.

Another reason for the lack of functionality of counseling when dealing with minority groups and/or cross-cultural situations
seems to be related to the fact that psychology, as well as other behavioral sciences, has traditionally had an ancillary role for the ruling class and the cultural values represented by them.

On this particular subject, a survey of the research on behavioral sciences (Sue & Sue, 1972) indicated that in spite of the fact that there is a considerable amount of research being done about the culturally different subject, the research being conducted for the culturally different individual is almost non-existent.

In addition, since counseling is an American phenomenon, whenever this field expands its range of action to a different cultural setting it is done without assessing how alien the values of counseling might be from those of the host culture. This expansion, whenever it occurs, appears to develop with a missionary zeal and in a paternalistic fashion with little or no concern for axiological or phenomenological considerations. The views on counseling are being exported from the original culture of origin in its original form without making provisions for possible and necessary adjustments.

Without keeping these ideas in mind, conflicts will result from a counseling interaction. The observed behavior resulting from the counselor-client's interaction comes from the counselor's cultural perspective which determines the evaluative criteria for the assessment of the client's behavior, and will most certainly
come in conflict with the client's evaluative criteria in reference to standards of behavior. This is a generally conflictive situation due to the fact that the values influencing the counselor's behavior and that of the culturally different client are a function of two different cultural ethos.

Culture

Culture is a term which is widely used in many fields of research; but, unfortunately, the result of this variety is a certain degree of confusion or vagueness.

At the very general and abstract level, culture is described (Parsons & Shils, 1951) as having as a main component a set of evaluative criteria intended to provide the limits of the permissible costs of an expressive gratification. This set of criteria provides a classification of the standards of behavior related to the areas of cognitive problems, appreciative problems, and moral standards.

Every culture has a unique way of defining truth in terms of scientific knowledge, as a way of describing functional relationships, or in terms of other not necessarily empirical but rather esoteric sources of knowledge.

In addition, every culture has distinctive appreciative criteria for establishing standards of beauty in terms of purely
artistic creations, as well as the degree to which these aesthetic manifestations become a part of everyone's vital experience.

Appreciative criteria for determining the degree of relative utilitarian value of nature, technology and other artifacts developed by or used within a given culture are the elements generally most distinctive and most difficult to reconcile in cross-cultural transactions.

Finally, each culture can be characterized by very distinctive ethical standards of behavior for the over-all integration of the various units of the system.

These subsets of standards of behavior are basic components of cultures but they are not discrete elements. Every culture develops a unique pattern of interrelations among these variables which result in a unique global configuration. Part of the uniqueness of this final pattern is due to the co-existence of two other factors which are inherent to every culture: time and space. Cultures do not exist in a vacuum. They are immersed in these two dimensions which provide new sources of dynamic interactions within these configurations. As a function of time, a culture is not a static but an ongoing process, a highly dynamic entity. The physical, geographic characteristics of a given culture also provide a unique substratum for what can be called a cultural ecosystem.
Good examples of such ecosystems are the numerous Spanish-speaking groups and communities in the Southwest of the USA, generally described as Mexican-Americans. Without making necessary distinctions in terms of range of residence, range of acculturation and socio-economic status, or historical and geographical differences within the Mexican-American communities, most observations and analyses of behavior will result in extremely inaccurate conclusions which will have little or no validity whatsoever.

Cultural Dimensions of Perception

The different variables that describe culture are manifested on the individual's behavior, which can be described as the resultant of all the vectors interacting at two parallel levels: (1) an idiographic dimension and (2) a nomothetic dimension (Gretzels & Guba, 1957). Lewin (1935) formulates behavior in terms of his formula $B = f(P \times E)$ where $P$ is personality and $E$ is environment as perceived by the subject. In this formulation, $P$ and $E$ are not independent since one defines the other, environment being defined by the perception of the person.

If one accepts this formulation, one may infer a need for a
phenomenological analysis of cross-cultural interactions. This need is particularly important to behavioral scientists interested in analyzing transactions across cultures.

With a phenomenological perspective, it is possible to discover that the actual differences in behavior in different cultural settings are not the result of environmental but perceptual differences.

When a culturally different client is trying to react meaningfully to a counseling interaction, he is ready to react in a given way. He has a predisposition to see and hear; to remember and forget; to think and say; and to behave according to his dispositions founded in his particular cultural experiences and perspectives. Cultural values and subsequent dispositions act as differential sensitizers to external phenomena, emphasizing or de-emphasizing them in accordance with the degree of congruence between them and his own cultural values.

In some cases, through a process of assimilation, events that are neutral, contradictory or puzzling to a particular cultural set are assigned subjective meaning and cohesion at the unrecognized risk of being false in meaning and with a spurious cohesion. By a similar process the complexity of the real data may be simplified in order to be assimilated to a given attitude and placed into the preconceived test.
In case the facts are opposed to an operational set of cultural attitudes, rationalization may provide a mechanism for conformity with the pre-existing disposition.

Finally, whenever the factual data provide an element of reality that happens to support the cultural belief system, accentuation of that element may occur, exaggerating out of proportion the actual importance of reality.

These considerations may be particularly useful for counselors operating in cross-cultural situations. Previous to any implementation of counseling in culturally different settings, it is necessary to assess carefully the set of characteristic values, beliefs and attitudes of the client. Equally important is the ability to recognize the impact that the values implicit in counseling have on the concept of self-actualization. In other words, the experienced impact that counseling has on the subject—-as defined by the culturally different client's perception—-is a most crucial element in determining the functionality of counseling in this new situation.

The relevance of counseling to any given culture is certainly not questioned here, but in order to facilitate the utilization of the full potential energy concomitant to systematic self-actualizing methodologies, it is necessary to provide not only for an adaptation of counseling to the different culture but to facilitate an integration of counseling methods and the values of the different culture. This
need seems to be crucial at the counselor education level. Those being educated to disseminate and implement this system in a culture where a counseling relationship does not exist--at least in a systematic way--need to be assisted in integrating their behavior into this new behavioral system.

The possibility of conflicts in cross-cultural situations is not an indication that counseling should be avoided because certain types of conflict can give rise to transformations and new ideas that could be beneficial for both cultures participating in the trans-action.

Cultures are dynamic entities. Their nature is a process of constant change and evolution. Cultures are constantly being revised in the light of new creations, in the light of alternate norms of behavior being proposed, and reformulation of some of the old standards.

The conditions of modern society do not allow any given culture to become self contained. Cultures are continuously being exposed to each other, thus influencing each other to the point where it becomes difficult at times to trace back the cultural origins of certain norms of behavior. The prognosis of a given behavior to be integrated into a new culture depends on the degree of compatibility of the values implied in this behavior with the values of the host culture. The occurrence of an initial conflict
is not necessarily a sign of dislocation or incompatibility; it could very well be a function of a perceptual distortion.

Through systematic analysis of these areas of conflict knowledge about cross-cultural transactions can be acquired. Many times these areas of conflict cannot be foreseen until the interactions are happening. It is, therefore, necessary for all social systems of cross-cultural interactions to include as a part of their system a built-in mechanism for continuous detection, appraisal and correction of sources of conflict. In this respect, one of the most promising sources of diagnosis is the analysis of perception as it occurs in these transactions.

This type of analysis is the basis for the present study in which the initial perceptions of the counseling interaction in a cross-cultural situation are appraised. It is hoped that this knowledge will benefit those engaged in cross-cultural counseling and in the education of counselors for cross-cultural settings.

The Problem

This study is based on the set of assumptions implied in the previously described framework for cross-cultural counseling, and mainly on the contention that there is a dire need for the assessment of the way counselors are perceived by culturally different clients.
This appraisal needs to be undertaken whenever counseling occurs across cultural boundaries. It appears, though, that it is most necessary at the early stages of implementation of counseling into a new area of cultural pluralism. This is the particular situation in the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas where counseling is rapidly being implemented as a result of the creation of a graduate program in 1971 at Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas, for the training of school counselors.

Counseling, as it is being taught and practiced in most of the U.S.A. today, has very recently been introduced into the lower Rio Grande Valley. The main reason for this situation is that this area is geographically isolated from the rest of the country. This has created a situation with very unique features in terms of cultural exchange which cannot be found in any other section of the country.

Counseling is still fighting its way through the social systems of the Valley; counseling is being frowned upon, and quite often counselors are being described with derogatory epithets. The counselors themselves appear to be struggling with the counselor education program, in spite of their enthusiasm for the concept. Many of the students in the counseling program go through some internal turmoil as they try to conform to the role expectations commonly described in the literature as desirable behaviors in a
counselor or the so-called therapeutic conditions for counseling. Even after many of them succeed at exhibiting these new behaviors, it appears to be a temporary condition which lasts for as long as they remain in the program. Follow-up surveys of counselors in the field have been discouraging. Many counselors do not put into practice many of the behaviors learned in the program, using the excuse that "those things don't work here." The reasons for this type of statement could be varied, but it is the researcher's opinion that it is due to a lack of recognition of the cultural differences and, therefore, a lack of functionality. It may be possible to alleviate this situation with an early detection of conflictive perception of the counselor's behavior. This study is, therefore, intended to evaluate the perception of counselors--the dependent variable--as it occurs at the beginning of counseling in a bi-cultural situation. In order to operationalize this variable, perception of counselors is defined in terms of level of empathic understanding, level of regard, unconditionality of regard, congruence, and willingness to be known by those characteristics which are exhibited by the counselors (Barrett-Lennard, 1962).

These criteria are theoretically defined as formulated by Barrett-Lennard in 1959 and operationally defined as the final scores of the five different scales devised by the same author and formulated in their final form in 1962.
The independent variable is culture, previously defined as a set of evaluative criteria consisting of standards for solving cognitive and practical problems, standards for solving appreciative problems, and ethical standards for the overall integration of the system. Cultural differences are represented by two groups of college students attending the same university but whose family backgrounds permitted them to be considered as representatives of either the Anglo-American or Mexican-American ethnic groups. The inclusion of sex in the design was based on the differences that exist in terms of sex roles and norms of behavior in this area.

The existence of a close interaction between the ethnic background and the sex of both the counselor and the client was explored for the possible implications that this interaction effect could have on the perception of counseling.

In summary, this study is designed to explore the effect that the culture of the Mexican-Americans in the lower Rio Grande Valley has on the perception of counselors by the clients as opposed to the way counselors are perceived by the Anglo-American clients in the same region.

A second area of investigation is the effect that the counselor's cultural background has on the way he is perceived by clients of different cultural backgrounds.

This study is expected to provide information which will be
of particular use in understanding the impact that culture has on
perceiving some of the so-called therapeutic conditions exhibited
by client-centered counselors.

Hopefully, this study will provide a tentative baseline for
further investigation of the Mexican-Americans in other areas of
the country where other factors, besides culture, influence their
perception and reaction to other institutions of the American social
system.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were
accepted.

Mexican-American. --Individuals whose names and family
background permit them to be referred to as members of the Mexican
and Spanish cultural heritage in the Rio Grande Valley.

Anglo-American. --Individuals whose names and ethnic
heritage permit them to be referred to as "Anglos" in the Rio Grande
Valley.

Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. --A multiple item,
five-scale questionnaire designed to measure the perception of
facilitating factors in counseling interaction.

Level of regard. --The general tendency--at a given time--
of the various affective reactions--positive or negative--of the
counselor in relationship to a client, and operationally defined as the final score on this scale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

**Empathic understanding.**—The degree to which one person is conscious of the immediate awareness of another. This is operationally defined by the final score on this particular scale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

**Congruence.**—The degree to which one person is functionally integrated in the context of his relationship with another so that there is absence of conflict or inconsistency between his total experience, his awareness, and his overt communication. Operationally defined as the final score on this scale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

**Unconditionality of regard.**—The degree of constancy of regard felt by one person for another who communicates self experiences to the first. Operationally defined by the final score on this scale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

**Willingness to be known.**—The degree to which one person is willing to be known as a person, by another, according to the other’s desire for this. The final score on this scale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory provides an operational definition of it.
Hypotheses

This project was developed with the purpose of investigating the effect that cultural backgrounds of both the clients and the counselors have on the way counseling is perceived by the clients.

This project was developed in accordance with a 2x2x2x2 factorial design (Figure 1) in which the cells represent the perception of counselors with different cultural backgrounds--defined in terms of ethnic affiliation and sex--by clients with different cultural backgrounds, defined also in terms of ethnic affiliation and sex.

Perception of counseling was defined in terms of level of regard, empathic understanding, congruence, unconditionality of regard, and willingness to be known, as operationally defined and measured by the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

This study tested the following general hypotheses:

$H_1$ There is a significant difference in the way clients with different cultural backgrounds--defined in terms of ethnicity and sex--perceive the level of regard, unconditionality of regard, empathic understanding, congruence, and willingness to be known exhibited by counselors during the initial stage of counseling.

$H_2$ There is a significant difference in the way clients perceive the level of regard, unconditionality of regard, empathic understanding, congruence, and willingness to be known exhibited by counselors during the initial stage of counseling when counselors differ in terms of ethnicity and sex.
FIGURE 1

RESEARCH DESIGN

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I  Clients  
II Counselors  
A and C Mexican-American  
B and D Anglo-American  
1 Male  
2 Female  

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The review of literature of cross-cultural studies as it applies to counseling presents a rather gloomy situation. Some researchers (Kitano, 1969; Billingsley, 1970) believe that behavioral sciences have consistently ignored many culturally different members of American society, or, at the most, conducted research which perpetuates incorrect information about them. This has been the case with Americans of Asian descent, such as Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese and Koreans. In a similar fashion it has happened with other minorities, i.e. Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and Blacks. Research about these last three ethnic groups has certainly flourished recently as a result of the Civil Rights movement, but it appears that a large number of these studies have been more or less the direct reaction to social activism and not the result of real concern for the culturally different.

The amount of research about culturally different groups within the American society seems to be a function of the amount of social violence and turmoil created by those groups. The result of this situation is that sections of minority groups have perceived research about themselves as potentially damaging and, furthermore, when knowledge concerning ethnic groups is so vital and important
for improved cross-cultural relations, researchers are meeting increasing resistance from minority members to being researched (Sue & Sue, 1972). Another reason for this situation is the questionable relevance and validity of some studies along with the stigmatizing effect of stereotyping and of equating the model characteristics of a given section of an ethnic group with the behavior of all members of that culture (Kagan, 1964).

No matter what the reasons for this situation are, there is an unquestionable need for studies directed toward combating stereotypes, focusing on positive attributes and characteristics of ethnic groups, and bringing to a level of awareness and mutual understanding of the cultural values and influences which result in a differential development of personality, interest, and academic achievement and guidance of culturally different minorities (Sue & Sue, 1972; Simpkins & Raphael, 1970; Williams, 1970; Billingsley, 1970; Herzog, 1971; Blau, 1970; Beckman, Henthorn, Niyakawa-Howard, & Passin, 1970).

When researchers refer to counseling, it becomes more evident that there is a need for investigation and change in some of the traditional concepts and techniques. Calia (1966) called for a reformulation of the counselor's role with the culturally different client, based on the inappropriateness of contemporary concepts in counseling when applied indiscriminately in cross-cultural
settings. Vontress (1969) points out that one of the cultural barriers in the counseling relationship is the counselor's ignorance of clients' backgrounds, and suggests that a more desirable approach for counseling culturally-different clients would be to recognize and appreciate their differences. In reference to this problem, it is the researcher's contention that even though differences are crucial in a social context, it is more important to recognize them as they become operationally intervening factors in a cross-cultural situation at times such as at the very beginning of a counseling interaction.

The cultural variable has been mainly analyzed by sociologists and anthropologists who have recognized that each particular society builds a cultural pattern, a unique philosophy about each phase of the individual, and standardized ways in which culture prescribes what must be done, ought to be done, should be done, and may be done, in different situations and social interactions (Williams, 1960; Kunde & Davis, 1959; Benedict, 1960; Stump, Jordan & Friesen, 1967).

In spite of the general agreement on the need for understanding cultural differences, when it comes to defining those dissimilarities in an operational fashion literature becomes vague, superficial, and inadequate.

One of the main inadequacies is the lack of knowledge in
terms of what it actually means to be culturally different in a
counselor-client situation or similar situation. There is some
evidence, though, that the counselor's role is defined differently
by different people (Muro & Revello, 1970; Hitchcock, 1953;
Oelke, 1962; Gibson, 1965; Russell & Willis, 1964). But, unfor-
tunately, the differences reported in these studies are mainly
related to the duties and other professional activities of the
counselors in terms of their priorities or rank order as different
people see the counselor performing in various settings.

In more recent studies, cross-cultural counseling has been
analyzed with the purpose of assessing the attitudes of black people
in relationship to cross-cultural counseling.

The findings in this area are varied. Black clients appear
to prefer counselors of the same ethnic background (Stranges &
Riccio, 1970), disregarding their level of training (Banks, Berenson
& Carkhuff, 1967). But, on the other hand, at times evidence is
found that in some cases race does not constitute an issue (Kirshner
& Jackson, 1973) and sometimes personal and professional skills of
the counselor are more important than race (Brown, 1965; Backner,
1970). More recently Bryson and Cody (1973) as well as Grantham
(1973), investigating the relationship of race, sex, and level of
understanding between counselor and client, suggested that in some
instances race and sex of the counselor are factors related to level
of satisfaction and understanding in the counseling process. The race of the client, though, may not be as important a variable as some have thought (Grantham, 1973).

However, research reporting the effect of race on the counselor-client variable is scarce. Sattler (1970), in reviewing the literature in interracial counseling, concluded that few conclusions are warranted.

This situation is more evident with Spanish-speaking ethnic groups. Most of the cross-cultural studies in recent years about the Mexican-Americans have been conducted as a result of an increasing concern for the disadvantaged, the underprivileged, the underachievers, and anyone who deviates from the societal norms of behavior and standards of living. The common elements of those studies have been culture and deprivation. Unfortunately, in the minds of many, the term Mexican-American or any of the epithets used to refer to this particular group seems to have a derogatory connotation in terms of assigning to them some of the more devastating psychological characteristics of the culture of poverty. These are the characteristics of helplessness, of not belonging, of being marginal people, almost displaced people in their own land (Wilson, 1968). The analysis of this contaminating variable has provided rather conclusive evidence that poverty seems to be a far more influential variable than ethnic culture itself.
Jordan (1964) observed that cultural influences of poverty in inner-city slum areas of the American society are directionally and qualitatively similar to the influences of poverty in the "Barriada" in Lima, Peru; the "Callampas" in Santiago, Chile; the "Villas Miseria" in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the "Favelas" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; or the "Tugurios" in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

It is also the thesis of Lewis (1966) in his "Culture of Poverty," that poverty influences behavior beyond ethnic cultural values and transcends time and space. The same elements of influence found in the revolutionary events in Cuba, Bolivia, and Haiti are not different from the elements of Watts and other ghetto areas.

In this sense, the lower Rio Grande Valley provides a unique environment in terms of culture. The Valley is a bicultural setting with far less outcries and overt frictions than other Spanish-speaking communities.

Many of the facts of this microcosmic environment are very puzzling and paradoxical in terms of understanding the Mexican-American. This area is classified as one of the poorest in the nation; but a large number of the low middle-class families have maids and other niceties only found in very affluent situations elsewhere.

Prejudice exists across ethnic boundaries, but it is heavily modified by socio-economic status with an increasing number of mixed marriages. The idea that migrants do not have a sense of identity

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and of belongingness is not applicable in this area, since many of
them own some property—even though small—in the Valley and
migrating is for them a seasonal event no more or less than
vacationing is for most of the Americans in the rest of the country.
The assumption that Mexican-Americans are poor does not neces-
sarily apply to Mexican-Americans any more than it does to other
ethnic groups in this area, as they are found in all the echelons of
society. For example: Forty percent of the physicians belong to
this ethnic group. In addition, an increasing number of Mexican-
Americans are found in private and public office and are gaining
control of many institutions. Language does not constitute a
cultural barrier either. Mexican-Americans in the schools are
functionally bilingual in most cases. Bilingualism is happening
at an earlier age as a result of bilingual education and media. All
these facts, in conjunction with other historical and geographical
variables, have provided a unique place for analyzing behavior as
a function of culture without the contaminating socio-economic
factors which are prevalent in other sections of the country in
connection with minority groups.
CHAPTER II

DESIGN AND METHOD

The research was conducted at Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas, which is the largest school in the country in terms of the number and proportion of Mexican-Americans attending an institution of higher education. An examination of the enrollment figures at this university reveals a very close similarity with the figures related to the general population of the Rio Grande Valley. The "average" student lives in one of four neighboring counties; commutes daily from home in an organized car pool; is 79.3% dependent on his parents for survival; and is part of the 2% of the area population that is attending the university. The student population is 0.09% Black, 77.80% Mexican-American, and 22.11% Anglo-American.

This particular ethnic composition creates some very unique conditions for the purposes of this study. This is a bi-cultural-bilingual area where two large ethnic groups coexist without many of the permanent outcries and frictions which characterize other regions. Another interesting fact is that the Mexican-Americans constitute more than 75% of the population, and for this
reason they can hardly be called a minority. The same observations must be applied when using the label "underprivileged." In spite of the fact that 56.8% of the Mexican-American population still lives on incomes under the poverty level, and 31.6% of the population lives in housing which is overcrowded by federal definition, it is also true that a large section of the Mexican-Americans are middle class and participate actively in all kinds of social and governmental institutions and can be found in large numbers at all professional and industrial levels.

At the formal, normative social level the official, governmental, political, economical and educational institutions can be identified with the Anglo-American culture, which in this sense is a dominant element of community life. The Mexican-American of this area of the country is found at all level of the social system, and functioning not only efficiently but advantageously in this bilingual-bicultural community.

Cross-cultural studies conducted in this area can be conducted with the definite advantage of a minimized confounding effect due to socio-economic factors related to poverty, which is a common constant intervening variable in most studies conducted about Mexican-Americans in other sections of the country.

The School of Education at Pan American University has an enrollment of 2,700, which represents 37% of the total enrollment.
of the university.

The Graduate School has, at the Master's level, an enrollment of 60 to 70 students in the counseling program each semester.

Selection of Counselors

From this population a sample of 12 counselors was obtained and categorized in four subgroups:

3 Mexican-American, male counselors
3 Mexican-American, female counselors
3 Anglo-American, male counselors
3 Anglo-American, female counselors

These 12 counselors were part of an original group of 20 student counselors who were invited to participate in this study--five for each category. All of them were at the end of their counseling program. The initial selection was based on the unanimous recommendation of the faculty members in the program in terms of being considered clearly and consistently functioning in a client-centered counseling style. In addition to this, the 10 Mexican-American counselors selected were completing a federally funded fellowship program designed to prepare a selected group of Mexican-American students as leaders in the field of counseling.

These 20 counselors were submitted to a second screening
procedure in order to select only three for each one of the four categories. For this purpose each counselor was assigned to conduct a counseling session of approximately 45 minutes with a student who had requested the opportunity to discuss some personal concerns with a counselor. These sessions were monitored and evaluated by three raters simultaneously according to the Carkhuff scale for helping relationships. Once these sessions were completed, the counselors were rank ordered according to the combined scores obtained by the three raters.

After each session both the client and the researcher filled out a Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory in regard to their perception of the counselor. From the combined final scores of both instruments, a final group of three counselors for each one of the four categories was selected.

Selection of Clients

The selection of clients for this study consisted of 154 junior and senior students in the School of Education, Pan American University, categorized as follows:

43 Mexican-American, male clients
45 Mexican-American, female clients
28 Anglo-American, male clients
38 Anglo-American, female clients
Initially 520 students—juniors and seniors taking required courses in education—were surveyed in order to identify those students who did not have any previous experience with counseling related to personal problems and concerns. The results of this initial survey indicated that 460 students had not been exposed to counseling.

A second contact was made with these 460 students with an invitation to participate in this study. Three hundred ninety three students expressed their willingness to participate in it. This group consisted of 287 Mexican-American and 106 Anglo-American students.

Following this second contact a new selection was made for the purpose of obtaining the final sample. Ninety clients were randomly selected from the 287 Mexican-American students, and 70 clients were also randomly selected from the 106 Anglo-American students. This sampling procedure yielded:

43 Mexican-American, male clients
47 Mexican-American, female clients
31 Anglo-American, male clients
39 Anglo-American, female clients

The next step consisted of assigning each one of these clients to a counselor for interviewing. This assignment was done at
random by categories in order to obtain an even distribution. At this point each student was notified in writing of the time and place of his or her appointment. At the same time they were reminded that this study was going to require a brief interview by a counselor, after which they were going to be asked to evaluate their interviewer. Special emphasis was given to the fact that the focus of this project was on the counselor's behavior. Six of the original 160 clients selected for the sample did not keep their appointments for various reasons, which reduced the final sample to 154, as stated at the beginning of this section.

In summary, 154 students in this study represented experimental variable I--cultural background of clients, and the 12 counselors represented experimental variable II--cultural background of counselors.

Procedure

Each client was scheduled for a counseling session, within a five-day period, to be conducted during the client's regular class-time. Each counselor interviewed a maximum of three clients each day. The assignment of clients to counselors was done at random by categories of clients and counselors. The counseling sessions did not exceed 15 minutes from the time the client came in visual contact with the counselor.
The rationale for conducting these sessions within a 15 minute period was based on the assumption that in order to expose the client to facilitative counseling conditions, a minimum length of time was necessary in order to allow the counselor to exhibit these particular behaviors. Fifteen minutes was considered the minimum length of time required to allow the client to make a judgment based on the counselor's behavior.

On the other hand, a longer counseling session would very likely introduce other intervening factors based on individual differences other than those occurring at the beginning of a counseling interaction. It appears also that, at the beginning of counseling, most client-centered therapists exhibit very similar behaviors geared toward establishing a high level of facilitative conditions previous to any other therapeutic strategy.

After completing each session the client was requested to answer the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. No names were used at this point but only a code number to indicate the ethnic group and sex of both the counselor being evaluated and the person doing the evaluation. The purpose of this instrument was to measure the level of facilitative counseling conditions as they were perceived by the client within the first 15 minutes of a session.

In contrast to interaction observation systems which use an outside observer's objective report, the Barrett-Lennard
Relationship Inventory relies on the subjective report of the individuals involved in the interaction. The inventory is based on the assumption that how the individual perceives a relationship in which he is involved is more important in determining how that relationship will influence him than another person's judgment of that relationship. Several studies evaluating the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory have been conducted. Generally the reliability of the total score and its subscales range from .75 to .94 as calculated by the split half method. As most values reported are in the upper part of this range, the reliability is satisfactory for the purposes of this study.

Statistical Analysis

In this study two categories were analyzed by means of a four-way classification factorial design (Figure 1). One of the categories (I) was the cultural background of clients, including in this particular case, two factors, ethnicity (A) and sex (B). Thus, four groups of clients were considered: (1) Mexican-American male, (2) Mexican-American female, (3) Anglo-American male, and (4) Anglo-American female.

The second category (II) in this factorial design was cultural background of counselors. Ethnic affiliation (C) and sex (D) were the two factors included for this second category. The groups of
counselors participating were: (1) Mexican-American male, (2) Mexican-American female, (3) Anglo-American male, and (4) Anglo-American female.

The 2x2x2x2 analysis of variance provided two kinds of statements regarding the factors included in the study. The first set of statements was related to the main effects of ethnicity (A and C) and sex (B and D) of both the client and the counselor, on the way clients perceive the five counseling interaction variables considered in the study.

The second set of statements was related to the possible existence of significant two, three, and four-way interactions among these factors.

---

1The term "main effect" is being used throughout this study in the same way as generally used in the literature. It only indicates the level of significance of each separate treatment variable in factorial designs. No cause-effect relationship should be claimed based solely on these statistical results.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analysis of data was accomplished in this study by means of a 2x2x2x2 factorial analysis of variance for unequal cells. This statistical method provided a means of analyzing each main effect separately (See note 1, page 33). The factors analyzed were: (A) ethnicity of the client, (B) sex of the client, (C) ethnicity of the counselor, and (D) sex of the counselor. The levels for A and C were: (1) Mexican-American, and (2) Anglo-American. The levels for B and D were: (1) male, and (2) female. Interactions among these factors were also analyzed.

The main effects and interactions were analyzed in relation to perception of: (1) level of regard, (2) empathic understanding, (3) willingness to be known, (4) unconditionality of regard, and (5) congruence. These five variables were measured and operationally defined by the final score on each subscale of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory. This instrument was administered to the clients at the end of 15 minutes of counseling.

Statistical Results

Table 1 shows a summary of the means and standard
deviations for each one of the 16 cells of the design (Figure 1, p. 36). These values are given in relation to each one of the five variables included in the analysis of perception of counseling. In this table, each cell is identified by four digits, which represent the levels (1 or 2) for each one of the factors represented by that cell.

The analysis of variance for the main effect of ethnicity of the clients produced significant values for four of the variables as shown in Table 2, page 38.

These values indicate that perception of level of regard, empathy, unconditional regard, and congruence is a function of the ethnic affiliation of the client.

The F ratios for the main effect of sex of the clients produced no significant results. Table 3, page 38, whose these values.

These values indicate that sex of the clients does not induce any significant differences in the way clients perceive counselors as a function of the client's sex.

The only significant value for the main effect of ethnicity of the counselors (C) was in relation to perception of level of regard, as it is shown in Table 4, page 39.

These results indicate that the counselor's ethnic affiliation is related significantly to client's perception, but only in terms of level of regard.

In regard to the main effect of the counselor's sex on
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<th>Factor</th>
<th>ABCD</th>
<th>OBS</th>
<th>LREG</th>
<th>EMPAT</th>
<th>WKNWN</th>
<th>UNREG</th>
<th>CONGR</th>
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</thead>
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### TABLE 2

Test for Main Effect

Clients' Ethnicity (A)

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<td>WKNWN</td>
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<td>CONGR</td>
<td>8.132</td>
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### TABLE 3

Test for Main Effect

Clients' Sex (B)

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### TABLE 4

Test for Main Effect
Counselors' Ethnicity (C)

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<td>WKNWN</td>
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### TABLE 5

Test for Main Effect
Counselors' Sex (D)

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<td>LREG</td>
<td>3.082</td>
<td>&lt;.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>&lt;.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td>&lt;.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>&lt;.617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>&lt;.767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
perception of counselors, the $F$ ratios obtained are not significant. These values are shown in Table 5, page 39. These results indicate that perception of counseling is not a function of the counselor's sex.

In summary, the only factor which appears to have a significant effect on the client's perception of counselors is the client's ethnic affiliation. The counselor's ethnicity has a limited effect on this perception, and sex of either the client or the counselor does not have any significant effect on the way the counseling variables are perceived.

The most significant $F$ ratios resulted from the analysis of different interactions provided by the four-way analysis of variance.

The results for the analysis of interaction between the client's ethnicity and sex (AxB) are shown in Table 6, page 47.

These $F$ ratios are significant in four of the variables: level of regard, empathic understanding, willingness to be known, and congruence. These results indicate that the perception of the counselor may be largely determined by the strong interaction existing between the client's ethnicity and sex. Each one of the four groups of clients reacts to counselors in a significantly different way. An examination of the Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 illustrates these differences.

The analysis of interaction between the client's and the counselor's ethnicity provided significant values in three of the
FIGURE 2

Perception of Level of Regard

![Graph showing perception of level of regard for counselors and clients. The graph plots Level of Regard against different categories of counselors and clients.](image)

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FIGURE 3

Perception of Empathic Understanding

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FIGURE 4

Perception of Willingness to be Known

Level of Willingness to be Known

Counselors

△△△ M-A-M Clients
○○○ M-A-F Clients
△△△ A-A-M Clients
○○○ A-A-F Clients

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FIGURE 5
Perception of Unconditional Regard

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variables as shown in Table 7, page 47.

The results indicate a highly significant interaction between these two factors in relation to perception of empathic understanding and congruence. The perception of level of regard also shows a significant interaction. These differences in perception as a function of the client's and the counselor's ethnicity are illustrated in Figures 2, 3, and 6, on pages 41, 42, and 45, respectively.

The client's ethnicity was also analyzed for possible significant interactions with the counselor's sex. Two significant values were obtained, one in regard to perception of empathic understanding and the other in regard to perception of congruence. Table 8, page 48, summarizes these results.

The significant interactions between the client's ethnicity and the counselor's sex is an indication of some unique way of perception in regard to empathy and congruence, which are a function of these two factors. These interactions are illustrated in Figure 3, page 42, and Figure 6, page 45.

The perception of willingness to be known was the only variable influenced at a significant level by the interaction between the client's sex and the counselor's ethnic affiliation. The results of the analysis of this interaction are in Table 9, page 48.

The interaction between the client's sex and the counselor's ethnicity results in significant differences in the way a counselor
### TABLE 6

**Test for Two-Way Interactions**  
Ethnicity and Sex of the Clients (AxB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>21.630</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>18.556</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>12.804</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>&gt;.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>5.792</td>
<td>&lt;.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 7

**Test for Two-Way Interactions**  
Clients' and Counselors' Ethnicity (AxC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>5.249</td>
<td>&lt;.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>19.433</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>3.067</td>
<td>&lt;.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.832</td>
<td>&lt;.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>10.464</td>
<td>&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### TABLE 8
Test for Two-Way Interactions
Clients' Ethnicity and Counselors' Sex (AxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>1.825</td>
<td>&lt;.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>10.233</td>
<td>&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>&lt;.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>&lt;.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>6.170</td>
<td>&lt;.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 9
Test for Two-Way Interactions
Clients' Sex and Counselors' Ethnicity (BxC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>3.651</td>
<td>&lt;.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>&lt;.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>6.911</td>
<td>&lt;.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>&lt;.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>1.823</td>
<td>&lt;.176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is perceived in terms of willingness to be known as a function of these two factors combined. Illustration for this interaction can be found in Figure 4, page 43.

The test for interaction between the client's and the counselor's sex shows a significant interaction in regard to perception of congruence and willingness to be known. The F ratios are in Table 10, page 50.

Perception of congruence and willingness to be known are significantly influenced by the interaction between the client's and the counselor's sex. Figures 4, page 43, and 6, page 45, illustrate these interactions.

The last two-way interaction was computed between the counselor's ethnicity and sex. Unconditionality of regard is the only variable to reach significance as shown in Table 11, page 50.

Perception of unconditionality of regard appears to be the only variable which is a function of the interaction between the counselor's ethnic affiliation and sex. Figure 5, page 44, illustrates this particular interaction.

The test for three-way interactions revealed some isolated significant results affecting different variables. Table 12, page 51, shows the results for interactions between the client's ethnicity and sex combined, and the counselor's ethnicity (AxBxC).

Table 13, page 51, shows the results of the test for interactions between the client's ethnicity and sex, and sex of the counselor (AxBxD).
TABLE 10

Test for Two-Way Interactions
Clients' and Counselors' Sex (BxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>1.999</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>3.862</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>1.845</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>9.864</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 11

Test for Two-Way Interactions
Counselors' Ethnicity and Sex (CxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>.641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>27.411</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>.780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 12

Test for Three-Way Interactions  
**Clients' Ethnicity and Sex, Counselors' Ethnicity (AxBxC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>&lt;.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>&lt;.599</td>
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<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>7.288</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>&lt;.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>8.368</td>
<td>&lt;.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 13

Test for Three-Way Interactions  
**Clients' Ethnicity and Sex, Counselors' Sex (AxBxD)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>7.171</td>
<td>&lt;.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>3.389</td>
<td>&lt;.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>&lt;.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>&lt;.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>&lt;.813</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 14, page 53, summarizes the results for interactions between the client's ethnicity and the counselor's ethnicity and sex (AxCxD). The results for interactions between the client's sex and the counselor's ethnicity and sex are in Table 15, page 53 (BxCxD). Finally, Table 16, page 54, shows the results for the analysis of four-way interactions among the four factors (AxBxCxD).

The results given in Table 17, page 56, indicate that the only factor having a strong influence in four of the relationship variables is the client's ethnicity. The counselor's ethnicity is the only other factor having a significant main effect. This factor is influential for only one of the variables.

The cultural background of clients (AxB) appears as the most influential set of interactions affecting the client's perception of counselors. This particular result in conjunction with the main effect of A confirms the first general hypothesis $H_1$ in relation to perception of level of regard, empathic understanding, unconditionality of regard and congruence. The counselor's cultural background (CxD) appears to have a significant effect on only one of the variables. This result provides only marginal support to hypothesis $H_2$, since the remaining four variables appear not to be affected by this interaction at any significant level.

The rest of the significant interactions illustrated in Table 17
### TABLE 14
Test for Three-Way Interactions
Clients' Ethnicity, Counselors' Ethnicity and Sex (AxCxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>0.221</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>21.448</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>&lt;.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>&lt;.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>&lt;.868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 15
Test for Three-Way Interactions
Clients' Sex, Counselors' Ethnicity and Sex (BxCxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td>&lt;.566</td>
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<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>3.425</td>
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<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>&lt;.680</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>9.723</td>
<td>&lt;.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>&lt;.643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### TABLE 16

Test for Four-Way Interactions
Clients' Ethnicity and Sex, Counselors' Ethnicity and Sex (AxBxCxD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>$&lt;.618$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>$&lt;.740$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>2.119</td>
<td>$&lt;.144$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>3.196</td>
<td>$&lt;.072$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>$&lt;.957$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reflect the fact that counseling across ethnic and sexual boundaries results in perception of counselors as functioning at higher levels of conditions which are facilitative of counseling.

Findings

The results reported in this chapter yielded a series of findings in regard to the effect that the client's and the counselor's cultural backgrounds have on the way the counselor's behavior is perceived by the client. Cultural background is defined by two main factors: ethnicity and sex. Perception of counselors is defined in terms of five relationship variables. These variables correspond with the five subscales of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (Barrett-Lennard, 1962).

The findings refer to two different areas. The first one relates to the main effect of each one of the four factors included in the design. The second set of findings refers to two, three, and four-way interactions among those four factors which contribute to significant differences in perceiving counselor's behavior.

The factor which appears to have the most powerful effect on the perception of four of the variables is the client's ethnicity (A). This finding indicates that Mexican-American clients perceive counselors at a significantly different level from the Anglo-American clients. An inspection of Figures 2, 3, 5 and 6 shows that Mexican-


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Effect</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>4.41*</td>
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<td>6.78*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>15.84**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td>13.02**</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>8.13**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two-Way Interactions</th>
<th>AxB</th>
<th>AxC</th>
<th>AxD</th>
<th>BxC</th>
<th>BxD</th>
<th>CxD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>21.63**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td>18.55**</td>
<td>19.43**</td>
<td>10.23**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>12.80**</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.91*</td>
<td>3.86*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.24*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>5.79*</td>
<td>10.46**</td>
<td>6.17*</td>
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<td>9.86**</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three-Way Interactions</th>
<th>AxBxC</th>
<th>AxBxD</th>
<th>AxCxD</th>
<th>BxCxD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LREG</td>
<td>7.17*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPAT</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.40**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKNWN</td>
<td>7.29*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNREG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.72**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGR</td>
<td>8.37**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $P < .05$  
** $P < .005$

A: Clients' ethnicity  
B: Clients' sex  
C: Counselors' ethnicity  
D: Counselors' sex
Americans, as a group, perceive counselors at a higher level of functioning than the Anglo-American clients.

Ethnicity of the counselor (C) shows a limited effect in terms of perception of unconditionality of regard only. The other two factors—client's and counselor's sex (B, D)—appear to have no significant effect on perception of counselors.

The most surprising finding may be related to the highly significant F values for the interactions between the client's ethnicity and sex (AxB). These values are significant for four of the variables. These results show that the cultural background of the client provides the single most important set of interactions affecting the perception of the counselor's behavior. This finding is particularly interesting since factor B, client's sex, does not have a significant main effect by itself.

On the other hand, the cultural background of the counselor appears to have an effect only on the perception of unconditionality of regard (interaction CxD).

The significant interactions between factors A and C indicate that perception of empathic understanding, congruence, and unconditionality of regard are a function of the ethnic background of both the client and the counselor. An inspection of Figure 3 shows that Mexican-American clients perceive Anglo-American counselors as exhibiting a higher level of empathic understanding than Mexican-
American counselors. The reverse situation occurs between Anglo-American clients and Mexican-American counselors. Similar situations can be found in relation to perception of congruence and to a lesser degree in perception of unconditionality of regard.

The two significant interactions between factors A and D show that perception of empathic understanding and congruence are also a function of the interaction AxD. An inspection of Figures 3 and 6, pages 42 and 45, respectively, shows that clients from each ethnic group perceive the counselor of their own ethnic affiliation, but of the opposite sex, as exhibiting a higher level of functioning than the counselor with the same ethnic affiliation and the same sex.

The significant interaction between B and C is illustrated in Figure 4, page 43, which indicates that in terms of willingness to be known, female clients perceive Mexican-American counselors as exhibiting a higher level in this variable. Male clients show the opposite pattern in their perception of willingness to be known.

In regard to the significant interactions between B and D, Figures 4, page 43, and 6, page 45, show that male clients perceive female counselors at a higher level in these two variables—congruence and willingness to be known—while female clients appear to perceive a higher level of functioning in male counselors.

In relation to the three-way interactions, the findings generally indicate that clients perceive the counselor at a higher
level of functioning in each one of the variables when they differ
in ethnicity and/or sex.

Further inspection of the data indicates that the highest score
on each curve is found 43.75% of the time when the client and the
counselor differ in both ethnicity and sex; 31.25% of the time the
highest score occurs when the client and the counselor are different
in terms of ethnic affiliation; and in the remaining 25% the highest
score occurs when the difference is sex.

The analysis of the lowest scores for each curve on each
variable shows that this score occurs 62.5% of the time when the
client and the counselor have the same ethnic affiliation and the
same sex. A lowest score is found only 6.25% of the time when
they differ in sex or in sex and ethnicity combined. When the differ-
ence is ethnicity, the lowest score occurs in 18.75% of the cases.

A visual inspection of the Figures 2 through 6 shows that
Anglo-American male clients and Mexican-American female clients
appear to have a more uniform perception of the counselors, while
the Mexican-American male clients and the Anglo-American female
clients have a more variable perception of counselors from differ-
ent cultural backgrounds.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The results of this piece of research appear to raise a series of new questions about cross-cultural dimensions of counseling. The findings support some of the previous studies conducted in this field, but are in clear conflict with other pieces of research.

The first thing to keep in mind when referring to the findings in this study is that none of the results can be generalized in terms of cross-cultural counseling. This study was conducted in a geographic area possessing some rather unique patterns of social behavior which possibly cannot be replicated elsewhere. These findings may not be applied to other sections of the country with large Mexican-American or Spanish-speaking populations, without careful assessment of other intervening variables.

A question arises from the fact that the clients in this study, with different cultural backgrounds, differed significantly from each other very early in counseling in their perception of the counselor's behavior in terms of the five variables selected. It is possible to interpret these differences as being the result of nothing more
than first impressions. First impressions are generally characterized by stereotyping, assumed similarity, and trait attribution. However, this study shows some results that may indicate that the clients reacted to the counselors' behavior in a fashion that is probably just the opposite of what might be expected from first impressions. This seems to be the case in a large number of the scores reflecting the perception of counselors across cultural boundaries.

Another possible implication of the differences among cultural groups very early in counseling is that any study on therapeutic changes which does not include an initial assessment of perception of counselors will most likely yield significant results in terms of different levels of perception of counseling variables. These results will not necessarily be related to therapeutic practices, as they would probably be reflecting a difference already present very early in therapy and not necessarily related to whatever happened during the counseling process.

Another possibility that emerges from these results is that cross-cultural studies based only on ethnic affiliation will very likely produce limited results, particularly if the norms of behavior related to cultural parameters are as clearly dichotomized in terms of sex as they are in the Rio Grande Valley for the Mexican-American and the Anglo-American ethnic groups. It appears to be
justified to consider each one of the sexes within any ethnic group as a subculture. The combination of ethnicity and sex seems to be a productive one, especially in terms of interactions.

It is important at this point to add that the fact that the lowest scores in perception of facilitative conditions of counseling are found more frequently when counseling occurs between individuals with the same ethnic affiliation and sex does not necessarily mean that counseling is not functional or therapeutic. It does suggest that the need for counselors with the same ethnic background as the client may have been overemphasized.

It is not known at this point whether or not the geographic isolation of this area has resulted in cultural patterns in the clients which might be different from other parts of the country. It appears that a validation of these findings in other cross-cultural settings would provide additional understanding of this pluralistic society.

The fact that the client's cultural background but not the counselor's had a significant effect on the perception of four of the facilitative conditions of client-centered counseling is rather intriguing. A possible explanation for this outcome can be found in the fact that all the counselors involved in this project may have exhibited similar behaviors due to their training. These counselors were selected on the basis of their conformity with a strict model which probably somehow transcended cultural differences.
An important limitation of the study is related to the lack of evidence in regard to the uniformity of behavior exhibited by the counselors during the 15 minute sessions. The selection procedure controlled some of the possible differences, but still it is not known whether or not the clients were exposed to a similar set of counseling behaviors.

The different interactions found in regard to each one of the facilitative conditions of counseling may be indicative of a more productive counseling relationship when the client and the counselor differ in terms of ethnicity and sex.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the impact that the cultural background of clients and the cultural background of counselors might have on the way client-centered behavioral practices in counseling are initially perceived by clients. In other words, the experimenter's first interest was to find out what happens in terms of perception of some particular dimensions of counseling when this relationship occurs between a client and a counselor with the same sex and ethnic affiliation. The second related to what happens when counseling occurs between individuals who differ in terms of sex, ethnic affiliation, or both.

The dimensions of counseling being considered in this study are level and unconditionality of regard, empathic understanding, congruence and willingness to be known. These variables are frequently considered to be the therapeutic or facilitative conditions of counseling, and they usually describe the behaviors exhibited by client-centered counselors. In this study they constitute the dependent variable perception of counseling. At the same time
they are operationally defined by the final score on each one of the five subscales of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory.

The sample in this study consisted of a stratified random sample of 154 clients -- college students at Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas -- who volunteered to be interviewed by a counselor and at the same time represented four categories in terms of cultural background. Cultural background was defined, for the purposes of this study, as a function of ethnic affiliation and sex. This construct was based on the assumption that these two variables are the two most influential factors in determining the norms of behaviors defined as culture. At the same time these two factors combined are considered as having a strong influence on the way an individual perceives his particular environment; they are influential in the way a client with a particular cultural background perceives counseling practices. The four categories of clients were Mexican-American male clients, Mexican-American female clients, Anglo-American male clients, and Anglo-American female clients.

Twelve counselors participated in this study. They represented counseling practices and four different cultural backgrounds defined in terms of ethnic affiliation and sex. There were three counselors for each one of the following categories: Mexican-American male counselors, Mexican-American female counselors,
Anglo-American male counselors, and Anglo-American female counselors.

Each client was randomly assigned to a counselor from a specific category for a brief counseling session of 15 minutes according to a 2x2x2x2 factorial design. Immediately after these sessions, the client completed the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory in terms of his perception of the counselor during the brief encounter that just preceded. This instrument is designed to measure the perception of counseling behaviors in terms of the level of facilitative or therapeutic conditions exhibited by a counselor and as they are perceived by the client. This is accomplished by five different subscales that measure the level and unconditionality of regard, empathic understanding, congruence, and willingness to be known.

A four-way factorial analysis of variance between cultural background of clients--independent variable I--and cultural background of counselors--independent variable II--was conducted in order to test the level of significance between the different cell mean scores.

The results of the four-way analysis of variance for each one of the five dimensions of perception of counseling yielded a series of statistically significant F ratios related to the main effect of the factors included in the study: (A) client's ethnicity, (B)
client's sex, (C) counselor's ethnicity, and (D) counselor's sex.

The same analysis provided significant values for two and three-way interactions among these factors.

The results indicate that the initial perception by the client of each one of the counseling variables exhibited by the counselor may be influenced by the client's cultural background at a statistically significant level. This is supported by the \( F \) ratio for the main effect of the client's ethnicity (A) and for the interaction between the client's ethnicity and sex (AxB).

The cultural background of the counselors—defined by the interaction between ethnicity and sex (CxD)—does not have a significant effect on the way clients perceive counselors in regard to facilitative conditions of counseling, with the exception of perception of unconditional regard.

Without denying that identification between the client and the counselor in terms of cultural background may be desirable, preferred when given the choice, and very productive at times, the results of this study indicate that cross-cultural counseling—across ethnic and/or sex boundaries—may be beneficial in some situations.

It is also important to point out that in this study the element of personal preference for a counselor with a specific ethnic affiliation and sex was not present since the assignment of clients
to particular counselors was done randomly.

Recommendations

The first recommendation emerging from this piece of research is to apply a similar approach to other bicultural settings in order to explore the effects of ethnicity and sex on the clients' perceptions of counselors.

It is also recommended that this study be replicated, including this time the counselors' perceptions of their own behavior with the purpose of exploring the discrepancies in perception between clients and counselors.

It seems necessary to assess the clients' perceptions of counselors at different stages of the counseling relationship. It may be possible to find significant fluctuations in perception of counselors as a function of time.

A possibly productive area of investigation is the assessment of different counseling theoretical approaches in the way they are perceived and accepted by culturally different clients.

It would also be possible to study the differences in perception of counselors, which occur early in counseling, and explore their use as predictors of therapeutic outcome.

There are many other intervening variables related to culture that need to be explored as to their effect on cross-
cultural interactions. Some of the areas suggested for study are:
social class, upward social mobility, level of education, level of
bilingualism, migratory versus sedentary familiar structure,
religious beliefs, folk medicine as it applies to mental health,
drug culture, et cetera. Some of these variables may have power-
ful effects on cross-cultural counseling as well as on other aspects
of the behavioral sciences.

"As he looked down . . . he saw the fish
struggling against the swift current. With
the very best of intentions, he reached down
and lifted the fish from the water. The result
was . . ." (Adams, 1962).

. . . the fish survived the catastrophe.
(Note: Nobody knew until then that the
fish was a Lepidosiren, a lungfish.)
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX I. -- Facilitative conditions of counseling
Barrett-Lennard definitions.

1. Empathic understanding is "conceived as an active process of desiring to know the full present and changing awareness of another person, of reaching out to receive his communication and meaning, and of translating his words and signs into experienced meaning that matches at least those aspects of his awareness that are most important to him at the moment."

2. Level of regard "refers to the affective aspect of one person's response to another; regard is the general tendency--positive or negative--of the various affective reactions of one person in relationship to another."

3. Unconditionality of regard "is the degree of constancy of regard felt by one person for another who communicates self-experiences to the first."

4. Congruence is described as "the degree to which one person is functionally integrated in the context of his relationship with another, such that there is absence of inconsistency between his total experiences, his awareness, and his overt communication."

5. Willingness to be known is conceived as "the degree to which one person is willing to be known as a person, by another, according to the other's desire for this. It implies the sharing of experiences and perceptions of the self, perceptions of and feelings toward the other, and perceptions of the self-other relationship."
APPENDIX II. -- The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory

The Relationship Inventory was prepared and used in four parallel forms. The two Client forms differed only in the gender of the third person pronouns. The Therapist forms differed from the Client forms in that the positions of the first-person and third-person pronouns were reversed. Thus, for example, the first item in the form for the therapist to answer (in respect to a male client) became "I respect him."

The Inventory is reproduced here just as it was used with clients who had male therapists, except that (a) code letters followed by plus or minus signs have been added, to indicate the scale to which each item belonged and whether it was positively or negatively stated in respect to this scale; and (b) items that were not used in the final scoring have been omitted.

The code letters signify the five scales, as follows:

- R = Level of regard
- E = Empathic understanding
- C = Congruence
- U = Unconditionality of regard
- W = Willingness to be known

Relationship Inventory - Client Form
(male therapist)

(Please do not write your name on this form. It will be coded anonymously and your answers used for research purposes only.)

Below are listed a variety of ways that one person could feel or behave in relation to another person. Please consider each statement with respect to whether you think it is true or not true in your present relationship with your therapist. Mark each statement in the left margin according to how strongly you feel it is true or not true. Please mark every one. Write in +1, +2, +3; or -1, -2, -3, to stand for the following answers:

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+1: I feel that is probably true, or more true than untrue.
+2: I feel it is true.
+3: I strongly feel that it is true.
-1: I feel that it is probably untrue, or more untrue than true.
-2: I feel it is not true.
-3: I feel it is not true.

R+  1. He respects me.
E+  2. He tries to see things through my eyes.
C-  3. He pretends that he likes me or understands me more than he really does.
U-  4. His interest in me depends partly on what I am talking to him about.
W+  5. He is willing to tell me his own thoughts and feelings when he is sure that I really want to know them.
R-  6. He disapproves of me.
E-  7. He understands my words but not the way I feel.
C+  8. What he says to me never conflicts with what he thinks or feels.
U+  9. He always responds to me with warmth and interest --or always with coldness and disinterest.
W- 10. He tells me his opinions or feelings more than I really want to know them.
R- 11. He is curious about "the way I tick," but not really interested in me as a person.
E+ 12. He is interested in knowing what my experiences mean to me.
C-  13. He is disturbed whenever I talk about or ask about certain things.

U+  14. His feeling toward me does not depend on how I am feeling towards him.

W-  15. He prefers to talk only about me and not at all about him.

R+  16. He likes seeing me.

E+  17. He nearly always knows exactly what I mean.

C-  18. I feel that he has unspoken feelings or concerns that are getting in the way of our relationship.

U-  19. His attitude toward me depends partly on how I am feeling about myself.

W+  20. He will freely tell me his own thoughts and feelings, when I want to know them.

R-  21. He is indifferent to me.

E-  22. At times he jumps to the conclusion that I feel more strongly or more concerned about something than I actually do.

C+  23. He behaves just the way that he is, in our relationship.

U-  24. Sometimes he responds to me in a more positive and friendly way than he does at other times.

W-  25. He says more about himself than I am really interested to hear.

R+  26. He appreciates me.

E-  27. Sometimes he thinks that I feel a certain way, because he feels that way.

C+  28. I do not think that he hides anything from himself that he feels with me.
U- 29. He likes me in some ways, dislikes me in others.
W- 30. He adopts a professional role that makes it hard for me to know what he is like as a person.
R+ 31. He is friendly and warm toward me.
F+ 32. He understands me.
U- 33. If I feel negatively toward him he responds negatively to me.
W- 34. He tells me what he thinks about me, whether I want to know it or not.
R+ 35. He cares about me.
E- 36. His own attitudes toward some of the things I say, or do, stop him from really understanding me.
C+ 37. He does not avoid anything that is important for our relationship.
U+ 38. Whether I am expressing "good" feelings or "bad" ones seems to make no difference to how positively--or how negatively--he feels toward me.
W- 39. He is uncomfortable when I ask him something about himself.
R- 40. He feels that I am dull and uninteresting.
E- 41. He understands what I say, from a detached, objective point of view.
C+ 42. I feel that I can trust him to be honest with me.
U- 43. Sometimes he is warmly responsive to me, at other times cold or disapproving.
W- 44. He expresses ideas or feelings of his own that I am not really interested in.
R+  45. He is interested in me.
E+  46. He appreciates what my experiences feel like to me.
C+  47. He is secure and comfortable in our relationship.
U-  48. Depending on his mood, he sometimes responds to me with quite a lot more warmth and interest than he does at other times.
W-  49. He wants to say as little as possible about his own thoughts and feelings.
R-  50. He just tolerates me.
C-  51. He is playing a role with me.
U+  52. He is equally appreciative--or equally unappreciative--of me, whatever I am telling him about myself.
W+  53. His own feelings and thoughts are always available to me, but never imposed on me.
R-  54. He does not really care what happens to me.
E-  55. He does not realize how strongly I feel about some of the things we discuss.
C-  56. There are times when I feel that his outward response is quite different from his inner reaction to me.
U-  57. His general feeling toward me varies considerably.
W+  58. He is willing for me to use our time to get to know him better, if or when I want to.
R+  59. He seems to really value me.
E-  60. He responds to me mechanically.
C-  61. I don't think that he is being honest with himself about the way he feels toward me.
Whether I like or dislike myself makes no difference to the way he feels about me.

He is more interested in expressing and communicating himself than in knowing and understanding me.

He dislikes me.

I feel that he is being genuine with me.

Sometimes he responds quite positively to me, at other times he seems indifferent.

He is unwilling to tell me how he feels about me.

He is impatient with me.

Sometimes he is not at all comfortable but we go on, outwardly ignoring it.

He likes me better when I behave in some ways than he does when I behave in other ways.

He is willing to tell me his actual response to anything I say or do.

He feels deep affection for me.

He usually understands all of what I say to him.

He does not try to mislead me about his own thoughts or feelings.

Whether I feel fine or feel awful makes no difference to how warmly and appreciatively—or how coldly and unappreciately—he feels toward me.

He tends to evade any attempt that I make to get to know him better.

He regards me as a disagreeable person.

What he says gives a false impression of his total reaction to me.