

Marquette University
e-Publications@Marquette

Education Faculty Research and Publications

Education, College of

10-1-2003

White Racial Identity Attitudes as a Predictor of Cross-Cultural Working Alliances

Alan W. Burkard

Marquette University, alan.burkard@marquette.edu

Michele Juarez-Huffaker

Kativa Ajmere

Indiana State University

Post-print. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, Volume 31, No. 4 (October 2003):
226-244. DOI. © Wiley 2003. Used with permission.

White Racial Identity Attitudes as a Predictor of Client Perceptions of Cross-Cultural Working Alliances

Alan W. Burkard, Michele Juarez-Huffaker, and Kativa Ajmere

Racial identity has been theorized to significantly influence cross-racial counseling relationships. In this study, the authors examined the influence of White racial identity on working alliance perceptions in a cross-racial vicarious counseling analogue. A significant interaction effect was found between race of the counselor vignette and White racial identity attitudes.

Se ha teorizado que la identidad racial influye significativamente en las relaciones consejeras multirraciales. En esta investigación, los autores examinan la influencia de la identidad racial Blanca en las percepciones de alianza vigente en un equivalente vicario de la consejería multirracial. Se descubrió un efecto significativo de interacción entre la raza del consejero y las actitudes raciales blancas.

The relationship formed between a culturally different client and counselor has been identified as perhaps the most important factor in determining if a client engages in the counseling process (Frank & Frank, 1991; Ho, 1992). In the attempt to understand how a cross-cultural relationship can be improved, S. Sue, Zane, and Young (1994) have suggested that it is critical for counselors or psychotherapists to address how individual differences may influence or improve therapy. Racial identity, a model of individual differences, has recently been identified as one of three models of multicultural counseling particularly important to understanding multicultural counseling processes and cross-cultural relationship development (Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000). The intention of this study was to investigate the connection between the racial identity of White client-

Alan W. Burkard, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, Marquette University; Michele Juarez-Huffaker, private practice, Wilmington, Delaware; Kativa Ajmere, Department of Counseling, Indiana State University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alan W. Burkard, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, Marquette University, PO Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881 (e-mail: alan.burkard@marquette.edu).

participants and their perceptions of the potential for forming a working alliance with racially similar and dissimilar counselors.

The connection between racial identity and the quality of the client–counselor relationship has been hypothesized to be important since the early writings on racial identity. In particular, Helms (1984, 1990b) has asserted that the psychological meaning that individuals attribute to their race and racial group affiliation is more important to determining the quality of a client–counselor relationship than simply matching clients and counselors based on skin color. The literature on matching clients and counselors based on race has consistently yielded empirically inconsistent and unpersuasive findings for counselor credibility and preference ratings (Coleman, Wampold, & Casali, 1995). In fact, in a meta-analysis, Coleman et al. found a significant tendency toward choosing a racially similar counselor in participant ratings of counselor racial preferences when the methodology relied on a forced-choice format between a racially similar or dissimilar counselor. In contrast, when participants were allowed freedom of choice regarding preference for counselor race, preference for a racially similar counselor did not emerge as a significant finding. These findings are consistent with Helms’s (1984, 1990b) hypothesis that use of race as categorical data for a client or counselor is of little use in understanding the dynamics of counseling relationships.

white racial identity development

Racial identity has been defined as the quality of an individual’s identification with a specific racial group in which he or she perceives a “common racial heritage” (Helms, 1990a, p. 3). Theory on racial identity development suggests that clients’ and counselors’ racial identity resolutions directly affect the development of attitudes, cognitive processing, and interpersonal behaviors (Helms, 1995). In the context of counseling, racial identity theory has been presented as a model for understanding the interpersonal dynamics that occur in cross-cultural relationship formation (Helms, 1984).

For purposes of clarity, Helms and Piper (1994) modified Helms’s (1990b) original White racial identity model, so that the stage model was reconceptualized as ego statuses. This was done in part to acknowledge the fluidity of racial identity. Although the White racial identity model remains developmental, the modification by Helms and Piper reflects the notion that individuals are thought to have attitudes, affect, and behaviors reflective of each of the racial identity statuses. Although these statuses are relatively fluid, an individual’s identity is still predominantly anchored in one status. White racial identity development, according to Helms and Piper, has been posited to consist of six ego statuses: (a) Contact, general unawareness of race or racism; (b) Disintegration, confusion, disorientation, and conflict about race and racial injustice; (c) Reintegra-

tion, belief in White superiority and inferiority of other racial groups; (d) Pseudo-Independence, intellectualization of positive White identity and people of color; (e) Immersion-Emersion, intent to define self as nonracist; and (f) Autonomy, internalized nonracist identity.

Relevant to cross-cultural counseling relationship formation, research on White racial identity attitudes has focused on racism, interpersonal relationships, and interracial comfort (Ponterotto et al., 2000). Contact attitudes have been found to be related to lower capacity levels for intimate contact (Tokar & Swanson, 1991), positive views of other ethnic/racial groups (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997), and lower levels of racism for women (Carter, 1990). In an investigation by Helms and Carter (1991), high Disintegration attitudes in Whites were found to be related to preferences for a White female or male counselor, and high Pseudo-Independence and Autonomy attitudes were found to be related to preferences for a White female counselor. Disintegration attitudes have been found to be related to negative views of other ethnic/racial groups (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997), and negative reactions toward African American coworkers (Block, Roberson, & Neuger, 1995). High Reintegration attitudes were found to be related to higher levels of racism (Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992, 1994), lower levels of mature interpersonal relationships (Taub & McEwen, 1992), and negative attitudes toward African American coworkers (Block et al., 1995). Pseudo-Independence attitudes have correlated with higher levels of Autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships in college students (Taub & McEwen, 1992), lower levels of racism in women (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994), and preferences for White female counselors (Helms & Carter, 1991). Higher levels of inner-directedness (Tokar & Swanson, 1991), college student autonomy (Taub & McEwen, 1992), and positive views of people from other ethnic/racial groups (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997) were found to correlate with higher levels of Autonomy attitudes.

In a review of the research on racial identity, including White racial identity, Ponterotto et al. (2000) suggested that "the most consistent finding to date is that racial identity status is predictive of feelings, attitudes, and comfort with persons from one's own and other racial groups" (p. 652). Conceptually, this conclusion seems to have applicability to the counseling relationship as well. In this sense, understanding the psychological meaning that clients and counselors attribute to their racial heritage is likely to influence the development of cross-cultural counseling relationships.

working alliance

The working alliance model (Bordin, 1979, 1994; Horvath, 2000) was chosen to measure the relationship dimension of the client-counselor relationship in this

study. Originally, the concept of working alliance was derived from psychoanalytic theory (Greenson, 1967); however, the working alliance has been postulated to exist in most counseling relationships, regardless of the theoretical orientation of the counselor (Bordin, 1979, 1994; Gelso & Carter, 1985, 1994). Many practitioners and theorists believe that positive therapeutic outcomes are derived in part from the positive development of a working alliance, and empirical research supports this hypothesis (e.g., Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Orlinsky & Howard, 1986). Bordin (1979, 1994) has postulated that a positive working alliance is not a sufficient condition alone, to produce client change but, instead, is the milieu in which it becomes possible for the client to engage and follow treatment (Bordin, 1980). In this context, the working alliance does not represent the entire relationship but the "attachment that exists to further the work of therapy and contains participants' role expectations regarding the work of therapy" (Gelso & Carter, 1994, p. 300). Bordin (1979, 1994) defined the working alliance as a collaborative relationship that occurs between the client and counselor that comprises three components: tasks, goals, and emotional bond. Research on the working alliance has demonstrated that poorly developed alliances are correlated with noncompliance in clients (Eisenthal, Emery, Lazare, & Udin, 1979), poor client outcomes (L. B. Alexander & Luborsky, 1986), and premature termination of counseling (Tracey & Kokotovic, 1989).

Although the working alliance is an important factor in counseling, the unique aspects of the working alliance remain unclear (Horvath, 2000). For example, different therapy models may have "unique alliance characteristics" (Horvath, 2000, p. 164), and clients and counselors may present with unique characteristics that influence the development of a working alliance (Luborsky, 1994; Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman, Daniels, & Bowling, 1999). Researchers have acknowledged the dearth of empirical studies examining individual differences in working alliance literature (Burkard, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Alfonso, 1999; Luborsky, Crits-Christoph, Alexander, Margolis, & Cohen, 1983; Luborsky, Crits-Christoph, Mintz, & Auerbach, 1988) and the significance of this future research direction (Luborsky, 1994).

white racial identity development and the working alliance

Theorists have hypothesized that therapeutic relationship formation between culturally different clients and counselors may be significantly influenced when these individuals have similar value systems or worldviews (Coleman et al., 1995; Fischer, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998). White racial identity development, as an important aspect of one's worldview (D. W. Sue & Sue, 1999), may have important implications for the predication of working alliance formation.

The relationship between White racial identity development and cross-cultural working alliance formation remains relatively unexplored empirically (Burkard et al., 1999).

In a recent investigation, Burkard et al. (1999) explored the effect of White racial identity attitudes on perceptions of White surrogate counselors' ability to form a working alliance in a 10-minute audiotaped vicarious counseling situation with an African American or a White client. They found that White racial identity attitudes significantly predicted ratings of perceived ability to form a working alliance for the client conditions, whereas, perception of the race of the client did not contribute significantly to the prediction of these ratings. Burkard et al. also found that Disintegration and Reintegration attitudes were inversely correlated with working alliance ratings and that Pseudo-Independence and Autonomy attitudes were positively correlated with working alliance ratings. These findings suggested that White racial identity is an important individual difference that directly influences the White counselor's perceived ability to form a working alliance in cross-cultural counseling.

Burkard et al. (1999) acknowledged that the findings from their investigation were not generalizable to the client perspective. In fact, the empirical findings examining the relationship between client and counselor ratings of the working alliance have been inconsistent, and the client ratings of the working alliance, as opposed to counselor ratings, have been more directly related to positive client outcomes (Horvath, 1994; Horvath & Greenberg, 1986). Given the robust finding in the working alliance literature between client working alliance ratings and positive treatment outcomes, it is important that future research explore the relationship between client perceptions of cross-cultural working alliance formation and clients' racial identity attitudes (Burkard et al., 1999).

Given these identified concerns, this study sought to specifically examine if White racial identity attitudes would predict participant perceptions of their ability to form a working alliance with a racially similar and dissimilar counselor. This study is important for several reasons. Foremost, this investigation would allow counselors and researchers to examine if White racial identity would significantly predict client-counselor relationship development, as hypothesized by Helms (1984). Second, the nature of the relationship between White racial identity and client working alliance formation could be clarified. Moreover, an examination of the relationship between working alliance and White racial identity will add significantly to the multicultural counseling literature and may be suggestive of an important area for empirical study.

We developed the first hypothesis of this investigation to directly test Helms's (1984, 1990b) assertion that White racial identity attitudes would account for more variance in client-counselor cross-cultural relationship development than would simply matching clients with counselors on the basis of race. In this study, we hypothesized that White racial identity attitudes would account for more variance in pseudoclients' perceived ability to form a working alliance

with an African American counselor than would simply matching clients and counselors based on race (e.g., African American, White) in a vicarious counseling situation (Munley, 1974). The second hypothesis involved the nature of the relationship between White racial identity attitudes and client ratings of perceived ability to form a working alliance with an African American and a White counselor. For the African American counselor condition, we anticipated that scores on the Pseudo-Independence and Autonomy statuses would positively correlate with ratings of the perceived potential to form a working alliance, and higher scores on the Contact, Reintegration, and Disintegration statuses would inversely correlate to ratings of the perceived potential to form a working alliance. In the case of the White counselor condition, we anticipated that the White racial identity attitudes of the participants would not correlate with perceived potential to form a working alliance.

method

PARTICIPANTS

Volunteer participants were 100 White European American undergraduate students, ages 18 to 23 years ($M = 20$, $SD = 1.44$), who were enrolled in psychology and communication courses at a midsized, midwestern university. The sample consisted of 45 men and 53 women, with missing data for 2 students. Participants identified school rank as follows: (a) 1st-year students, 29%; (b) 2nd-year students, 18%; (c) 3rd-year students, 20%; (d) 4th-year students, 24%; and (e) 5th-year students, 9%.

INSTRUMENTATION

White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (WRIAS). Helms and Carter (1990) designed the WRIAS to assess the five theoretical stages of White racial identity development originally postulated by Helms (1984, 1990b): (a) Contact, (b) Disintegration, (c) Reintegration, (d) Pseudo-Independence, and (e) Autonomy. The WRIAS is a self-report attitude measure consisting of 50 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale and is hypothesized to have five subscales, each consisting of 10 items (Helms & Carter, 1990). Subscale scores range from 10 to 50.

An initial inquiry on the WRIAS suggested that internal consistency reliabilities were in the .90s for all the subscales on the WRIAS (Carter, 1984). Behrens's (1997) meta-analysis of 22 studies found the following average coefficient alphas: .50 (Contact), .77 (Disintegration), .78 (Reintegration), .67 (Pseudo-Independence), and .61 (Autonomy). The Contact subscale has consistently produced low and incongruous internal consistency findings (Behrens, 1997). In a few studies, the Contact subscale has yielded coefficient alphas as low as

.18 to .33 (C. M. Alexander, 1993; Davidson, 1992; Sadowsky, Seaberry, Gorji, Lai, & Baliga, 1991). Coefficient alphas were calculated for the five WRIAS scales for this study: Contact, .49; Disintegration, .78; Reintegration, .79; Pseudo-Independence, .60; Autonomy .53.

Research using this instrument has raised questions regarding the theory behind the WRIAS as well as the validity of the instrument. Tokar and Swanson (1991) implied that the factor structure of the WRIAS does not support the five hypothetical constructs suggested by Helms (1984). Bennett, Behrens, and Rowe (1993) and Behrens (1997) substantiated these findings in a confirmatory factor analysis. However, White racial identity attitudes and scales have been found in empirical studies to be related to cultural racism (Davis & Carter, 1988; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994), cultural values (Carter & Helms, 1990), and disposition to associate with African American coworkers (Block et al., 1995). Given this controversial evidence, the WRIAS remains the most investigated measure that assesses White racial identity attitudes from a developmental perspective.

Working Alliance Inventory-Client Modified Form (WAI-C). The original WAI-C was developed to assess the working alliance that develops between a client pursuing change and a counselor facilitating this process as an agent of change (Bordin, 1979, 1994). The WAI-C is a self-report measure consisting of three subscales: Tasks, Goals, and Emotional Bonds. Each of the three subscales comprises 12 items that are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*; Horvath & Greenberg, 1986).

The original WAI-C form is written in the past tense and was designed for use after a counseling session to measure the client's perception of the formed working alliance. For the purposes of this study, the WAI-C form was modified with future tense phrasing to assess the participant's perception of his or her capacity to form a future working alliance with an identified counselor. For this study, high scores on the modified WAI-C indicated positive respondent perceptions of a future working alliance that could be formed between the counselor and him- or herself. An internal consistency reliability of .85 using coefficient alpha was found for the modified version of the WAI-C for this study.

Demographic questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was used to identify participants' age, gender, ethnicity, and year in school.

STIMULUS VIDEOTAPE

Two 8-minute, videotaped counseling scenarios developed by Juarez-Cullen (1996) were used in this study. Both tapes used the same role-played script, which portrayed a first counseling session in which an African American female client described feelings of loneliness and depression to either a White or a Black female counselor. The client role performance was edited in both versions of the videotaped scenarios (White or Black counselor), so that the client

role was depicted in the same manner in both tapes. The counselors were portrayed by two women who were rated as similar in terms of age and physical attractiveness by an independent panel of judges (Juarez-Cullen, 1996). The script for the videotape was designed to contain both culturally responsive and culturally naive responses to control for ceiling effects, which could result from consistency in quality of responses. The client role depicted responses to the counselors' interventions that were neutral and positive. This type of response was recommended by Pomales, Claiborn, and LaFromboise (1986) as a way to hold responses constant in order to maintain face validity while varying counselor interventions.

A panel of 6 expert multicultural psychologists read and evaluated the written script to judge whether it was representative of "moderately effective counseling." Suggestions to make the script "moderately effective" were integrated into the script before production of the videotape. The finished videotape was judged by a different panel of 7 multicultural experts. The expert panel was asked to view both scenarios and then rate, on a 9-point Likert-type scale, the counselor's effectiveness based on definitions of the counselor's attractiveness, expertness, and trustworthiness (Strong, 1968). The videotapes were counterbalanced to control for order effect. The rating for the Black counselor effectiveness was $M = 4.14$ ($SD = 1.71$), and White counselor effectiveness was rated at $M = 4.00$ ($SD = 1.41$). A dependent sample *t* test showed significant differences between the two counselor analogues. For a complete overview of the development of the stimulus videotapes, readers are advised to consult Juarez-Cullen (1996).

PROCEDURE

One Asian American and two White counseling psychology graduate students in their mid-20s administered the protocol for this study. Participants completed the demographic questionnaire after they were informed that their participation in this study was entirely voluntary and that all of their responses to the instruments would be kept confidential. Small groups of participants were randomly assigned to one of two therapist analogue conditions (i.e., a White or an African American female therapist condition). Participants were informed that they would watch an 8-minute videotape of a counseling vignette and then complete two measures: the modified WAI-C and the WRIAS (titled "Social Attitude Survey," as advocated by Helms and Carter, 1990). These two instruments were counterbalanced to control for any ordering effects. When completing the modified WAI-C, participants were instructed to rate their desire and capacity to form a counseling relationship with the counselor they had observed in the videotape. Completing the research materials, participants were debriefed on the purpose of the study through a discussion with one of the investigators.

results

Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas and intercorrelations for each of the variables studied are presented in Table 1 by total sample and African American and White female counselor analogue conditions. The results of the intercorrelations revealed that none of the White racial identity scales were correlated with the modified WAI-C ratings for the White female counselor analogue situation, whereas the Contact ($r = .46, p < .01$), Reintegration ($r = -.40, p < .01$), and Autonomy ($r = .45, p < .01$) scales were significantly correlated with the WAI-C modified form ratings for the African American female counselor analogue situation. The Contact and Autonomy subscale scores were positively correlated with WAI-C ratings, and Reintegration subscale scores were inversely

TABLE 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Coefficient Alphas, and Intercorrelations of the WRIAS Subscales and the WAI-C Scale

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6
1. WAI-C							
Scale	47.79	10.77	.22*	-.08	-.12	.10	.18
AA	50.91	9.47	.46**	-.03	-.40**	.10	.45**
EA	45.15	11.08	-.07	-.10	.08	.05	-.01
2. Contact							
subscale	34.15	4.13		-.11	-.30**	.16	.45**
AA	35.04	4.57		-.16	-.41**	.18	.50**
EA	33.42	3.60		-.06	-.18	.10	.41**
3. Disintegration							
subscale	22.67	5.76			.79**	-.46**	-.19
AA	22.49	5.51			.70**	-.45**	-.24
EA	22.82	6.01			.85**	-.46**	-.15
4. Reintegration							
subscale	21.85	5.53				-.35**	-.24*
AA	21.64	5.43				-.35*	-.39**
EA	22.27	5.62				-.35*	-.11
5. Pseudo-Independence							
subscale	36.29	4.35					.50**
AA	36.96	4.40					.43**
EA	35.75	4.27					.56**
6. Autonomy							
subscale	39.24	3.80					
AA	39.29	3.96					
EA	39.20	3.70					

Note. WRIAS = White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (Helms & Carter, 1990); WAI-C = Working Alliance Inventory-Client Modified Form (Horvath & Greenberg, 1986); AA = African American Counselor Analogue ($n = 45$); EA = European American Counselor Analogue ($n = 55$). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

related to WAI-C ratings. To explore for possible differences in WAI-C ratings by participants' age, gender, and year in college, a separate *t* test and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed; these analyses yielded no significant results.

Because there were correlations between the five WRIAS scales, five 3-step hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, using the modified WAI-C ratings as the criterion variable. The predictor variables were entered in the same order for each analysis. Consistent with the recommendations of Wampold and Freund (1987), the analogue condition was entered in the first step, with the European American condition serving as the constant, the WRIAS subscale was entered in the second step, and the interaction effect between the analogue condition and the WRIAS subscale was entered in the final step.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis, as presented in Tables 2 and 3, indicate that the counselor race analogue situation significantly contributed to the variance in working alliance therapist ratings in Step 1 for all five analyses, $F(1, 98) = 7.61, p > .007, R^2 = .07, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .06$. This indicates that participants rated their perceived ability to form a working alliance with the African American counselor significantly higher than their ability to form a working alliance with the European American counselor. In Step 2 of the five analyses, none of the WRIAS subscales were found to significantly contribute to the variance of participants'

TABLE 2

Summary of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Prediction of Working Alliance Inventory-Client Ratings (*N* = 100)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Step 1 Analogue Condition	5.76	2.09	0.29	2.76**
Step 2 Contact	0.45	0.26	0.17	1.77
Step 3 Interaction Effect	1.17	0.50	1.94	2.32*
Step 1 Analogue Condition	5.76	2.09	0.27	2.76**
Step 2 Disintegration	-0.13	0.18	-0.07	-0.72
Step 3 Interaction Effect	0.13	0.37	0.36	0.72
Step 1 Analogue Condition	5.76	2.09	0.27	2.76**
Step 2 Reintegration	-0.21	0.19	-0.11	-1.12
Step 3 Interaction Effect	-0.85	0.37	-0.91	-2.28*
Step 1 Analogue Condition	5.76	2.09	0.27	2.76**
Step 2 Pseudo-Independence	0.17	0.24	0.07	0.70
Step 3 Interaction Effect	0.10	0.50	0.18	0.21
Step 1 Analogue Condition	5.76	2.09	0.27	2.76**
Step 2 Autonomy	0.50	0.27	0.18	1.83
Step 3 Interaction Effect	1.11	0.54	2.04	2.07*

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

TABLE 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of White Racial Identity Attitudes, Counselor Race (African American, White), and Interaction Effects on Working Alliance Ratings (*N* = 100)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Change in <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> for Change	Signif. of <i>F</i>
Contact						
Analogue	.27	.07	.06	.07	7.61	.01
Contact	.32	.10	.08	.03	3.14	.08
Interaction	.39	.15	.12	.05	5.38	.02
Disintegration						
Analogue	.27	.07	.06	.07	7.61	.01
Disintegration	.28	.08	.06	.00	0.52	.47
Interaction	.28	.09	.05	.00	0.13	.72
Reintegration						
Analogue	.27	.07	.06	.07	7.61	.01
Reintegration	.29	.08	.06	.01	1.26	.26
Interaction	.36	.13	.10	.04	5.18	.02
Pseudo-Independence (P-I)						
Analogue	.27	.07	.06	.07	7.61	.01
P-I	.28	.08	.06	.00	0.49	.49
Interaction	.28	.08	.05	.00	0.05	.83
Autonomy						
Analogue	.27	.07	.06	.07	7.61	.01
Autonomy	.32	.10	.08	.03	3.35	.07
Interaction	.38	.14	.11	.04	4.27	.04

ratings of perceived ability to form a working alliance. In Step 3 of the five hierarchical analyses, the Contact subscale, $F(3, 96) = 5.38, p > .02, R^2 = .15$, adjusted $R^2 = .12$; the Reintegration subscale, $F(3, 96) = 5.18, p > .02, R^2 = .13$, adjusted $R^2 = .10$; and Autonomy subscale, $F(3, 96) = 4.27, p > .04, R^2 = .14$, adjusted $R^2 = .11$, emerged as significant predictors of perceived ability to form a working alliance with the African American counselor.

discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between participants' White racial identity attitudes and their perceived ability to form a working alliance with a racially similar or dissimilar counselor. The results of this study partially supported the hypothesis that White racial identity attitudes would significantly improve ability to predict how pseudoclients form a working alli-

ance with an African American and with a White counselor. In the first step of the regression analyses, the counselor analogue conditions (i.e., African American counselor, White counselor) were entered to control for the main effect of counselor race in the prediction of modified WAI-C ratings. This finding indicates that White participants rated their perceived ability to form a working alliance as being higher with the White counselor than with the African American counselor. This first finding is consistent with prior research findings. For example, research examining the effect of race on counselor credibility and preferences ratings (see Atkinson & Lowe, 1995, for a review) demonstrates inconsistent findings. Race is typically treated as categorical or descriptive data in these studies, and researchers have acknowledged that using race in this manner in research may lead to the oversimplification of empirical findings (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995; Coleman et al., 1995; Pomales et al., 1986). Because of these prior research findings, the main effect of the WRIAS subscales and the interaction effect are the variables of interest in this current investigation.

Each WRIAS subscale was entered in Step 2 of the regression analyses, and none significantly contributed to the prediction of modified WAI-C ratings. This finding indicates that White racial identity statuses did not uniquely contribute to participants' perceived ability to form a working alliance with the African American or White counselor perceived in the videotape. These results indicate that White racial identity attitudes are not broadly applicable to perceived ability to form a working alliance.

In the final step of the analyses, the interaction effect of Contact, Reintegration, and Autonomy White racial identity attitudes and the counselor analogue situations (i.e., African American counselor, White counselor) were found to uniquely and significantly contribute to prediction of participant ratings of the modified WAI-C, whereas Disintegration and Pseudo-Independence attitudes did not contribute any unique variance in the regression models. Furthermore, an examination of the pattern of intercorrelations shows that the White racial identity attitudes of Contact, Reintegration, and Autonomy were significantly correlated with the modified WAI-C ratings of the African American counselor analogue, and none of the White racial identity attitudes were correlated with the White counselor analogue. More specifically, the Reintegration attitude was inversely related to working alliance ratings, and the Contact and Autonomy attitudes were positively related to working alliance ratings. These findings indicate that White pseudoclients who were high in Reintegration attitudes perceived more difficulty in forming a positive working alliance with an African American female counselor, and pseudoclients who were high in Contact and Autonomy attitudes perceived themselves as capable of forming a positive working alliance with an African American counselor. For participants who were high in Reintegration attitudes, it is likely that their negative stereotypes of African Americans and their superiority beliefs about White culture may have negatively influenced their perceived ability to form a working

alliance with the African American counselor. By contrast, participants high in Autonomy attitudes may feel more capable of forming a positive working alliance with the African American counselor because of their appreciation of diversity issues. Given that a panel of multicultural experts rated the African American counselor condition as representative of more effective counseling than the White counselor condition, it is also possible that this finding is reflective of pseudoclients, who are high in Autonomy attitudes, desire to work with a more effective counselor. The finding of a positive correlation between Contact subscale scores and modified WAI-C ratings of the African American counselor is contrary to one hypothesis of this study. Perhaps these results are reflective of participants' color-blind beliefs (i.e., race does not matter), which Helms (1984, 1990b) has proposed to be prominent in those individuals high in Contact attitudes. For Whites, this color-blind attitude may artificially inflate positive perceptions for people of color, and in this study the effect may have influenced perceived ability to form a working alliance with the African American counselor in a positive direction.

These findings are certainly consistent with previous research findings, which indicated that White coworkers who were high in Reintegration attitudes had negative attitudes toward working with African American coworkers, whereas White coworkers who were high in Autonomy attitudes had more positive feelings about African American coworkers (Block et al., 1995). In addition, previous research findings have also demonstrated that Whites who were high in Reintegration attitudes had more racist attitudes (Carter, 1990; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992, 1994), which may be a poor prognostication for the development of a positive cross-cultural working alliance. Collectively, these findings are consistent with Ponterotto et al.'s (2000) conclusions regarding White racial identity research in that "the most consistent finding to date is that racial identity status is predictive of feelings, attitudes, and comfort with persons from one's own and other racial groups" (p. 652).

The findings specific to the interaction effect between Contact and Autonomy White racial identity attitudes and the African American counselor are consistent with prior research findings as well. It has been shown in past research that the Contact and Autonomy subscales have a curvilinear relationship with comfort with African Americans (Claney & Parker, 1989). Although the empirical findings from the current study indicate that pseudoclients who were high in Contact and Autonomy attitudes had positive perceptions of forming a working alliance with the African American counselor, perhaps the counseling processes during relationship formation are therapeutically different for people who are high in these statures. For example, Carter (1995) has suggested that clients who are high in Contact attitudes may minimize the importance of counselor race in counseling, whereas clients who are high in Autonomy attitudes may demonstrate appreciation for racial differences. It is conceivable that both processes may have the net effect of positively influencing working

alliance ratings from the client's perspective in cross-cultural counseling situations, despite the divergent qualitative differences in the perception of the relationship. Certainly, future investigations need to examine and differentiate how the counseling processes are different for individuals who are high in Contact and Autonomy attitudes.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the findings of this study showed that a limited portion of variance was accounted for by the results of the hierarchical regression analyses. There are several reasons why this may have occurred. The coefficient alphas were low for several of the WRIAS scales (.49 to .79), and statistically this would have lowered the available variance to explain in the regression model. Furthermore, as acknowledged above, the range of scores for the WRIAS subscales was restricted, and this could have affected the amount of available variance. Finally, the skill level of the therapists portrayed in the videotapes may have influenced working alliance ratings. A panel of experts rated the counselors in the videotape as demonstrating "moderate" counseling abilities. This limited range of demonstrated counseling abilities by the counselors may have led to a restricted range of working alliance ratings, potentially suppressing modified WAI-C ratings. Each of these concerns, individually or collectively, may have influenced the amount of variance accounted for in this study.

LIMITATIONS

Several methodological limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the results of this investigation. The first limitation involves the sample used in this study. All volunteer participants were university students participating in a group administration of the research materials. Participants rated their perceived ability to form a working alliance with a White or African American female counselor based on an observation of an 8-minute section of videotape of one of the counselors and an African American client. The artificiality of the group administration, the counseling analogue condition, and the fact that participants were volunteer students rather than actual clients, may have influenced the results in unforeseen ways. It is important to recognize that the way in which volunteer study participants react to analogue situations may be significantly different from actual clients' reactions in a counseling relationship. Furthermore, participants may have had difficulty relating to the African American client in the videotape, and this may have potentially influenced ratings of the modified WAI-C.

Another limitation involves the WRIAS subscales. In examining the range of scores on each of the WRIAS subscales, there is a restriction of range problem within the sample. An examination of the means and standard deviations shows the range of scores for the Disintegration and Reintegration subscales as significantly lower than the range of scores for the Contact, Pseudo-Independence, and Autonomy subscales. This has been a common concern with other investi-

gations in which the WRIAS was used (e.g., Helms & Carter, 1991; Pope-Davis, Menefee, & Ottavi, 1993; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992), and this may have reduced the total available variance for the regression models. Furthermore, the coefficient alphas for the WRIAS subscales in this study were in the low to moderate range. Some characteristics of the sample (i.e., volunteers, attitude of participants) may have affected participant responses to items, subsequently lowering the internal consistency of the WRIAS subscales. These findings may also be reflective of an unstable factor structure. For example, Swanson, Tokar, and Davis (1994) have suggested that one bipolar factor, rather than five independent factors, may best represent the factor structure of the WRIAS. Although the coefficient alphas may have been influenced by the characteristics of the sample in this study, it is also important to acknowledge that these findings are not uncharacteristic of prior investigations that examined the internal consistency of the WRIAS subscales (Ponterotto et al., 2000). In conclusion, the WRIAS remains a controversial measure because of the recognized psychometric limitations of the scale (Behrens, 1997), and it is important that the findings from this study be interpreted with caution.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several implications can be drawn from this study for cross-cultural counseling and counselor training. The results of this study suggest that effective cross-cultural counseling with White clients is related to the racial identity attitudes held by the White client, particularly regarding African American counselors. So, counselors of color should be sensitive not only to how racial identity attitudes affect the White client's internal processes, but also to how these attitudes may influence the dynamics of counseling. For example, counselors should assess early in the development of the cross-cultural counseling relationship the nature of the White client's racial identity attitudes and how this may influence the development of a therapeutic relationship. In the context of counselor training, it is important that counselors be trained to assess the White client's racial identity development and continue to assess how these identity statuses may influence the process and outcome of therapy. This preliminary research suggests that the racial identity status of a White client seems to interact with the dynamics of counseling, and it behooves counselors to continue to assess the influence of racial identity to increase the effectiveness of counseling interventions, processes, and outcomes. It will be important for counselors to demonstrate flexibility in their treatment approach to address the emotional reactions and developmental needs of White clients as these needs change based upon their level of racial identity development.

Furthermore, there are several important research implications that can be garnered from this study. Research is needed that examines the influence of

White racial identity on each of the subscales of the WAI (i.e., Bond, Tasks, Goals). Each of these subscales represents processes that are important to the development of a working alliance (Bordin, 1979, 1994), and it may be that different levels of racial identity influence the development of bonds, tasks, and goals differentially. Future studies should also extend this research beyond African American and White counseling dyads and explore the interaction of racial identities from other cultural groups with cross-cultural working alliance development. Finally, more research needs to be conducted that explores the influence of racial identity attitudes in actual counseling relationships, rather than in analogue counseling situations.

summary

This study has provided some important insights into the role of White racial identity development in cross-cultural counseling and perceptions of therapeutic relationship formation. The results of this study provide some support for Helms's (1984) hypothesis that racial identity influences counseling relationship formation; however, these findings are specific to White clients and African American and White counselors. Although these results are based on client perceptions of forming a working alliance, it certainly suggests that the working alliance theoretical model may be an important clinical and research paradigm for understanding cross-cultural counseling (Burkard et al., 1999; Ponterotto et al., 2000).

references

- Alexander, C. M. (1993). Construct validity and reliability of the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 53(11), 3799A. (University Microfilms No. AAC92-37652)
- Alexander, L. B., & Luborsky, L. (1986). The Penn Helping Alliance Scales. In L. S. Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook* (pp. 325-366). New York: Guilford Press.
- Atkinson, D. R., & Lowe, S. M. (1995). The role of ethnicity, cultural knowledge, and conventional techniques in counseling and psychotherapy. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 387-414). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Behrens, J. T. (1997). Does the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale measure racial identity? *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 44, 3-12.
- Bennett, S. K., Behrens, J. T., & Rowe, W. (1993, August). *The White Racial Identity Attitude Scale: Validity and factor structure*. Paper presented at the 101st annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Block, C. J., Roberson, L., & Neuger, D. (1995). White racial identity theory: A framework for understanding reactions toward interracial situations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 46, 71-88.
- Bordin, E. S. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 16, 252-260.

- Bordin, E. S. (1980, December). *Of human bonds that bind or free*. Presidential address to Tenth Annual Convention of Society for Research on Psychotherapy, Pacific Grove, CA.
- Bordin, E. S. (1994). Theory and research on the therapeutic working alliance: New directions. In A. O. Horvath & L. S. Greenberg (Eds.), *The working alliance: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 13-37). New York: Wiley.
- Burkard, A. W., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., & Alfonso, V. C. (1999). White counselor trainees' racial identity and working alliance perceptions. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 77*, 324-329.
- Carter, R. T. (1984). *The relationship between Black students' value orientations and their racial identity attitudes*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Maryland.
- Carter, R. T. (1990). Does race or racial identity attitudes influence the counseling process in Black and White dyads? In J. E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 145-164). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Carter, R. T. (1995). *The influence of race and racial identity in psychotherapy: Toward a racially inclusive model*. New York: Wiley.
- Carter, R. T., & Helms, J. E. (1990). White racial identity attitudes and cultural values. In J. E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 105-118) Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Claney, D., & Parker, W. M. (1989). Assessing White racial consciousness and perceived comfort with Black individuals: A preliminary study. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 67*, 449-451.
- Coleman, H. L. K., Wampold, B. E., & Casali, S. L. (1995). Ethnic minorities' rating of ethnically similar and European American counselors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 42*, 55-64.
- Davidson, J. R. (1992). Evaluation of an education model for race/ethnic sensitive social work and critique of the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 53*(01), 304A. (University Microfilms No. AAC92-17628)
- Davis, L. E., & Carter, R. T. (1988, August). *White racial identity attitudes and racism*. Paper presented at the 96th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Atlanta, GA.
- Eisenthal, S., Emery, R., Lazare, A., & Udin, H. (1979). "Adherence" and the negotiated approach to patienthood. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 36*, 393-398.
- Fischer, A. R., Jome, L. M., & Atkinson, D. (1998). Reconceptualizing multicultural counseling: Universal healing conditions in a culturally specific context. *The Counseling Psychologist, 26*, 525-589.
- Frank, J. D., & Frank, J. B. (1991). *Persuasion and healing: A comparative study of psychotherapy* (3rd ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gelso, C. J., & Carter, J. A. (1985). The relationship in counseling and psychotherapy: Components, consequences, and theoretical antecedents. *The Counseling Psychologist, 13*, 155-243.
- Gelso, C. J., & Carter, J. A. (1994). Components of the psychotherapy relationship: Their interaction and unfolding during treatment. *The Counseling Psychologist, 41*, 296-306.
- Goodstein, R., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1997). Racial and ethnic identity: Their relationship and their contribution to self-esteem. *Journal of Black Psychology, 23*, 275-292.
- Greenson, R. R. (1967). *The technique and practice of psychoanalysis* (Vol. I). New York: International Universities Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1984). Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A Black and White model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 12*, 153-165.
- Helms, J. E. (1990a). Introduction: Review of racial identity. In J. E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 3-8). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1990b). Toward a model of White racial identity development. In J. E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 49-66). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1995). An update of Helms's White and people of color racial identity models. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 181-198). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Helms, J. E., & Carter, R. T. (1990). Development of the White Racial Identity Inventory. In J. E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 67–80). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Helms, J. E., & Carter, R. T. (1991). Relationships of White and Black racial identity attitudes and demographic similarity to counselor preferences. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 446–457.
- Helms, J. E., & Piper, R. E. (1994). Implications of racial identity theory for vocational psychology. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 44*, 124–136.
- Ho, M. K. (1992). *Minority children and adolescents in therapy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Horvath, A. O. (1994). Empirical validation of Bordin's pantheoretical model of the alliance: The Working Alliance Inventory perspective. In A. O. Horvath & L. S. Greenberg (Eds.), *The working alliance: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 109–130). New York: Wiley.
- Horvath, A. O. (2000). The therapeutic relationship: From transference to alliance. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*, 163–173.
- Horvath, A. O., & Greenberg, L. S. (1986). The development of the Working Alliance Inventory. In L. S. Greenberg & W. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A resource handbook* (pp. 529–556). New York: Guilford Press.
- Horvath, A. O., & Symonds, B. D. (1991). Relation between working alliance and outcome in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 139–149.
- Juarez-Cullen, M. (1996). Relationship between White counselors' racial identity development and their judgments of the effectiveness of Black and White female counselors (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1996). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 57*, 2868.
- Luborsky, L. (1994). Therapeutic alliances as predictors of psychotherapy outcomes: Factors explaining the predictive success. In A. O. Horvath & L. S. Greenberg (Eds.), *The working alliance: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 38–50). New York: Wiley.
- Luborsky, L., Crits-Christoph, P., Alexander, L., Margolis, M., & Cohen, M. (1983). Two helping alliance methods for predicting outcomes of psychotherapy: A counting signs vs. a global rating method. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 171*, 480–491.
- Luborsky, L., Crits-Christoph, P., Mintz, J., & Auerbach, A. (1988). *Who will benefit from psychotherapy? Predicting therapeutic outcomes*. New York: Basic Books.
- Munley, P. H. (1974). A review of counseling analogue research methods. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 21*, 320–330.
- Orlinsky, D. E., & Howard, K. I. (1986). Process and outcome in psychotherapy. In S. L. Garfield & A. E. Bergan (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (pp. 117–156). New York: Wiley.
- Pomales, J., Claiborn, C. D., & LaFromboise, T. D. (1986). Effects of Black students' racial identity on perceptions of White counselors varying in cultural sensitivity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*, 57–61.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Fuentres, J. N., & Chen, E. C. (2000). Models of multicultural counseling. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 639–669). New York: Wiley.
- Pope-Davis, D. B., Menefee, L. A., & Ottavi, T. M. (1993). The comparison of White racial identity attitudes among faculty and students: Implications for professional psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 24*, 443–449.
- Pope-Davis, D. B., & Ottavi, T. M. (1992). The influence of White racial identity attitudes on racism among faculty members: A preliminary examination. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 389–394.
- Pope-Davis, D. B., & Ottavi, T. M. (1994). The relationship between racism and racial identity among White Americans: A replication and extension. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 72*, 293–297.
- Sodowsky, G. R., Seaberry, J., Gorji, T. N., Lai, E. W., & Baliga, G. (1991, August). *Theory of White racial identity: Qualitative and quantitative analyses of White psychology trainees' responses*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco.

- Strong, S. R. (1968). Counseling: An interpersonal influence process. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 15*, 215-224.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Sue, S., Zane, N., & Young, K. (1994). Research on psychotherapy with culturally diverse populations. In A. Bergin & S. L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change* (4th ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Swanson, J. L., Tokar, D. M., & Davis, L. E. (1994). Content and construct validity of the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 44*, 198-217.
- Taub, D. J., & McEwen, M. K. (1992). The relationship of racial identity attitudes to Autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships in Black and White undergraduate women. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 439-446.
- Tokar, D. M., & Swanson, J. L. (1991). An investigation of the validity of Helms's (1984) model of White racial identity development. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 296-301.
- Tracey, T. J., & Kokotovic, A. M. (1989). Factor structure of the Working Alliance Inventory. *Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1*, 207-210.
- Wampold, B. E., & Freund, R. D. (1987). Use of multiple regression in counseling psychology research: A flexible data-analytic strategy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34*, 372-382.
- Werner-Wilson, R. J., Zimmerman, T. S., Daniels, K., & Bowling, S. M. (1999). Is therapeutic alliance influenced by a feminist approach in therapy? *Contemporary Family Therapy, 21*, 545-550.

