

Latina Undergraduates' Attitudes Towards Counseling

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This project will investigate Latina undergraduates' attitudes towards counseling. Specifically, this project will seek to explore descriptions of the university counseling center, the value of counseling services, key elements for a successful session, and the addressing of culture in counseling as they relate to Latina undergraduates' attitudes towards counseling. In addition, Latina undergraduates' family and community's thoughts on seeking counseling for personal concerns will be explored. Finally, Latina undergraduates' recommendations to improve current counseling services will be solicited.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are Latina undergraduates' thoughts on seeking counseling for personal concerns?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of Latina undergraduates' social support system towards counseling?

RQ3: What value do Latina undergraduates place on counseling services?

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the advancement of multicultural psychology, the importance of investigating public attitudes towards counseling and client perceptions of counseling has surfaced as an important theme in the discipline (Heppner, Rosenberg, & Hedgespeth, 1992; Sells, Smith, & Moon, 1996; Wilcox-Matthew, Ottens, & Minor, 1997). College student populations and their perceptions of counseling services and help-seeking tendencies have been investigated.

As Fuertes, Bartolomeo and Nichols (2001) have stated, the need to assess the multicultural competence of counselors through client perceptions of this competency may be a result of the lack of support for a relationship between self-and-other ratings of a counselor's multicultural counseling competence (as cited in Constantine, 2002). These authors, (Fuertes, Bartolomeo and Nichols, 2001), also state that the investigation of client perceptions of counseling could result in beneficial information about counseling and its relationship with multicultural topics, and aid mental health personnel in providing effective services to a more diverse population.

Constantine (2002), in a quantitative study with 112 ethnically diverse undergraduate, graduate students and 37 counselors, found that a client's attitude towards counseling was responsible for significant variance in their ratings of overall counseling satisfaction. Also, this study suggested that clients' ratings of their counselors' multicultural counseling competence affected the variance in counseling satisfaction ratings.

The relationship between social support and help-seeking tendencies has also been presented in the literature. Kelly and Achter (1995) concluded that high levels of self-concealment, a person's tendency to keep personal information secret were related to negative attitudes towards psychotherapy while positive perceptions of psychotherapy with high self-concealment tendencies were indicative of a greater perceived likelihood of seeking professional counseling (as cited in Cepeda-Benito, & Short, 1998). This study also found that with a low social support level there was an increase in the perceived likelihood of seeking counseling for high self-concealers (Kelly & Achter, 1995).

Contrary to previous findings, in an investigation of the self-concealment, avoidance of psychological services, and perceived likelihood of seeking professional help of 732 Texas university students, Cepeda-Benito and Short (1998) found that these assertions were not apparent. These authors also concluded that high self-concealers were not likely to report higher rates of help-seeking than low self-concealers. Moreover, this study found that high self-concealers were more than three times more likely to report needing professional counseling but not seeking this help in comparison to low self-concealers.

Student values toward mental health, likelihood to consult mental health services, and a comparison between college students and the general public were examined in a study conducted by Turner et al (1999). Results showed students were stronger in believing that good health consists of psychological physical well being and are less likely to consult professional help when they have an issue they cannot resolve (Turner et al, 1999).

In another study conducted by Gloria, et al. (2001), perceptions of individuals and the differences and relationships between cultural congruity, student perception of the environment, and help seeking attitudes by race, socio economic status, and gender were examined. Results suggest that there were no significant relations between sociorace and gender. Although the higher White students scored in cultural congruity, the more positive perceptions they had toward the university environment and help seeking attitudes than racial and ethnic minorities (Gloria et al, 2001). In addition, females were more likely to score higher in cultural congruity than males and had more positive help-seeking attitudes. Examining race and gender, white females reported higher in cultural congruity, university environment, and help seeking attitudes than REM females. Similarities were discovered between White and REM males. For gender differences, females had greater cultural congruity than males both in White and REM groups. In this study, an increase of cultural congruity and a more positive perception of the university environment are related to more positive help-seeking attitudes.

Ruelas et al. (1998) investigated the impact a counselor model between White and Mexican participants' perceptions of counselor credibility and determined if the participant responses of counselor credibility were related to levels of acculturation. This study concluded culture is related to a positive perception of counselors suggesting that other factors besides cultural values may add to Mexican American's underutilization of mental health. Income was not a significant predictor for counselor credibility and acculturation did not have a significant impact on Mexican Americans' response for counselor credibility. Conversely, however, loss of Mexican culture is related to less positive perceptions of counselor credibility. Mexican culture may support use of counseling services among themselves (Ruelas et al, 1998).

Although research has been conducted to investigate college student populations' perceptions of counseling services and help-seeking tendencies, there is limited discussion concerning Latina undergraduates and their attitudes towards counseling. As ethnic, cultural and economic diversity is increasing on college campuses in the United States, it is imperative to include Latina undergraduates in the research on attitudes towards counseling. This research can then contribute to the knowledge of counseling psychology and higher education (Morrow, Burriss-Kitchen & Der-Karabetian, 2000).

APPROACH

Project Design

This research will follow a qualitative design. The participants in this study will be undergraduate students attending a four-year Research Type I Institution. Five focus groups will be conducted with approximately 5-7 Latina undergraduates each. Focus group discussions will be tape-recorded and this data will be transcribed. In addition, this qualitative data will be coded according to themes and patterns that develop concerning attitudes towards counseling.

Methods

The first phase of this project, which is initiated, will be a literature review on attitudes towards counseling, including themes such as descriptions of the university counseling center, the value of counseling services, key elements for a successful session, and the addressing of culture in counseling to investigate current research.

A demographic sheet (see Appendix) will be distributed to the participants that will include background information (e.g., age, gender, class status, parental education, etc). The five focus groups will be conducted with approximately seven Latina undergraduates. Discussion time will be approximately 90 minutes and the sessions will be tape-recorded. Also, notes will be taken during the discussion. Refreshments and pizza will be provided during each focus group session.

The following questions will be presented to the focus groups:

- 1) Does having good psychological health play an important role in maintaining good health
- 2) What are your thoughts about going to the counseling center to address your personal concerns?
- 3) What words come to mind in describing the university counseling center?
- 4) What are your communities' perceptions of counseling?
- 5) What are your family's perceptions of seeking counseling for personal concerns?
- 6) What value do you place on counseling services?
- 7) If you don't value counseling, what don't you value?
- 8) If you seek counseling, what are the key elements for a successful session?
- 9) How should culture be addressed in counseling sessions?
- 10) If you had the opportunity to provide recommendations to improve the current services, what would you suggest?

Each 90-minute focus group discussion recording will be transcribed. This qualitative data will be coded into themes to determine patterns in the discussion.

STUDENT DUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Two group members will be responsible for collecting literature to write a literature review, which will help them understand the current research on Latina attitudes towards counseling. Then, they will begin to prepare and photocopy survey packets. Upon receiving IRB approval, they will recruit approximately five to seven participants for five focus groups. Both researchers will alternate facilitator and note-taker positions. After completing all focus group sessions, they will transcribe and code the data to discover themes in the discussions, which will aid in finding conclusions for this project. Both researchers will also prepare materials and content for a UROP presentation.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Phase I- Fall Quarter

- Consultation with faculty advisor about project
- Initiate literature review
- Develop focus group questions
- IRB submissions

Develop a list of possible Latino organization contacts on campus
 Completion of literature review

Phase II- Winter Quarter

Identification of potential focus group participants
 Initiate focus groups
 Data transcription

Phase III- Spring Quarter

Data Analysis
 Write up of findings, results, and recommendations for future research
 Present Research Paper

Budget

UROP Funding Request

Total Amount Requested: \$932.00

Itemized List

Cassette Tape Recorder with microphone	\$65.00
Audio Cassette Tapes	\$36.00 (6 @ \$6 each)
Package of Batteries for Tape Recorder	\$10.00 (2 @ \$5 each)
Transcription of Taped Interviews	\$150.00 (approx. 100 pages @\$1.50 per page)
Photocopying Expenses	
Questionnaire (3 pages)	\$10.50 (105 copies @ \$.10 each)
Presentation Handouts (6 pages)	\$12.00 (copies @ \$.10 each)
Poster for Presentation	\$120.00
Library Request (Dissertations)	\$80.00 (2 @ \$40 each)
Telephone Phone Card (approx.)	\$20.00 (approx. 2 @ \$10 each)
Slide Development for Presentation (estimated)	\$80.00
Misc. Office Supplies	
Paper	\$20.00 (two packages of ink jet paper @ \$10 each)
Envelopes	\$2.50 (box of 100)
Printer Ink (Color and BW) for Deskjet 648	\$56.00 (\$25 for blacks, \$35 for color)
Poster Board for Presentation	\$10.00
Pizza	\$180.00 (15 @ \$12 each)
Paper Pads	\$5.00
Floppy Discs	\$10.00 (package)
Pens	\$15.00 (package of 12)
Clipboards for Focus Groups	\$50.00 (10 @ \$5 each)

References

Cepeda-Benito, A., & Short, P. (1998). Self-concealment, avoidance of psychological

- services, and perceived likelihood of seeking professional help. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45(1)*, 58-64.
- Constantine, M.G. (2002). Predictors of satisfaction with counseling: Racial and ethnic minority clients' attitudes toward counseling and ratings of their counselors' general and multicultural counseling competence. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 49(2)*, 255-263.
- Gloria, A. M., Hird, J. S., & Navarro, R. L. (2001). Relationships of cultural congruity and perceptions of the university environment to help-seeking attitudes by sociorace and gender relationships of cultural. *Journal of Counseling Student Development, 42(6)* 545-562.
- Phillips-Morrow, G., Burris-Kitchen, D., & Der-Karabetian, A. (2000). Assessing campus climate of cultural diversity: a focus on focus groups. *College Student Journal, 34(4)*, 589-602.
- Ruelas, S. R., Atkinson, D. R. & Sanchez, L. R. (1998). Counselor helping model, participant ethnicity and acculturation level and perceived counselor Credibility. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45(1)*, 98-103.
- Turner, A. L. & Quinn, K. F. (1999). College students' perceptions of the value of psychological services: A comparison with APA's public education research. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 30(4)* 368-371.

Appendix

**University of California-Irvine
The School of Social Sciences**

Department of Social Sciences

Department Phone 949.824-6298
369 Social Science Tower
Irvine, CA 92697-5100

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines students' experiences in higher education. In an effort to better understand how higher education institutions can best help students, we are asking your help in completing the enclosed survey.

The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Do not forget to also respond the four questions on the second page of the survey. Please do not include your name anywhere on the survey packet, as your responses will be kept anonymous. Upon completion of the survey, please return the packet to the researchers.

The numbers on the survey will identify focus groups and will be used for the sole purpose of calculating the number of participants in our study. The survey will be kept in a secure and locked place in order to ensure your confidentiality and the anonymity of your responses. **Only** the researcher team and researchers' assistant will have access to your information

Please answer **all** of the survey questions, however, you may skip or discontinue answering the questions at any time as your participation is purely voluntary. It is believed that there are no foreseeable risks or discomfort involved with the completion of this research. Finally, any presentation or publication of the data will in no way identify you or your institution. **Please note that the return of your completed survey will be considered your consent for participation in this study and the focus group session that will follow.**

Although you will not receive any immediate or direct benefits from this research, the information gained will help us understand student perceptions of counseling and how service providers can best provide effective services.

Thank you for your help in participating in this research. Please keep this cover letter for your records. If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact us at the numbers provided below.

Appendix Student Survey

Thank you for filling out this survey that examines your thoughts about your attitudes towards counseling. Do not spend a lot of time on each question – respond with your first reaction. Please circle the most appropriate answer to each question and answer all the questions. ****Do not write your name on this survey!****

Gender:

- Male
 Divorced Widowed
 Female

Age: _____

GPA: _____

Marital Status:

- Single
 Married Separated

Class Standing: student?

- _____ Freshman
 Sophomore

 Junior
 Senior

- Graduate student
 Professional student

Where do you live?

- on-campus housing
 off-campus housing with friends
 off-campus housing with family
 other _____

Are you a transfer

If yes, from where?

If yes, how long ago did you transfer?

What degree are you currently working toward? academic degree you expect to earn?

- Bachelor of Arts or Science
 Master of Arts, Master of Science, or other master's
 MBA
 J.D. (Law)
 M.D. (Medicine)
 Ph.D. or Ed.D.
 Other: _____

What is the highest

- Bachelor of Arts or Science
 Master of Arts, Master of Science, or other master's
 MBA
 J.D. (Law)
 M.D. (Medicine)
 Ph.D. or Ed.D.
 Other:

Which department are you affiliated?

- School of the Arts
 School of Biological Sciences
 School of Engineering
 School of Humanities
 Information and Computer Sciences

 Interdisciplinary Studies

- School of Physical Sciences
 School of Social Ecology
all that apply)

What is your race / ethnicity? (check one)

- Central-American African American
 Cuban-American Asian American or Pacific Islander
 Mexican-American/Chicano Caucasian
 Puerto Rican-American Native American
 South-American Multiracial
 Other

How do you finance you education? (check

- School of Social Sciences
- Undeclared
- Work part-time
- Scholarship
- Work full-time
- Personal savings
- Family
- Student loans

Have you been continuously enrolled since you began the degree you are currently working toward? _____

If no, how many semesters did you stop out of school? _____ semesters

What is your mother's highest completed level of education? **What is your father's highest completed level of education?**

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No formal education | <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS | <input type="checkbox"/> No formal education | <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (1-5) | <input type="checkbox"/> MA/MS/MBA | <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (1-5) | <input type="checkbox"/> MA/MS/MBA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle school | <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D. or Ed.D. | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School | <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D. or Ed.D. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional (M.D. or J.D.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Some High School | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School (9-12) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> High School (9-12) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some college (no degree) | | <input type="checkbox"/> Some College (no degree) | |

Do you have any siblings attended college? **Yes** **No** **Have any of your siblings**

attended college? _____ **If yes, have they completed a college degree?** _____ **If yes, have they given you**

advice about education? _____

If no, are they currently enrolled in college? _____

What is your family income? Who of the following family members I value the

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$10,000 | were first to be born in the United States? | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-\$19,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> No one in your family | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000-\$29,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yourself or your siblings | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000-\$39,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Your parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-\$49,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Your grandparents | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000-\$59,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Your great-grandparents | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-\$69,000 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 70,000 & Above | | |
- If no one, how long have you been in the US?** _____

Additional Questions:

- 1) When you have personal concerns, with whom do you talk to address your concerns?
- 2a) Have you ever gone to counseling for help with a personal concern?
- 2b) Was it helpful?
- 2c) What did you value about the session/s?

3a) If you have gone to counseling for a personal concern, would you go to counseling again for help for another personal concern?

3b) If no, why not?

4) Did the counseling you received help you to cope with your concerns?