The Relationship between Gender and Attitude Toward Counseling in University Students

Elizabeth A. Call
Loyola University Chicago

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND ATTITUDE TOWARD COUNSELING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY
ELIZABETH A. CALL

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The purpose of this study was to provide further research evidence of the difference in gender attitudes toward counseling. In addition, this study examined an aspect of help-seeking in both men and women and the possible differences in help-seeking between the two. This study provided support that there is a significant difference between men's and women's attitudes toward counseling. Women's attitudes tended to be more favorable toward help-seeking. However, there were no significant results supporting a difference in help-seeking.

To determine if a difference existed between men and women regarding attitudes toward counseling a t-test for independent groups was performed. Also, to determine if a difference existed between men and women regarding help-seeking behavior, a second t-test was performed. The results of the first t-test proved to be highly significant, while the second t-test proved to be non significant. This provided partial support for the hypothesis.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Relationship Between Gender and Attitude Toward Counseling in University Students

Studies suggest that there appear to be gender differences in attitude toward seeking counseling services. According to Collier (1982), one in three women seek services from a mental health professional at some point during their lifetime, compared with one in seven men. In addition, two thirds of all clients seeking psychological help are female. Therefore, it is suggested that gender affects attitudes about seeking professional psychological aid, as well as seeking help in general. This poses a significant obstacle for mental health workers because men are probably being under served. It is not likely that men avoid counseling because they are psychologically healthier; rather, there seem to be other factors related to their reluctance to seeking counseling. Much research and theoretical writing has focused on the psychological and sociological reasons for women's use of counseling services. However, a much smaller amount of literature has focused on the problems associated with male reluctance to use psychological services. Based on these issues, it is imperative that psychologists and counselors understand
possible factors associated with the differences between men's attitudes toward counseling versus women's attitudes toward counseling. One theory used to explain attitude is based on a social psychological theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) which states that the decision to engage in a particular behavior (e.g., seeking professional psychological help) is primarily a function of the individual's intention to engage in the behavior. The intention to engage in the behavior is largely determined by the individual's attitude toward the behavior. Attitude, therefore, is a function of specific beliefs regarding the consequences of performing the behavior and evaluations of those consequences. Thus, someone with a positive attitude toward therapy might seek treatment for self-exploration and growth, whereas someone with a negative attitude might perceive therapy as a humiliating endeavor indicative of personal inadequacy. This may lead an individual to either avoid treatment until severely disabled or never consider seeking help (Brody, 1993).

Former research suggests a consistent pattern distinguishes those who seek psychological help. They are likely to have high educational and income levels, are young, and identify themselves as Jewish or as not strongly religious, are from urban or suburban environments, and are
women (Greenley & Mechanic, 1976; Katz & Bender, 1976; Kulka, Veroff & Douvan, 1979; McMichael & Hetzel, 1974; Sue, McKinney, Allen, & Hall, 1974). According to Veroff (1981), help-seekers in this society tend to be young or middle-aged people who have had at least a high school education, and whose level of income is at least at the median. In addition, help-seekers are much more likely to be women than men except for men with a college education. Patterns for generalized help-seeking behavior have been suggested.

Current literature explores attitude in several directions most of which focus on the relationship between cultural factors and attitudes toward seeking psychological services. (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Atkinson, Ponterotto, & Sanchez, 1984; Price & McNeil, 1992; Sanchez & Atkinson, 1983; Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, Tata, & Jolly, 1994; Tata & Leong, 1994; Tedeschi & Willis, 1993; Tracy, Leong, & Glidden, 1986). Similar literature also indicates a relationship between race, ethnicity and attitudes associated with seeking psychological help (Cheatham, Shelton, & Ray, 1987; Cimbolic, Thompson, & Waid, 1980; Hall & Tucker, 1985). Likewise, research also shows a correlation between level of education, socioeconomic class and attitude toward counseling (Cheatham et al.; Fischer & Turner, 1970; Jensen, McNamara, & Gustafson, 1991; Kulka,
Veroff, & Douvan, 1979). Comparable studies continue to indicate distinct gender differences in attitudes toward willingness to seek psychological help (Cheatham et al.; Cook, 1984; Fischer & Turner, 1970; Fischer & Turner, 1995; Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1988; Greenley & Mechanic, 1976; Halgin, Weaver, Edell, & Spencer, 1987; Ichiyama, Colbert, Laramore, Heim, Carone, & Schmidt, 1993; Kemp, 1989; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992; Shack-Finger, 1988; Tracy, Sherry, Bauer, Robins, Todaro, & Briggs, 1984). However, little of this research has focused primarily on the relationship between gender and attitude toward counseling.

This study attempted to clarify gender differences in attitudes toward seeking counseling. More specifically, this study focused on the relationship between gender and attitude toward counseling in university students. In addition, intentions to seek counseling for various problems were examined in order to clarify whether participants would be more willing to seek help for particular problems. It was hypothesized for this study that there would be a direct relationship between gender and attitude toward counseling. Those participants who indicated more favorable attitudes toward counseling would also be more likely to seek professional help at a greater rate than those with less favorable attitudes. One other hypothesis was that women
would be more likely to seek help for personal problems while men would be more likely to seek help for professional concerns. The results of the study will aid psychologists and counselors in determining possible factors for resistance or reluctance on the basis of gender.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes Toward Counseling

Potential clients' attitudes toward counseling are an essential component for professionals in the helping fields to consider. This is not only related to professional identity issues, but more importantly, intervention strategies. If clients' initial attitudes about counseling are negative, then clients might behave in ways that will prevent them from receiving maximum benefit from the counseling process (Tedeschi et al., 1993). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind various factors that may affect an individual's attitude toward counseling. The following factors and their relation to attitude will be reviewed: ethnicity, race, culture, gender, and male role.

Ethnicity/Race and Attitude

Research literature has demonstrated a relationship between ethnicity as well as race with regard to attitudes toward counseling. Atkinson et al. (1984) conducted a study to examine the attitudes of Vietnamese students and Anglo-American students toward counseling. A questionnaire designed to assess attitudes toward counseling and preferences for help providers was distributed to Vietnamese
students (40 men and 23 women) and Anglo-American students (17 men and 35 women) enrolled through Extended Opportunity Program and Services in a California college. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part 1 consisted of demographic and personal data. Part 2 respondents completed an adaptation of the Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Help scale (Fischer & Turner, 1970). Part 3 consisted of four items that assessed respondent preferences for psychologists-counselors in situations in which they had personal problems. In Part 4 respondents rank ordered various help providers as persons they would go to first if they had a personal problem to discuss. The main effect of ethnicity was found to be significant. Anglo-American students consistently scored higher on each of the four subscales of the Fischer and Turner Scale (indicating a more positive attitude toward seeking psychological help) than did Vietnamese students. Compared with the Anglo-American students, Vietnamese students expressed less recognition of personal need for professional help, less tolerance of the stigma associated with psychological help, less interpersonal openness regarding their problems, and less confidence in the ability of mental health professionals to be of assistance. These findings suggest that traditional college counseling services may not be sought out by
Vietnamese students in times of psychological stress.

Tedeschi and Willis (1993) indicated somewhat different findings in a more recent study of attitudes toward counseling among Asian international and native Caucasian students. One hundred fourteen undergraduate students (30 Asian women international, 36 Asian men international, 26 native Caucasian men) at a state university completed Fischer and Turner's Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (1970). Preliminary analyses did not indicate any differences between national groups for the international students on any of the scales so the national groups were combined for the comparisons with the native Caucasian students. However, the results of the scales on the attitudes toward counseling were that American women were more positive toward counseling and psychotherapy.

Cheatham et al. (1987) examined race, sex and causal attribution with regard to help-seeking behavior. Participants were 83 Black (42 men, 41 women) and 66 White (32 men, 34 women) full-time students at a large eastern university. In addition to a demographic data sheet, this study used the Personal Problem Assessment Questionnaire (PPAQ) (Margolis, 1981). The second part of the questionnaire included a variable on causal attribution. Using a 7-point Likert-type scale, respondents were asked to
choose among alternatives based on the following statement: Sometimes people see their problems as caused by factors within themselves, while at other times they see their problems as caused by factors outside themselves. The primary focus of the study was a comparative examination of Black and White students' causal attributions regarding personal problems and their effects on the process of seeking help (Cheatham et al., 1987).

The findings indicated that although Blacks' and Whites' primary preferences for help sources were identical, Blacks were three times more likely than Whites to have sought help from a professor or an academic counselor. White women were three times more likely than either Black or White men and six times more likely than Black women to have sought help from a psychologist or psychiatrist. Whites, when compared with Blacks, and women, compared with men, communicated with more people about their problems. However, although the study did not indicate a specific relationship between race and help-seeking it did establish that most students who sought help contacted an academic counselor. This finding also supports a study by Gibbs (1975) who observed that Blacks tend to use formal help sources in their initial college years and later turn to peers and other informal sources (Cheatham, et al., 1987).
In a study by Atkinson and Gim (1989) 557 Asian-American students completed a survey which consisted of a demographic questionnaire, a modified version of Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale, and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS). The results of this study found that regardless of ethnicity and gender, the most acculturated students were most likely to recognize personal need for professional psychological help and most open to discussing their problems with a psychologist. There was strong evidence to suggest that Asian-American attitudes toward professional psychological help are directly related to their level of acculturation. This study, however, did not indicate differences in attitude toward professional psychological help.

Although the preceding research literature demonstrated a relationship between ethnicity as well as race with regard to attitude toward counseling, there are more factors that have been considered in examining attitude. Race and ethnicity are extremely relevant to attitudes toward counseling. Therefore, the studies related to race and ethnicity are most important in discussing other possible factors related to attitudes toward counseling. The following studies take into consideration the variable of
Culture and its effect on attitude.

Culture and Attitude

Research literature has indicated that cultural commitment has an effect on attitudes toward counseling. Counseling attitudes were assessed for American Indian college students by Price and McNeil (1992). The 80 students representing 46 tribes, rated themselves as strongly or weakly committed to both Tribal and Anglo cultures. The instrument used in the study was the ATSPPHS, developed by Fischer and Turner (1970). Participants strongly committed only to Tribal culture showed more negative attitudes toward seeking counseling than those strongly committed only to the Anglo culture or to both cultures. Overall, women compared to men in both groups generally had more favorable attitudes toward counseling than men.

A more recent study by Tata and Leong (1994) attempted to predict patterns of help-seeking attitudes among a sample of 219 Chinese-American students in a large midwestern university. Of those students, 117 were women and 102 were men. The measures used were the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) by Fischer and Turner (1970), Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA), Network Orientation Scale
(NOS), and a measure of individualism-collectivism by Triandis (1988).

Results indicated a direct and significant predictive relationship between acculturation and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. In other words, Asian-American students who have higher levels of acculturation may be willing to seek mainstream psychological services in the United States. Gender was also found to be a significant predictor of attitudes toward seeking professional help among Chinese-American students in this study, with women having more positive attitudes than men.

In a study conducted by Sanchez and Atkinson (1983) 98 Mexican-American college students were administered a questionnaire designed to assess demographic data, cultural commitment, strength of preference for an ethnically similar counselor, and attitudes toward using professional counseling services. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part 1 was designed to gather census data, assess cultural commitment, and determine subject preference for an ethnically similar counselor. Part 2 of the questionnaire was an adaptation of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) developed by Fischer and Turner (1970).
The results suggested that participants with a strong cultural commitment to only the Mexican-American culture obtained significantly lower scores on the Openness subscale than did participants with a weak commitment to both cultures. This suggests a cultural factor may be operating to inhibit self-disclosure in counseling. Additionally, the study indicated that females raised in both the Mexican-American and Anglo-American cultures are more socialized to counseling than are their male counterparts.

Among these studies which mainly examine culture, race, and ethnicity as being predictors of attitude toward counseling, most also indicate a significant relationship between gender and attitude toward counseling.

**Gender and Attitude**

Various aspects of gender and attitude toward counseling have been investigated in relation to factors such as; the dynamics of help-seeking in men and women, characteristics of help-seeking, identity development, and gender-role conflict (Good et al., 1988; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992; Veroff, 1981). The following studies indicated a relationship between gender and attitude toward seeking counseling and also examine the factors stated above.

In 1970, a measure of attitudes toward seeking
professional help for psychological disturbances was developed and standardized by Fischer and Turner. The scale reliably distinguished persons who had experienced psychotherapeutic help from those without such professional contact. 492 females and 468 males responded to a final version of the attitude scale. The respondents were all students of varied educational institutions.

The outcome of this study indicated that strong sex differences existed. Relative to males, females tended to endorse all items on the scale in a direction more favorable to help seeking.

Fischer and Farina (1995) developed a 10-item unidimensional version of Fischer and Turner's (1970) 29-item scale for measuring attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Respondents (389 university students) were required to rate each of the statements in a Likert-type response format consisting of the alternatives agree, partly agree, partly disagree, and disagree. The attitude items were followed by a one-page questionnaire, similar to that used by Fischer and Turner, to elicit each individual's previous experiences with personal crises and how they had coped with such problems. The respondents were primarily freshmen (74%), the modal age was 18 years, and 55% were female.
Of the total respondents, 154 indicated that they had previously experienced a serious emotional or personal problem. Findings indicated 32 (37%) of the females and 10 (15%) of the males had sought professional help for the problem. Gender was also the strongest demographic correlate found in the survey indicating females having more favorable attitudes toward seeking counseling than males.

Tracey et al. (1984), conducted a study on help-seeking as a function of student characteristics and counseling center program description. A random sample of 175 undergraduate students (90 male, 85 female) in a large northeastern university were mailed the study materials. A questionnaire dealing with student attitudes and characteristics, and a separate return postcard used as a request for information regarding enrollment in one of the workshops.

Results indicated a gender difference in help-seeking attitudes of the students. Females tended to see more value and showed more interest in attending counseling center workshops than did males, regardless of the workshop content and description.

In 1980, Zeldow and Greenberg investigated medical and psychological help-seeking attitudes and behaviors as a function of liberal-conservative attitudes toward women.
Participants were 36 males and 46 females at Syracuse University, predominantly white and middle class. They participated in a structured interview concerning their attitudes toward experiences with physicians and psychotherapists, and completed the Attitudes toward Women Scale. This scale measures attitudes toward vocational, educational, intellectual, legal-political, and social roles of women.

The results indicated college students with liberal attitudes toward women are more likely to seek help from mental health professional than are conservatives. Liberals of both sexes were more likely than conservatives to have seen a social worker.

In a more recent study, Kelly and Achter (1995), investigated the relations among self-concealment, attitudes toward seeking psychological help, and intentions to seek counseling. The 186 women and 70 men that participated in the study were from two introductory-level psychology courses. Among the scales used were: Self-Concealment Scale (SCS), the intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory, the Fischer-Turner Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale, the Social Provisions Scale, and the Beck Depression Inventory.

As with similar studies, results indicated male
participants tended to have less favorable attitudes toward seeking help than did female participants. In addition, the study also found that those participants who scored higher in self-concealment rated themselves as being more likely to seek counseling for various concerns than did participants who scored lower in self-concealment. This relationship existed even though high self-concealers had less favorable attitudes toward counseling than did the low self-concealers.

Kligfield and Hoffman (1979) conducted a study to explore the emotional antecedents of emotional distress among physicians. They investigated the relationship between year in medical school and student attitude toward seeking professional psychological help. The sample consisted of 489 students at the University of Southern California School of Medicine. The instrument used to measure attitudes was the Fischer and Turner scale (1970),

The initial analysis of the data indicated a significant interaction between sex of respondent and several other variables. Results also indicated that men developed significantly more positive attitudes toward seeking counseling as they progressed through medical school. Women entered with more positive attitudes as compared with men.
A thirteen-year comparison in patterns of attitudes toward counseling was completed by Rule and Gandy (1994). The study attempted to compare samples of college students who were administered the same survey of attitudes toward counseling in 1976 and 1989. Factors that were examined in this study were (1) likelihood of seeking counseling, (2) likelihood of seeking help from professional and nonprofessional helpers, (3) likelihood of seeking help for differing types of problems, (4) degree of responsibility the professional should assume, and (5) preferences for five of the major counseling approaches.

Results suggested that when comparing for each year, females were significantly more likely to seek help. Findings indicated that in comparing the 1976 and 1989 ratings, no significant differences were found for males or females. Also, in combining the males and females, no significant differences were found in comparing the two years. The study indicated that females were consistently more likely to seek counseling. However, the 13-year time span produced no significant changes for both sexes in seeking counseling.

**Dynamics of Help-Seeking**

Veroff (1981), investigated the dynamics of help-seeking in men and women in a national survey of 2264
American adults (1304 women and 960 men, 21 years or older). The framework for the study was derived from Jerome Frank's (1973) analysis of the common ingredients characterizing those who seek psychotherapy. He proposed that people who seek psychotherapy share a sense of demoralization. In other words, certain circumstances can make individuals feel less psychologically intact, more in need of help, and more helpless (Veroff, 1981). The interview covered multiple ways of assessing subjective mental health (for example, unhappiness, inadequacies, self-esteem, symptoms) and the coping techniques people use to handle their problems, including seeking professional help.

The initial results of the survey demonstrated that women seek help at a greater rate than men with 23% of the men and 31% of the women reporting seeking help. The commonly obtained two-to-one proportion of female and male help-seekers was derived by the data, in which 66% of the help-seekers were women while 34% were men.

**Male Role and Attitude**

Good et al. (1988), and Robertson and Fitzgerald (1992), examined male gender role in relation to help-seeking behaviors. Good et al. (1989), suggested that one possible reason for mens' hesitance to use counseling services is adherence to traditional male gender role,
although this hypothesis has received little attention in
the help-seeking literature. The participants in the study
were 401 undergraduate male students enrolled in
introductory psychology courses at a large midwestern
university. The participants completed Downs and
Engleston's (1982) Attitudes Toward Men Scale, O'Neil et
al.'s (1986) Gender Role Conflict Scale-I, Fischer and
Turner's (1970) Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional
Psychological Help Scale, and Behavior scale which was
designed for this particular study.

Participants in the study held less favorable views of
seeking professional psychological help than did those
examined by Fischer and Turner. The results of the study
indicate that there is a significant relation between
elements of the male role and men's attitudes and behaviors
related to seeking help. From the participants used in this
study, traditional attitudes about male role in society,
concern about expressing affection toward other men, and
concern about expressing emotions were related to negative
attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help and
to fewer reports of past help-seeking behavior.
Additionally, men's attitudes about the male role do
significantly affect their attitudes about seeking
professional psychological help. It appears that as men's
values regarding the male role became less traditional, their view of psychological help seeking became more positive.

According to Robertson and Fitzgerald (1992), both informal observation and considerable data confirm that men are less likely to seek psychotherapy than are women. Their study examined the possibility that this reluctance to seek help is related to traditional gender role socialization and can be lessened by offering counseling interventions that are more congruent with that socialization. Participants were recruited from intact classrooms on three West Coast college campuses. A total of 445 male students participated in the study and completed surveys which used the following instruments: a brochure evaluation questionnaire describing campus services, gender role measures, and the Fischer-Turner Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale.

Two inferences were drawn from the study. First, traditional masculine attitudes do seem to be negatively related to the willingness of men to seek professional psychological help. Second, men who express highly masculine attitudes react more positively to descriptions of interventions that are consistent with masculine socialization process. In accordance with the first
inference, men who express opinions consistent with traditional masculine socialization processes indicate that they are comparatively unwilling to seek help. These results were consistent with Good et al. (1989) who found an inverse relationship between attitudes toward masculinity and help seeking.

The present study attempts to clarify the gender differences in attitude toward seeking professional psychological assistance and support previous research. The literature suggests that there may be a relationship between gender and help-seeking behavior which is another factor examined in this study. It is hypothesized that women will have more favorable attitudes toward counseling than men.

Additionally, it was an important aspect of this study to identify whether there were any differences between genders with regard to problem type. Since it was hypothesized that women would have more favorable attitudes toward counseling, it seemed obvious the other aspect to study with regard to attitude would be help-seeking behaviors in both men and women. Therefore, this study has included another dimension to attitude toward counseling that many research studies have not. Although examining attitudes and gender may indicate differences, including problem type will indicate whether men are more likely to
seek help with various problems than women. This aspect of the study will give additional information regarding problem type with regard to gender and help-seeking behaviors.
Chapter III

METHOD

Participants

As part of a larger study, 152 university students from an introductory-level psychology course voluntarily participated in this study. As part of their introductory psychology course, participants were offered the option to gain one extra-point for each study from which they participated. They chose the studies in which they would participate via information provided on posted sign-up sheets. The sign-up sheet stated that students may only sign-up once for this study and that the questionnaire would take approximately 30 minutes to complete. No other information was offered at that time. Thus, although participation in the study was voluntary, the students received credit toward the introductory course for their participation. The mean age of the participants was 19, and the majority were in their first year of study. The sample consisted of 66% females, 34% males. Participants classified themselves as White, 110, Black, 9, Asian American, 24, Latino, 3, and Other, 6.

Measures

Intentions to Seek Counseling.

The Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory is a list
of 17 issues college students commonly bring to counseling. This list was created by Cash, Begley, McCown, and Weise (1975) and is composed of the following: choosing a major, weight control, relationship difficulties, self-confidence problems, overuse of alcohol, personal worries, difficulty in sleeping, concerns about sexuality, procrastination with schoolwork, difficulty concentrating, depression, fear of failure, improvement of self-understanding, relaxation training, test anxiety, loneliness, and drug problems (Kelly & Achter, 1995). Participants were asked to rate, on a scale ranging from "1" very unlikely to "6" very likely how likely they would be to seek help at the university counseling center if they were experiencing one of the problems. The responses were summed to yield scores ranging from 17-22, with higher scores indicating a greater likelihood of seeking counseling for various problems.

Attitude Scale.

All participants completed the Fischer-Turner Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPH). Fischer-Turner scale assesses attitudes toward traditional counseling services (Fischer & Turner, 1970) and consists of 29 Likert-type items and is divided into four subscales derived from factor analysis. These subscales include (a) Need (recognition of personal need for
psychotherapeutic help); (b) Stigma (tolerance of the stigma associated with psychiatric help); (c) Openness (interpersonal openness regarding one’s problem); and (d) Confidence (confidence in mental health professionals) (Fischer & Turner, 1970). Participants are asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with each statement, and items are scored from 0 to 3. Thus, the possible range of scores is from 0 to 87 for each subject, with higher scores denoting more positive attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help.

To make the ATSPPH Scale more appropriate for the target population and settings, the scale was modified similar to the modified versions used by Good, Dell, and Mintz (1989) and Atkinson and Gim (1989) in their studies with college students. The changes from the original version of the ATSPPH Scale involved replacing the words mental problems with emotional/personal problems, and the term psychiatrist with counselor/psychologist. In addition, the survey included a question regarding whether or not the participant had previous counseling experience.

Fischer and Turner (1970) reported test-retest reliability over a 2-week period of .89 and over an 8-week period of .84. The internal consistency of the scale calculated using Tyron’s (1957) method was .83 (Fischer &
Scores on this scale have discriminated between subjects who had never sought out psychological assistance from those who had sought counseling, thus providing evidence for construct validity (Fischer & Turner, 1970). Further, neither the total score nor any of the individual items correlated significantly with a measure of social desirability, indicating the tendency for subjects to respond in a socially desirable manner is not a liability of this scale (Fischer & Turner, 1970).

Procedure

The participants were tested in groups of approximately 30. The experimenters stressed the voluntary nature of the study and asked participants not to place their names on the questionnaires. A demographic data sheet was presented first, followed by the instrument. After completion of the instruments, the purpose of the study and the hypothesis under investigation were explained and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Analyses

To examine the internal consistency of the attitude and help-seeking scales, reliability estimates using the alpha criterion were calculated for the items as well as for the entire scales. Means and standard deviations for each factor were also calculated.
The Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory and the Fischer-Turner Attitude Scales were correlated at .3782 at .01 level indicating the two scales were measuring two different aspects.

Two t-tests for independent groups were performed in order to determine if differences exist between men and women concerning attitudes toward counseling and help-seeking behavior.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Preface

Reliability estimates for Fischer-Turner Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale and the Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory Scale are included in this chapter. Additionally, the statistical results are described in this chapter.

Due to the breadth of research concerning race/ethnicity and attitudes toward counseling, it was important to the author to examine if differences existed between races with regard to problem type. Also included were item analyses by gender for problem type. Therefore, the means of each item of the Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory were compared first by gender, and then by race. The results of this analyses are indicated in the last part of this chapter.

Reliability

The reliability estimate for the entire 29-item Fischer-Turner Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPH), using Cronbach’s alpha criterion, alpha=.89, reflecting strong internal consistency for the inventory.

The reliability estimate for the entire 17-item
Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory Scale was also calculated using Cronbach’s alpha criterion, alpha=.89. This reflected strong internal consistency for this measure.

**Inferential Statistics**

To determine if a difference existed between men and women regarding attitudes toward counseling a t-test for independent groups was performed. The results are denoted in table 1. The means of the female group and the male group were 82.75 and 73.44, respectively. The standard deviations were for the female group, 10.36 and for the male group, 11.38. A t-value (with degrees of freedom=150)=-5.08, p <.05, was obtained indicating a significant result. Women, therefore, had significantly more positive attitudes toward counseling than men.

To determine if a difference existed between men and women regarding help-seeking behaviors, a second t-test for independent groups was performed (Table 2). The means for the female group and male group were 61.95 and 60.00, respectively. The standard deviations were for the female group, 15.38 and for the male group, 17.82. A t-value (with degrees of freedom=150) of -.70 p >.05 indicating a non significant result. Therefore, results indicated no significant difference between gender and help seeking behaviors.
The study indicated that 40% of the females had experience with counseling in the past as compared to 30% of the males. Overall, 37% of all participants had experience with counseling. These figures show that among the participants, females were more likely to seek counseling than males.

Post-Hoc Analyses

A post-hoc item analyses was performed examining the means from the 17-item Intentions to Seek Counseling Inventory. The items were analyzed according to gender and then, by race.

Although most of the differences in the means between male and female were only slight there were a few worth citing (Table 3). Follow-up t-tests were performed to verify differences for means that appeared significant. For relationship difficulties, a t-value (with degrees of freedom=150)=-2.67, p < .05 was obtained indicating a significant result. For self-confidence problems, a t-value (with degrees of freedom=150)=-3.23, p < .05 was obtained indicating a significant result. A t-value (with degrees of freedom=150)=-1.67, p < .05 was obtained for concerns about sexuality which was also significant. For depression, a t-value (with degrees of freedom=150)=-1.53, p < .05 was obtained with a significant result. Therefore, women were
more likely to seek help than men with relationship difficulties, self-confidence problems, concerns about sexuality, and depression.

All means for each issue under the male gender fell below 4.0 except for the test anxiety issue which was 4.0, as compared with the mean of 3.7 for females. According to the item analyses, slight differences in the means between male and female existed. For six of the seventeen issues, the means for the females were 4.0 or above. The follow-up t-tests indicated that women may be more likely to seek help than men with such issues as relationship difficulties, self-confidence problems, concerns about sexuality, and depression.

To determine if differences existed between races regarding problem type, a second post-hoc item analyses was performed. The results are denoted in table 4. The only means above 5.0 were for the Latino population. Those issues were depression with a mean on 5.6, improvement of self-understanding with a mean of 5.0, and test anxiety with a mean of 5.6. These means indicate the Latino participants would be more likely to seek help with those issues than the other participants in the study. It is interesting to note, as well, that with the Asian American participants, there were only two means that were above 4.0 which were
relationship difficulties and depression both at 4.1. In addition, nine of the seventeen means for the Black participants were above 4.0 with most of the issues pertaining to personal problems.
### TABLE 1

**MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ATTITUDE SCALE**

\( n=152 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>73.44</td>
<td>82.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>11.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled Variance Estimate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Value</td>
<td>-5.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 2

**MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR HELP-SEEKING**

\( n = 152 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
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<td>61.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
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<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
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<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled Variance Estimate</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Value</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
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</table>
TABLE 3
MEANS BY GENDER FOR INTENTIONS TO SEEK HELP
n=152

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a major</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight Control</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship difficulties</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence problems</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overuse of alcohol</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal worries</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in sleeping</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about sexuality</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination with schoolwork</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of failure</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of self-understanding</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation training</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug problems</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight control</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship difficulties</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence problems</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overuse of alcohol</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal worries</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in sleeping</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about sexuality</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procrastination with schoolwork</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug problems</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to provide empirical research to determine whether or not a relationship exists between gender and attitudes toward counseling. Additionally, it was hypothesized that a difference would also exist between gender and help-seeking behaviors. Significant differences by gender were found with regard to attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among the population studied, with women having more positive attitudes than men. Overall, results indicated no significant difference between gender and help seeking behaviors. However, although initial results did not indicate significant differences between gender and help-seeking behaviors, women were found to be more likely to seek help with relationship difficulties, self-confidence problems, concerns about sexuality, and depression. The percentage of women that had experience with counseling was 40% as compared with 30% for the men giving more evidence to support the findings. Furthermore, results support the findings of previous research that gender is a determinant in attitudes toward counseling.

The results indicating the relationship between gender and attitude toward counseling support previous research by
Fischer and Farina (1995), Tracey et al. (1984), Kelly and Achter (1995), and Rule and Gandy (1994), which show evidence of a significant relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, this study included the additional variable of problem type and gender which was not included in previous research studies. Therefore, this study included additional information with regard to gender and help-seeking behaviors with regard to problem type.

With regard to the post-hoc analyses, the results regarding gender and problem type in an item-analyses were interesting to note with certain items. Women participants seemed to be more interested than men in the possibility of seeking help with relationship difficulties, self-confidence problems, concerns about sexuality, depression. Men, on the other hand, had response rates lower than women on every item except for test anxiety where the mean for men was 4.0 and for women, 3.7. Thus, even though the initial results of the t-test indicated no significant differences among men and women regarding help-seeking behaviors, item analyses indicated slight differences.

As was the case with gender, there were trends noted between races regarding problem type. Blacks were more likely to have intentions to seek help with the following problems than Whites: relationship problems, self-confidence
problems, overuse of alcohol, personal worries, concerns about sexuality, difficulty in concentrating, depression, improvement of self-understanding, and relaxation training. However, the Latino participants were more likely than the Black participants to seek help with self-confidence problems, personal worries, depression, improvement of self-understanding, and relaxation training. Overall, Asian Americans' and Whites' were less likely to have intentions to seek help on most issues more than any other group. Also interesting were the results indicating the Latino participants' likeliness to seek help for the issues of depression, improvement of self-understanding, and test anxiety. None of the other groups had mean scores for any item at 4.9 or above. However, t-tests or ANOVAs would have given a more accurate indication of whether the means were truly different rather than what they looked like. Additionally, the means according to race should be observed with caution due to the small sample size of the various races.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that a self-report measure was used that is subject to the response sets of individuals completing the forms. Although the behavior intention measure is likely to be a good predictor of actual
behavior (see Fishbein & Azjen, 1975) future researchers should include assessments of actual client behaviors. In other words, a study including actual clients from various settings rather than students would be a consideration. Future researchers should also attempt to replicate the present findings with samples of students from other universities and include samples of individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Because the participants in the present sample were primarily White, it was not possible to accurately assess the potential interaction between clients' cultural backgrounds and their attitudes and help seeking behaviors toward counseling. Therefore, there is the problem of external validity with which to contend.

Additionally, the participants in the sample were university students with an average age of 19. This particular population may be more open and liberal with respect to help-seeking behaviors as well as attitudes toward counseling.

Applications for the Field

Practical implications to be considered are the factors that affect men's lack of a positive attitude toward counseling. Furthermore, gender roles must be explored within family and individual counseling situations. Counselors may want to consider possible reasons for men's
hesitance to use counseling services such as adherence to traditional male gender role. Counselors should take into consideration possible factors leading to men's attitudes toward counseling and discuss these with their clients. Counseling psychology has identified primary prevention as one aspect of its professional definition, and psychoeducation regarding the liabilities of the traditional male role may be an appropriate community intervention. The reframing of the stigma of seeking counseling appears necessary and the need to dispel the popular image of men as the "strong and silent type". Therefore, it is imperative that intervention strategies be employed perhaps in university settings to support men whose attitude toward counseling may not be so favorable.

Another consideration for applications to the field is to assess different ways men and women may seek support. In other words, women may be more likely to seek professional psychological help while men may be more likely to seek help through their network of friends and/or co-workers. Therefore, it may be that both genders are willing to seek help for various problems; however, men may feel more comfortable discussing problems with a non-professional over a professional.

Furthermore, along with considering gender differences
with regard to attitudes and help-seeking behaviors, it is imperative that racial/ethnic differences are examined. Counselors should also adhere to weighing racial/ethnic and cultural influences as they are related to an individual's attitude toward counseling and help-seeking behaviors.

Implications for Future Research

Future research may replicate this study using a more diverse sample perhaps from several university settings in various regions. Also, they may replicate this study with a non-university population which may yield results more indicative of the general population. They may also pay greater attention to differences in attitudes among students from various cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and races. There is also room for exploring the dynamics of the male role across cultures which may further shed light on men's lack of a favorable attitude toward counseling.

Another potential area of exploration is the relationship between male role and gender role conflict. It may be most helpful to include a sex role inventory to determine whether or not a relationship exists between the traditional male gender role and help-seeking behaviors. This seems to be an area of research that once expanded upon may bring further knowledge to the field in how to create intervention strategies to dispel men's unfavorable attitude
toward counseling.
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Psychological Reports, 57, (3, Pt. 1), 907-916.


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Vita

The author, Elizabeth A. Call was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey and grew up in numerous places around the world and the United States. In September 1986, Ms. Call entered Georgian Court College receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities in May 1991. The following three years, Ms. Call worked as a District Sales Manager for a rental car firm in New Jersey. She was accepted to Loyola University of Chicago in 1994 in the Department of Counseling Psychology. While pursuing a master of arts degree she was a member of Dr. Elizabeth Vera's and Dr. Suzette Speight's research team and completed a practicum at Alternatives, Inc., a youth and family guidance center in Chicago, Illinois.
APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Elizabeth A. Call has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Elizabeth M. Vera, Director
Assistant Professor, Counseling Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

Dr. Suzette Speight
Assistant Professor, Counseling Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

11.27.96
Date

Director's Signature