

COPING ATTITUDES, SOURCES, AND PRACTICES AMONG BLACK AND LATINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

Lillian Chiang, Carla D. Hunter, and Christine J. Yeh

ABSTRACT

We investigated 130 Black and Latino college students regarding their concerns, attitudes toward professional counseling, sources of support, and coping activities. We found that the Black and Latino cultural emphasis on interdependence influenced attitudes toward using professional resources such as a counselor. We also found a significant two-way interaction between gender and race for attitudes toward professional counseling: Black males had less favorable attitudes in comparison to Black females, while Latino males had more favorable attitudes than did Latino females. Both Black and Latino college students had favorable attitudes toward informal support networks. Differences between Black and Latino college students were found for reported concerns and coping sources. Implications for counseling theory, practice, and research are discussed.

Blacks and Latinos represent 11% and 9.3%, respectively, of all students in higher education in the United States. This trend has steadily risen since 1976, but is relatively low when considering the enrollment rates of other racial groups, with the exception of Native Americans (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). In addition, 18.4% of Blacks and 12.3% of Latinos hold degrees from undergraduate institutions (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000), which are low percentages in comparison to those for Whites (27%) and Asians (35.7%). This has led to an interest in understanding the factors that affect Black and Latino students' adjustment to college and their resulting coping strategies. (The racial terms Black and Latino will be utilized in this study because ethnic terms, such as African American and Hispanic American, comprise multiple ethnicities, which are beyond the scope of our study. Ethnic terms will be utilized when relevant literature is cited.)

For many Black and Latino students, attending college involves a period of transition and adaptation that requires them to utilize coping

Lillian Chiang, Carla D. Hunter, and Christine J. Yeh, Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Requests for reprints should be sent to Christine J. Yeh, Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th Street, New York, New York 10027. E-mail may be sent to cy101@columbia.edu

ADOLESCENCE, Vol. 39, No. 156, Winter 2004
Libra Publishers, Inc., 3089C Clairemont Dr., PMB 383, San Diego, CA 92117

strategies for dealing with problems such as maintaining enrollment, grades, emotional adjustment, and physical health (Adan & Felner, 1995; Hughes, 1987; Jay & D'Augelli, 1991; Solberg & Villarreal, 1997; Tomlinson-Clarke, 1998; Zea, Jarama, & Bianchi, 1995). Constantine, Chen, and Ceesay (1997) reported the intake concerns of African American and Hispanic American college students at a university counseling center. These included family relationships, academic concerns, depression, difficulties with romantic partners, and stress management.

Several researchers have found that support networks, such as peers, family, and mentors, facilitate adjustment to college (Feenstra, Banyard, Rines, & Hopkins, 2001; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999). Yet, some researchers have not found racial and ethnic differences regarding the use of support networks. Steward, O'Leary, Boatwright, and Sauer (1996) found no racial or ethnic differences for sources of support, type of support requested, or the quality of support among White American, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American students who attended predominantly White universities. It has also been found that college students cope by relying on peer support (Robbins & Tanck, 1995). Moreover, peer network models have been utilized in working with racial and ethnic minority college students (Crouse, 1985; Hill, 1990). In addition to existing support networks, college students may seek help for a variety of stressors at campus counseling centers (Baron & Constantine, 1997; Matthews, Schmid, Goncalves, & Bursley, 1998; Ottens & Black, 2000; Perez, 1996).

College counseling centers offer assistance in a variety of areas. However, researchers have found racial and ethnic differences in terms of use of these centers and other sources of support. Specifically, cultural commitment, expectations of multicultural counseling, racial identity, ethnic identity, and acculturation have been found to impact Black and Latino college students' use of counseling centers (Arbona & Novy, 1990, 1991; Austin, Carter, & Vaux, 1990; Baron & Constantine, 1997; Brinson & Kottler, 1995; Constantine & Arorash, 2001; Delphin & Rollack, 1995; Gloria, Hird, & Navarro, 2001; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Leon & McNeil, 1986; Sanchez & King, 1986). With regard to utilizing informal sources of support, Kenny and Stryker (1996) found that ethnically diverse college students (African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans) relied on family to a greater degree than did European Americans, who relied more on peers.

Theorists have also focused on the mismatch between the needs of people of color and current counseling and psychotherapy approaches.

One consistently highlighted shortcoming is that individual psychotherapy frameworks are culturally inappropriate because of the focus on one-on-one counseling that does not consider the person in the context of his/her family system (Sanchez & Atkinson, 1983; Sue & Sue, 1999; Tiago de Melo, 1998).

In addition, theorists have contrasted Eurocentric worldviews with those of Asians, African Americans, and Latinos (Cheatham & Berg-Cross, 1992; Helms & Cook, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 1998; Sue & Sue, 1999). Eurocentric worldviews emphasize individualism and materialism while Asian, African American, and Latino worldviews emphasize collectivism and interdependence. Specifically, Daly, Jennings, Beckett, and Leashore (1995) note the importance African Americans place on family in regard to coping and support. Likewise, *familism* and *respecto* are widely held aspects of Latino culture, in which emphasis is placed on the family rather than on individual needs, and respect is paid to the family by not discussing the family's personal business (Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995). In fact, guilt and shame may be associated with obtaining professional help. It may be more culturally appropriate to seek help from informal networks. For example, friends and family rather than therapists at college counseling centers.

Researchers have sought to obtain empirical data on the influence of worldview on coping strategies. For example, Yeh and Wang (2000) found that strong familial and social network ties are culturally mandated and contribute to interdependent or relational coping strategies. Furthermore, other researchers (e.g., Ponterotto, Anderson, & Grieger, 1986; Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000) have also explored how cultural values influence informal coping strategies and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. Thus, this line of research is useful in extending our understanding of the underutilization of professional services.

Coping Strategies Among Blacks and Latinos

Several researchers (Cook & Wiley, 2000; Leong et al., 1995; Tiago de Melo, 1998) have posited that Black and Latino cultural values, with their emphases on family, social networks, and religion, influence coping strategies (e.g., family support, social activities, and the use of prayer). Central to culture-specific coping among Blacks is an African-centered worldview (Utsey et al., 2000), which stresses harmony with nature, spirituality, social time perspective, and collective consciousness. It has been suggested that coping strategies that are in line with this worldview may serve as a buffer against anxiety, depression,

hostility, interpersonal sensitivity, and somatization (Ferraro & Koch, 1994).

Likewise, coping within the Latino community is culturally bound. Reeves (1986) noted that traditional modes of coping among Hispanics involve the church, home care, folk healers and medicines, and doctors. Others, investigating the African influence in Latino culture, have found the strong presence of the Yoruba tradition, which emphasizes interconnection with one's ancestors as well as supernatural forces as the cause of physical suffering (Zea, Quezada, & Belgrave 1997). Thus, Latino college students who possess such a worldview may turn to informal rather than formal sources of support.

In a study of pathways to mental health utilization, McMiller and Weisz (1996) indicated that African Americans, compared with Latinos and Whites, participated in a greater number of informal pathways, such as consulting friends and family, before contacting a formal agency to obtain services for their children. McMiller and Weisz also reported that African Americans and Latinos, when compared to European Americans, relied more on familial support networks when seeking advice for their children's problems rather than consulting professionals. This use of informal coping sources indicates a strong cultural emphasis on interdependence. Although Blacks' and Latinos' cultural values may seem similar when compared to Whites, research indicates that Latinos may rely on family support to a greater extent than do Blacks (Kane, 2000; Saetmore, Beneli, & Busch, 1999). Additional research is needed on the coping strategies of these two cultural groups.

To date, Black and Latino college students' underuse of professional counseling services has primarily been examined via such factors as racial identity, ethnicity, and acculturation (Austin et al., 1990; Baron & Constantine, 1997; Delphin & Rollack, 1995). Yet, empirical research is also needed that examines coping from a cultural perspective, highlighted by theorists such as Sue and Sue (1999), Helms and Cook (1999), and Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1998).

The present study, exploratory in nature, investigated coping from a cultural perspective by empirically exploring college students' informal coping strategies. For example, who they turn to for support (coping sources) and the types of activities in which they engage (coping practices). Consistent with current theoretical conceptualizations, we hypothesized that Black and Latino college students utilize informal coping sources to a greater extent than professional counseling due to the emphasis placed upon family, social support, and interdependence.

In addition, we were interested in Black and Latino college students' attitudes toward using their informal social support networks, such as family and friends. Leong, Wagner, and Tata (1995) reported that Blacks and Latinos have negative attitudes toward seeking professional help. Due to Blacks' and Latinos' strong cultural values regarding family and social support (Goddard, 1990; Kenny & Stryker, 1994), which influence their coping sources (Cook, 1990; Kenny & Stryker, 1994), we believed that they would have favorable attitudes toward informal coping sources and engage in informal coping practices.

Lastly, several researchers (Atkinson, 1983; Parharm & Helms, 1981; Sue & Zane, 1987) have noted the importance of conducting investigations across racial groups. Therefore, in the present study, differences between Black and Latino college students were investigated in regard to their attitudes toward support networks (formal and informal), their coping practices (activities in which they engage), and their sources of support (who they choose to turn to for help). Our research expands the current literature in two ways: (1) it utilizes college students from Black and Latino cultural groups, specifically exploring interdependence in coping, and (2) it highlights Black and Latino college students' attitudes toward informal coping sources.

Hypotheses

We generated several hypotheses based on previous theory and research on college students' coping strategies: (1) in terms of coping attitudes, we hypothesized that participants in both groups would have less favorable attitudes toward seeking help from a counselor and would prefer to seek help from family and friends; (2) in terms of coping sources, we hypothesized that Black and Latino college students would be more likely to seek help from informal support networks rather than formal networks; and (3) in terms of coping practices, we hypothesized that Black and Latino participants would engage in informal coping practices such as socializing with friends.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were undergraduates from two diverse college campuses in the New York metropolitan area. Surveys were distributed to students enrolled in academic classes representing various majors and fields. Participation was strictly voluntary and no compensation was provided. Data were analyzed from students who self-identified as Black or Latino.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of our sample. Specifically, it consisted of 130 undergraduates (79 females, 51 males) ranging from 16 to 28 years of age ($M = 18.7$, $SD = 1.8$). They were predominantly freshmen ($n = 109$, 83.8%). There were 9 (6.9%) sophomores, 5 (3.8%) juniors, and 7 (5.4%) seniors. Of the 130 students, 75 self-identified as Black (45 females, 30 males) and 55 self-identified as Latino (34 females, 21 males).

Other demographic variables of interest included religious affiliation and generation in the United States. These factors were hypothesized to have potential impact on coping attitudes. With respect to religious affiliation, 96 (73.8%) participants reported Christianity, 2 (1.5%) Hinduism, 2 (1.5%) Islam, 10 (7.7%) Catholicism, 5 (3.8%) other religions, and 14 (10.8%) did not have a religion. One participant did not provide information on religion. In regard to generation in the United States, 41 (31.5%) were 1st generation (born in a country outside the United States), 49 (37.7%) were 2nd generation (born in the United States, with parents born outside the United States), 12 (9.2%) were 2.5 generation (born in the United States, with one parent born in the United States and one parent born outside the United States), 11 (8.5%) were 3rd generation (born in the United States, with both parents born in the United States and all grandparents born outside the United States), 12 (9.2%) were 4th generation (born in the United States, with parents and grandparents also born in the United States), and 2 (1.5%) were beyond the 4th generation. Three did not provide information on generation.

Instruments

Participants completed a demographic information sheet, the Student Concern Checklist, and the Coping Attitudes, Sources, and Practices Questionnaire (Yeh & Wang, 2000). The entire self-report survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Following participation, students were offered the opportunity to ask questions regarding their involvement.

Demographic Questionnaire. Information regarding age, gender, race, year in college, religious affiliation, and generation in the United States were gathered.

Student Concern Checklist. Participants reported their concerns by indicating their endorsement of 36 items on a checklist representing academic, personal, and interpersonal stressors (e.g., school grades, career choice, depression, relationship with family). This checklist was developed by Yeh and Wang (2000) through work with focus groups in which stressors of college students were addressed. In addition, the

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics ($N = 130$)

Demographic Variable	Black ($n = 75$)	Latino ($n = 55$)
Gender		
Male	30	21
Female	45	34
Year in College		
Freshman	66	43
Sophomore	4	5
Junior	2	3
Senior	3	4
Generation in U.S.		
1st generation	30	11
2nd generation	27	22
2.5 generation	5	7
3rd generation	3	8
4th generation	9	3
Other	0	2
Religion		
Christian	54	42
Hindu	2	0
Muslim	2	0
Catholic	3	7
None	11	3
Other	3	2

Note. Three participants did not provide information on generation level. One participant did not provide information on religious affiliation.

checklist was influenced by previous empirical work in the area of college student stress and coping (Dill & Henley, 1998; Guyton, Corbin, Zimmer, & O'Donnell, 1989; Murphy & Archer, 1996; Oliver, Reed, & Smith, 1998). The content of the checklist was also adapted from a standard mental health intake form utilized at a university counseling center. For this study, the eight most frequently indicated concerns were examined.

Coping Attitudes, Sources, and Practices Questionnaire (CASPQ).

The CASPQ was developed to survey the coping attitudes, practices, and sources associated with Asian cultural values emphasizing social and familial relationships (Yeh & Wang, 2000). In an attempt to capture collectivistic ways of coping, this measure highlights interdependence. Questionnaire items were created via several focus groups with Asian American college students. In addition to conclusions from focus groups, items were also influenced by scholarly work in the area of coping and help-seeking of collectivistic cultural groups (Atkinson, Whiteley, & Gim, 1990; Fischer & Turner, 1970; Solberg, Choi, Ritsma, & Jolly, 1994; Tedeschi & Willis, 1993). After a preliminary questionnaire was developed, a pilot test was conducted to assess the validity of the items. Items were changed and improved based upon the pilot and further validity testing.

Although the CASPQ was developed within a framework informed by Asian collectivistic and interdependent coping attitudes and practices, the questionnaire was utilized for this study of Blacks and Latinos because these groups were believed to have values and practices that parallel those of Asians (see Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Utsey et al., 2000; Yeh & Wang, 2000). Since this was an exploratory study that sought empirical evidence of coping that stresses interdependence and informal support networks among Blacks and Latinos, we contend that the CASPQ was appropriate for the purposes of this study.

The CASPQ is divided into three sections: coping attitudes, coping sources, and coping practices. Each section has a scale or checklist in which participants endorse an item with a checkmark. There is no overall CASPQ score. Each section provides separate and distinct information. Since this study was an initial attempt at capturing the attitudes and experiences of Black and Latino students in regard to their concerns, attitudes, and coping strategies, it was hoped that our results would be used to inform future studies as well as to develop measures that would be culturally appropriate for the Black and Latino communities.

In the coping attitudes section, participants were asked to rate their agreement (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) with statements emphasizing attitudes toward seeking professional help from

counselors, attitudes toward keeping problems to self, and attitudes toward sharing concerns with social support networks such as parents and friends. It should be noted that statements differed from previous scales that emphasized attitudes associated only with professional help seeking (i.e., Fischer & Turner, 1970) in that we also included attitudes related to using family and friendship networks (relational coping) and coping alone (self coping).

In this 10-item section, 3 statements assessed attitudes toward professional coping (i.e., "I would feel comfortable seeing a counselor for my problems"), 3 statements measured attitudes toward self coping (i.e., "I try to resolve problems on my own"), and 4 statements assessed attitudes toward relational coping (i.e., "I share my problems with my friends"). Lower scores indicate greater agreement with a given statement (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). For professional and relational coping, we considered participants with scores below 3 as tending to regard counseling in a positive manner or tending to share problems with support networks, respectively. Participants with scores above 3 were regarded as having more negative attitudes toward professional help or a tendency to not share problems with support networks. For self coping, scores below 3 were considered to illustrate a tendency to keep problems to oneself, and scores above 3 were regarded as a preference to not keep problems to oneself. Overall professional coping, self coping, and relational coping scores were generated by averaging the scores for each type of attitude.

In the coping sources section, participants were asked to indicate who they turn to when concerns arise. Similar to the Sources of Help Scale (Tedeschi & Willis, 1993), Sources of Support Scale (Atkinson et al., 1990), and Sources of Help Seeking Scale (Solberg et al., 1994), we asked participants to respond to a list of coping sources such as friends, family members, significant others, clubs or groups, teachers, doctors, religious leaders, counselors, and coping alone. In a checklist format, participants endorsed who they would feel comfortable talking to about their concerns (one participant did not complete this section). The top sources of help, as indicated by the frequency with which participants endorsed such sources, are reported.

In the coping practices section, participants were asked to indicate the practices they utilized for ameliorating concerns. A checklist with items highlighting recreational, social, religious, academic, artistic, and impulsive (e.g., substance use) activities was provided. Items were adapted from intake forms utilized at both a university counseling center and office of student life. Participants were asked to select the items that described their typical coping practices. The top coping prac-

tices, as indicated by the frequency with which participants endorsed such practices, are reported.

RESULTS

Top concerns are presented in Table 2. School grades were the most frequent concern (84.6%, $n = 110$), followed by study skills (62.3%, $n = 81$), and relationship with family (56.9%, $n = 74$). Career choice job search, and relationships with friends and a significant other were also issues that students marked as concerns. Table 2 also provides data for the primary concerns reported by Black and Latino students. Concerns most frequently indicated by Black students were school grades (82.7%, $n = 62$), study skills (64%, $n = 48$), and relationship with family (50.7%, $n = 38$). Job search, procrastination, career choice, and relationship with friends were also concerns for this group. For Latino students, school grades (87.3%, $n = 48$) was the most frequently noted concern, followed by relationship with family (65.5%, $n = 36$) and career choice (61.8%, $n = 34$). Additional concerns of this group were study skills, job search, and relationships with friends and a significant other.

As shown in Table 3, the most frequently reported coping sources were talking with friends (75.3%, $n = 98$), parents (60%, $n = 78$), and a significant other (54.6%, $n = 71$). Over half of the students (51.5%, $n = 67$) preferred to keep problems to themselves, whereas 24.6% ($n = 32$) would talk to a counselor about their concerns. In descending order of frequency, Black students reported talking with friends, keeping concerns to themselves, and talking with a significant other and parents as their most frequent coping resources. Of the 75 Black students, 13 (17.3%) indicated that they would seek help from a counselor when problems arise. Turning to friend, parents, and a significant other were the sources of coping most often noted by Latino students. Talking to a counselor was selected as a coping source by 34.5% ($n = 19$) of this group.

As shown in Table 4, the students frequently cited exercise, hobbies, and engaging in activities with family members as coping practices that make them feel better. When the sample was separated into Black and Latino groups, these activities remained the top coping practices. In addition, Black students reported religious activities, studying, and social activities as frequent practices. Sixteen Black students (21.3%) noted counseling as a coping practice. Studying and finding social support were other activities that were reported as helpful for Latinos.

Table 2

Frequencies for Reported Concerns ($N = 130$)

Reported Concerns	Overall		Black		Latino	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
School grades	110	84.6	62	82.7	48	87.3
Study habits/skills	81	62.3	48	64.0	33	60.0
Relationship with family	74	56.9	38	50.7	36	65.5
Job search	67	51.5	35	46.7	32	58.2
Career choice	67	51.5	33	44.0	34	61.8
Relationship with:						
Friends/peers	61	46.9	31	41.3	30	54.5
Significant other	56	43.1	26	34.7	30	54.5
Procrastination	53	40.8	35	46.7	18	32.7

Table 3

Frequencies for Reported Coping Sources ($N = 130$)

Coping Source	Overall		Black		Latino	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Talk with:						
Friend	98	75.4	54	72.0	44	80.0
Parent	78	60.0	39	52.0	39	70.9
Significant other	71	54.6	39	52.0	32	58.2
Keep to self	67	51.5	41	54.7	26	47.3
Talk with sibling	44	33.8	24	32.0	20	36.4
Talk to a counselor	32	24.6	13	17.3	19	34.5
Talk with an advisor	25	19.2	14	18.7	11	20.0

Table 4

Frequencies for Reported Coping Practices (N = 130)

Coping Practices	Overall		Black		Latino	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Exercise	82	63.1	47	62.7	35	63.6
Hobbies	68	52.3	37	49.3	31	56.4
Activities with family	58	44.6	30	40.0	28	50.9
Studying	57	43.8	30	40.0	27	49.1
Social activities	50	38.5	30	40.0	20	36.4
Religious activities	46	35.4	30	40.0	16	29.1
Social support	46	35.4	24	32.0	22	40.0
Counseling	35	26.9	16	21.3	19	34.5

Nineteen Latino students (34.5%) selected counseling as a coping practice.

Chi-square analyses were conducted in order to determine whether students' concerns, coping sources, and coping practices varied as a function of race. In terms of concerns, there were no significant differences in the frequency with which Black and Latino students reported the top concerns of school grades, study skills, and relationship with family. Significant associations, however, were found between race and several concerns: academic probation, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 7.06, p < .05$; career choice, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 4.03, p < .05$; anxiety, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 4.01, p < .05$; loss, $\chi^2(1, n = 130) = 4.29, p < .05$; and relationship with significant other, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 5.11, p < .05$. Latino students were more likely to report these concerns than were Black students.

For coping sources, results indicated that Latino students were significantly more likely to talk to their parents than were Black students, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 5.37, p < .05$. Latino students were also more likely to talk to a counselor when concerns arise, $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 5.36, p < .05$.

No significant relationships were found between race and coping practices. Although the practices of cigarette smoking and substance

use showed significant values ($p < .05$), at least 20% of the cells had counts that were less than 5, which rendered the results unsound.

We examined students' attitudes toward three coping resources: professional, relational, and self (Table 5). Overall, the students reported less favorable attitudes toward professional counseling ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.12$). Specifically, they tended to disagree with statements indicating that they would feel comfortable sharing problems with a counselor ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.18$), would feel comfortable seeing a counselor ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.23$), and believed that a counselor could be helpful ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.25$). As noted earlier, we considered scores above 3 as

Table 5

Mean Scores for Attitudes Toward Professional Coping, Relational Coping, and Self Coping ($N = 130$)

Attitude	Overall		Black		Latino	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Professional Coping						
Overall	3.41	1.12	3.44	1.10	3.36	1.16
Share problems	3.65	1.18	3.71	1.16	3.57	1.22
Comfort with counselor	3.49	1.23	3.51	1.19	3.46	1.30
Belief in counselor	3.09	1.25	3.12	1.27	3.04	1.23
Relational Coping						
Overall	2.48	.70	2.60	.64	2.30	.75
Share problems with:						
Friends	2.58	1.11	2.65	1.24	2.47	.91
Partners	2.18	1.00	2.26	1.00	2.06	1.00
Siblings	2.60	1.21	2.69	1.20	2.47	1.22
Parents	2.52	1.23	2.76	1.20	2.19	1.20
Self Coping						
Overall	2.54	.88	2.50	.84	2.64	.94
Keep problems to self	2.90	1.37	2.84	1.37	2.98	1.38
Resolve own problems	2.24	1.12	2.19	1.07	2.31	1.20
Keep in family	2.51	1.17	2.40	1.21	2.67	1.12

Note. Lower scores indicate greater agreement with a given statement.

indicating less favorable attitudes toward counseling. However, the standard deviations indicate a spread in students' responses. By examining the frequencies in detail, we found that the modes for each item indicated that students frequently responded with strong disagreement (5 = strongly disagree) toward the statement that they would feel comfortable sharing problems with a counselor. Moreover, students most frequently were neutral (3) or strongly disagreed (5) with the statement that they would feel comfortable seeing a counselor. A neutral 3 was the most frequently occurring response to the statement that they believed a counselor would be helpful to them.

In regard to attitudes toward seeking help from social networks and coping alone, the overall mean score was 2.48 ($SD = .70$) for relational coping and 2.54 ($SD = .88$) for self coping. Students were willing to share problems with friends, parents, a significant other, and siblings. They also indicated a preference for keeping problems within the family and keeping problems to themselves. Students also agreed with the statement that they resolved problems on their own ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.12$). The mode was 1 (strongly agree) for this statement.

We conducted paired-samples t tests to compare students' mean professional, relational, and self coping scores. Results indicated that the mean professional coping score was significantly different from the mean relational coping score, $t(119) = 7.82$, $p < .05$, and the self coping score $t(127) = 6.28$, $p < .05$. It should be noted, however, that reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for relational coping attitudes (.44) and self coping attitudes (.54) were low. Thus, the t -test findings may not be meaningful. Hence, the relational coping and self coping data generated in this study were utilized for descriptive purposes only. The reliability coefficient for professional coping was .91. Further statistical analyses were carried out to examine whether demographic variables such as race, gender, and generation in the United States influenced attitudes toward professional counseling. Age, grade level, and religious affiliation were not used as independent variables, as our sample size was not large enough to provide meaningful numbers of participants at each level of the variables.

A three-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine if there were main and interaction effects for race, gender, and generation on attitudes toward counseling. No significant main effects for race, gender, and generation were found. There was one significant two-way interaction effect for race and gender, $F(1, 104) = 5.406$, $p < .05$, indicating that race and gender, acting together, influenced attitudes toward counseling. There was one significant two-way interaction effect for race and gender, $F(1, 104) = 5.406$, $p < .05$, indicating that race

and gender, acting together, influenced attitudes toward counseling. Black males had less favorable attitudes toward professional counseling in comparison to Black females. Latino males had more favorable attitudes toward counseling than did Latino females. There was no significant three-way interaction effect.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the concerns, coping sources, coping practices, and coping attitudes of Black and Latino college students. We hypothesized that coping would be culturally bound for these groups, with greater value placed on familial, social, and other interdependent coping mechanisms and lesser emphasis on individual-oriented professional counseling. In particular, we believed that these students would be more likely to rely on family and friends as coping sources. In terms of coping practices, we also hypothesized that they would prefer activities involving familial and social networks. Furthermore, we postulated that Black and Latino students would have more favorable attitudes toward relational coping such as sharing problems with family and friends and less favorable attitudes toward professional counseling. Differences between Blacks and Latinos within these domains were also examined.

Studies have shown that college students experience academic and emotional stress (Dill & Henley, 1998; Guyton et al., 1989; Newby-Fraser & Schlebusch, 1997; Oliver et al., 1998; Zaleski, Levey-Thors, & Schiaffino, 1998). Our results indicated that Black and Latino students were primarily concerned with their school grades and study skills. Another frequently cited concern was family relationships. Other troublesome areas were students' career choice, job search, and relationships with friends. Latino students, in comparison to Black students, were more likely to report academic probation, career choice, anxiety, loss, and relationship with significant other as concerns. In academic settings, where achievement and professional development are emphasized, students' concern over grades, study skills, and career were to be expected. Of greater interest to us was the students' frequent citing of relationships with family and friends as concerns. It appears that while family and friends were turned to for help, relationships with these same family members and friends might also cause stress. Since familial and social relationships were found to be important, developing new relationships may place a strain on these informal support networks. Future work that investigates the nature of family and peer

relationships (e.g., parental conflict, divorce, arguments with friends), specifically their contribution to student concerns, would be beneficial.

Researchers found that Black and Latino communities tended to underutilize professional mental health services (Daly et al., 1995; Delphin & Rollock, 1995). In the present study, Black and Latino students selected friends, parents, and significant others as primary sources of support. In particular, Latinos turned to parents more than did Black students. Talking to parents may be related to cultural norms that emphasize hierarchical family relationships and respect for elders and authority figures. Compared with Black students, Latino students may be socialized to rely on family support to a greater extent. Due to cultural conceptualizations of the roles of parent and child (Saetermore et al., 1999), Latino college students may turn to their parents for help to a higher degree as Black communities may emphasize family dynamics that support individual autonomy (Kane, 2000).

Trends in education indicate that Latino student enrollment in higher education have only recently been on the rise. Thus, navigation through the college experience may require the assistance of older persons and authority figures such as parents (and counselors when parents are not able to provide support). Although Latino students were found to be more likely to talk to a counselor than were Black students, seeking help from a counselor was endorsed infrequently by either group. Beyond turning to family and friends, students preferred to keep problems to themselves rather than seek professional help. Kenny and Stryker (1996) indicated that Black and Latino communities emphasize strong familial ties and social networks. Our exploratory study illustrates that family members and friends play important roles for Black and Latino college students. The findings support and expand current literature by highlighting the informal coping sources of Blacks and Latinos in an empirical manner.

We also looked at Black and Latino students' coping practices. We found that, in addition to engaging in individual activities such as exercise, hobbies, and studying, students frequently engaged in family activities. Black students also participated in religious and social activities, and Latinos engaged in activities that provided them with a social outlet. Counseling was not a frequent coping practice. Once more, our results highlight the importance of activities with family, friends, or engaged in alone for the two groups. Moreover, religious activities seemed to be important for Black students. This finding is in line with previous research demonstrating that spirituality is an aspect of an African-centered worldview (Cook & Wiley, 2000; Utsey et al., 2000).

These relational coping practices provide further evidence of a strong interdependent emphasis in Black and Latino cultures. Individuals

from these cultures value connectedness with family and friends, a tendency that is evident in their ways of coping (Daly et al., 1995; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Coping practices that include social activities with family and friends are collectivistic strategies that highlight kinship ties, responsibility for others, and self in relation to others within the Black and Latino communities (Ak'Bar, 1984; Daly et al., 1995; Ho, 1987; Houston, 1990; Schiele, 1990; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Leong et al., 1995).

In regard to attitudes toward seeking help from mental health professionals, the students reported less favorable attitudes regarding counseling. They believed that sharing concerns with parents, friends, siblings, and significant others is a preferable form of help seeking. Coping alone or keeping problems to oneself was also preferred. Professional help may be seen in a less favorable light due to a cultural stigma attached to counseling. Among Blacks, there is a social stigma to seeking outside help for problems because personal and family resilience are valued (Daly et al., 1995). In the Latino worldview, family is emphasized over individual needs (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Since respect is paid to the family by not sharing personal problems with outsiders (Leong et al., 1995), seeking help from formal resources such as counselors and other mental health professionals could be regarded as a betrayal of the family. Thus, given the importance of family, friends, and other social groups within the Black and Latino communities, informal support networks are considered to be culturally appropriate and regarded as preferred ways of coping.

Finally, we found a significant interaction for race and gender. These variables together modify attitudes toward counseling. Black male students had less favorable attitudes toward professional help than did Black females, and Latino male students had more favorable attitudes toward counseling than did Latino females. Previous research has indicated that females in general are more likely than males to seek professional help (Dubow, Lovko, & Kausch, 1990; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Willis & DePaulo, 1991). The findings for Black students in our sample support this gender difference, but those for our Latino students demonstrate the opposite. In terms of the Latino students, it may be that females maintain positive racial, ethnic, and cultural definitions of themselves via strong group identification and membership (Lasley Barajas & Pierce, 2001). Thus, they have more positive attitudes toward seeking support from culturally dictated sources such as family and friends rather than individual counseling. For Latino males in college settings, less positive racial, ethnic, and cultural definitions of themselves may lead to coping from a more individualistic perspective (Lasley & Pierce, 2001), one embedded in the dominant

White cultural framework, which highlights independence, self-actualization, and professional counseling.

Limitations

The current research had several limitations. First, it was an exploratory study that investigated Black and Latino college students' informal coping sources and practices. Since this was a preliminary descriptive investigation, no causal relationships could be determined. Further research is needed to better understand the factors that affect mental health attitudes and use of resources. Second, our sample size was small and results cannot be generalized to all Black and Latino college students. In terms of demographic variables, there were imbalances in the number of participants. In particular, the sample consisted mostly of females, Black students, freshmen, and Christians. Third, utilizing frequencies for the statistical analyses resulted in simple descriptive information. Future studies should use more complex analyses. Furthermore, data on attitudes toward professional, relational, and self coping yielded average scores that fell in the midrange (slightly above or below the neutral 3) of the Likert scale. While we interpreted scores above or below 3 as representing either less or more favorable attitudes, a clearer distinction should be used in future studies. Our relational and self coping scales also generated low reliability coefficients. The eligibility and validity of the CASPQ will have to be better assessed. Fourth, while we selected the CASPQ for this study, it was originally developed under an Asian coping framework. One of the goals of the study was to highlight collectivistic ways of coping for Blacks and Latinos. Thus, we believe that developing measures that capture the specific concerns and coping mechanisms of different cultures is necessary.

Implications

Our findings indicate that Black and Latino college students hold less favorable attitudes toward professional counseling and more favorable attitudes toward familial and social support. Moreover, students in our study reported preferences for coping sources and practices involving family, friends, and significant others. These findings have implications for professional and program development and for therapists and other counselors working at university counseling centers.

Counselors who work with Blacks and Latinos should be trained to recognize the role informal coping practices play in the lives of students. This involves making counselors aware of the cultural norms, expectations, and values of Black and Latino groups. In addition, out-

reach to student groups and support networks utilized by Black and Latino students should be highlighted. Training counselors in these areas may facilitate changes at an organizational and systemic level, leading to program development that includes greater emphasis on collaborative work with Black and Latino students. For example, Constantine et al. (1997) suggest that professionals at university counseling centers work directly with campus organizations to inform student leaders about the resources available to Black and Latino students.

Alliances between the counseling center and the informal support networks of Black and Latino students could be developed. Events such as a mental health day, providing information on resources available at the university as well as specifically dealing with academic and psychological concerns experienced by Black and Latino students could be implemented. Mentoring programs and culturally sensitive peer counselors could also be made available to students. In addition, building alliances could help to dispel the stigma attached to professional counseling.

REFERENCES

- Adan, A. M., & Felner, R. D. (1995). Ecological congruence and adaptation of minority youth during the transition to college. *Journal of Community Psychology, 23*, 256–269.
- Ak'Bar, N. (1984). Afrocentric social services for human liberation. *Journal of Black Studies, 14*, 395–413.
- Arbona, C., & Novy, D. M. (1990). Noncognitive dimensions of predictors of college success among Black, Mexican-American, and White students. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 415–422.
- Arbona, C., & Novy, D. (1991). Hispanic college students: Are there within group differences? *Journal of College Student Development, 32*, 335–341.
- Atkinson, D. R. (1983). Ethnic similarity in counseling psychology: A review of research. *Counseling Psychologist, 11*, 79–92.
- Atkinson, D. R., Whiteley, S., & Gim, R. H. (1990). Asian American acculturation and preferences for help providers. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 155–161.
- Austin, N., Carter, R., & Vaux, A. (1990). The role of racial identity in Black students' attitudes towards counseling and counseling centers. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 237–244.
- Baron, J. G., & Constantine, M. G. (1997). A conceptual framework for conducting psychotherapy with Mexican-American college students. In J. G. Garcia & M. C. Zea (Eds.), *Psychological interventions and research with Latino populations* (pp. 108–124). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brinson, J. A., & Kottler, J. A. (1995). Minorities' underutilization of counseling centers' mental health services: A case for outreach and consultation. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 17*, 371–385.

- Cheatam, H. E., & Berg-Cross, L. (1992). College student development: African Americans reconsidered. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 6*, 167-191.
- Chronicle of Higher Education. (2000). *Educational attainment of the U.S. population by racial and ethnic group*. Available at: <http://www.chronicle.com/weekly/almanac/2001/nation0102203.htm>.
- Constantine, M. G., & Arorash, T. J. (2001). Universal-diverse orientation and general expectations about counseling: Their relation to college students' multicultural counseling expectations. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*, 535-544.
- Constantine, M. G., Chen, E. C., & Ceesay, P. (1997). Intake concerns of racial and ethnic minority students at a university counseling center: Implications for developmental programming and outreach. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 25*, 210-218.
- Cook, D. A. (1990). Alienation of Black college students' on White campuses: University-centered and student-centered interventions. *Educational Considerations, 18*, 19-22.
- Cook, D. A., & Wiley, C. J. (2000). Psychotherapy with members of African American churches and spiritual traditions. In P. S. Richards & A. E. Bergin (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and religious diversity* (pp. 369-396). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Crouse, R. H. (1985). Using peer network therapy with a residential program for Chicano students. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 26*, 549-550.
- Daly, A., Jennings, J., Beckett, J. O., & Leashore, B. R. (1995). Effective coping strategies of African Americans. *Social Work, 40*, 240-248.
- Delphin, M. E., & Rollock, D. (1995). University alienation and African American ethnic identity as predictors of attitudes toward, knowledge about, and likely use of psychological services. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*, 337-346.
- Dill, P. L., & Henley, T. B. (1998). Stressors of college: A comparison of traditional and nontraditional students. *Journal of Psychology, 132*, 25-32.
- Dubow, E. F., Lovko, K. R., & Kausch, D. F. (1990). Demographic differences in adolescents' health concerns and perceptions of helping agents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 19*, 44-54.
- Feenstra, J. S., Banyard, V. L., Rines, E. N., & Hopkins, K. R. (2001). First-year students' adaptation to college: The role of family variables and individual coping. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*, 106-113.
- Ferraro, K. F., & Koch, J. R. (1994). Religion and health among Black and White adults: Examining social support and consolation. *Journal for Scientific Study of Religions, 33*, 362-375.
- Fischer, E. H., & Turner, J. L. (1970). Orientations to seeking professional help: Development and research utility of an attitude scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 35*, 79-90.
- 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. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*, 545-562.
- Gloria, A. M., Kurpius, S. E., Hamilton, K. D., & Willson, M. S. (1999). African American students' persistence at a predominantly white university: Influence of social support, university comfort, and self-beliefs. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 257-268.

- Gloria, A. M., & Rodriguez, E. R. (2000). Counseling Latino university students: Psychosociocultural issues for consideration. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*, 145-154.
- Goddard, C. T. (1990). *A systematic approach to the integration of black college students*. (Report No. HE023926). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 325 009).
- Guyton, R., Corbin, S., Zimmer, C., & O'Donnell, M. (1989). College students and national health objectives for the year 2000: A summary report. *Journal of American College Health, 38*, 9-14.
- Helms, J. E., & Cook, D. A. (1999). *Using race and culture in counseling and psychotherapy: Theory and process*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn Bacon.
- Hill, L. (1990). Facing life transitions: A peer counseling program. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 572-573.
- Ho, M. K. (1987). *Family therapy with ethnic minorities*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Houston, L. N. (1990). *Psychological principles and the black experience*. New York: University Press of America.
- Hughes, M. S. (1987). Black students' participation in higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 28*, 532-545.
- Jay, G. M., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1991). Social support and adjustment to university life: A comparison of African-American and White freshmen. *Journal of Community Psychology, 19*, 95-108.
- Kane, C. M. (2000). African American family dynamics as perceived by family members. *Journal of Black Studies, 30*, 691-702.
- Kenny, M. E., & Stryker, S. (1994, August). *Social network characteristics of White, African-American, Asian and Latino/a college students and college adjustment: A longitudinal study*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.
- Kenny, M. E., & Stryker, S. (1996). Social network characteristics and college adjustment among racially and ethnically diverse first-year students. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*, 649-658.
- Lasley Barajas, H., & Pierce, J. L. (2001). The significance of race and gender in school success among Latinas and Latinos in college. *Gender & Society, 15*, 859-878.
- Leon, D. J., & McNeill, D. (1986). Chicano college students: Personal influences on the decision to enroll. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*, 562-564.
- Leong, F. T. L., Wagner, N. S., & Tata, S. P. (1995). Racial and ethnic variations in help-seeking attitudes. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 415-438). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224-253.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1998). The cultural psychology of personality. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 63-87.
- Matthews, C. R., Schmid, L. A., Goncalves, A., & Bursley, K. H. (1998). Assessing problem drinking in college students. Are counseling centers doing enough? *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 12*, 3-19.

- McMiller, W. P., & Weisz, J. R. (1996). Help-seeking preceding mental health clinic intake among African American, Latino, and Caucasian Youths. *Journal of the American Academy of Adolescents and Psychiatry, 35*, 1086-1094.
- Murphy, M. C., & Archer, J. (1996). Stressors on the college campus: A comparison of 1985-1993. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*, 20-28.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *Fall enrollment in colleges and universities: Surveys and integrated postsecondary education data system (IPEDS), July 1999*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Newby-Fraser, E., & Schlebusch, L. (1997). Social support, self-efficacy and assertiveness as mediators of student stress. *Psychology, 34*, 61-69.
- Oliver, J. M., Reed, C. K. S., & Smith, B. W. (1998). Patterns of psychological problems in university undergraduates: Factor structure of symptoms of anxiety and depression, physical symptoms, alcohol abuse, and eating problems. *Social Behavior and Personality, 26*, 211-232.
- Ottens, A. J., & Black, L. (2000). Crisis intervention at college counseling centers. In A. R. Roberts (Ed.), *Crisis intervention handbook: Assessment, treatment, and research* (2nd ed., pp. 152-173). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Parham, T. A., & Helms, J. E. (1981). The influence of Black students' racial identity attitudes on preference for counselor's race. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28*, 295-305.
- Perez, R. M. (1996). Group counseling for HIV+ students: Issues and considerations. *Journal of College Student Development, 11*, 11-26.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Anderson, W. H., & Grieger, I. Z. (1986). Black students' attitudes toward counseling as a function of racial identity. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 14*, 50-59.
- Reeves, K. (1986). Hispanic utilization of an ethnic mental health clinic. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing, 24*, 23-26.
- Robbins, P. R., & Tanck, R. H. (1995). University students' preferred choices for social support. *Journal of Social Psychology, 135*, 775-776.
- Saetermore, C. L., Beneli, I., & Busch, R. M. (1999). Perceptions of adulthood among Anglo and Latino parents. *Current Psychology: Developmental, Learning, Personality, Social, 18*, 171-184.
- Sanchez, A., & Atkinson, D. R. (1983). Mexican-American cultural commitment, preference for counselor ethnicity, and willingness to use counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30*, 215-220.
- Sanchez, A. R., & King, M. (1986). Mexican Americans' use of counseling services: Cultural and institutional factors. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*, 344-349.
- Schiele, J. H. (1990). Organizational theory from an Afrocentric perspective. *Journal of Black Studies, 21*, 145-161.
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Muller, J. R. (1996). Correlates of help-seeking in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 25*, 705-731.
- Solberg, V. S., Choi, K. H., Ritsma, S., & Jolly, A. (1994). Asian American college students: It's time to reach out. *Journal of College Student Development, 35*, 296-301.

- Solberg, V. S., & Villarreal, P. (1997). Examination of self-efficacy, social support, and stress as predictors of psychological and physical distress among Hispanic college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 19*, 182-201.
- Steward, R. J., O'Leary, K. J., Boatwright, K., & Sauer, E. M. (1996). Social support networks of successful university students: A study of race, ethnicity, and sex. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*, 97-98.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, S. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Sue, D. W., & Zane, N. (1987). The role of culture and cultural techniques in psychotherapy: A critique and reformulation. *American Psychologist, 42*, 47-45.
- Tedeschi, G. J., & Willis, F. N. (1993). Attitudes toward counseling among Asian international and native Caucasian students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 7*, 43-54.
- Tiago de Melo, J. A. (1998). *Factors relating to Hispanic and non-Hispanic White Americans' willingness to seek psychotherapy*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (1998). Dimensions of adjustment among college women. *Journal of College Student Development, 39*, 364-372.
- Utsey, S. O., Adams, E. P., & Bolden, M. (2000). Development and initial validation of the Africultural Coping Systems Inventory. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*, 194-215.
- Willis, T. A., & DePaulo, B. M. (1991). Interpersonal analysis of the help-seeking process. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology* (pp. 350-375). New York: Pergamon.
- Yeh, C., & Wang, Y. (2000). Asian American coping attitudes, sources, and practices: Implications for indigenous counseling strategies. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*, 94-103.
- Zaleski, E., Levey-Thors, C., & Schiaffino, K. M. (1998). Coping mechanisms, stress, social support, and health problems in college students. *Applied Developmental Science, 2*, 127-137.
- Zea, M. C., Jarama, S. L., & Bianchi, F. T. (1995). Social support and psychosocial competence: Explaining the adaptation to college of ethnically diverse students. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*, 509-531.
- Zea, M. C., Quezada, T., & Belgrave, F. (1997). Limitations of a cultural health psychology for Latinos: Reconstructing the African influence on Latino culture and health-related behaviors. In G. Garcia & M. C. Zea (Eds.), *Psychological interventions and research with Latino populations* (pp. 108-124). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Copyright of Adolescence is the property of Libra Publishers Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.