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ASSESSMENT OF WORLD VIEWS OF BLACK AND WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS : IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COUNSELLING

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A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology)

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ABSTRACT

This study was an exploratory assessment of the world views of Black and White South African adolescents. The Scale to Assess World View Across Culture (SAWVAC, Ibrahim and Kahn, 1987) was used to identify adolescent beliefs, values and assumptions on five variables: (a) views of human nature, (b) interpersonal relationships, (c) nature, (d) time, and (e) activity. It is a 45 item Likert scale and was administered to 100 Black and 100 White adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17. Analysis of Variance was used to assess both intergroup and intragroup variation in world view. Significant differences between Black and White South African adolescents were found for the following categories: Human Nature, Human Relationships, People/Nature and Time Orientation. Race was found to be a significant factor influencing within group differences, and to a lesser degree age and sex accounted for individual variation in world view. The significance of understanding world view and the implications for cross-cultural counselling are discussed.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

SIGNED _____

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

Cross-cultural study is enormously complex (Dawis, 1978). Its origins can be traced back to two fields of interest (a) the study of culture and mental health in Anthropology, and (b) the reality and experience of cultural variation in modern pluralistic and complex Western societies (Marsella, 1979). Whereas the first anthropological account of native healing in remote cultures goes back to the nineteenth century (Draguns, 1981), the systematic study of culture and counselling is only a phenomenon of the twentieth century (Pederson, 1982).

Despite early recognition that cultural diversity in the United States requires cross-cultural rather than monocultural counselling practices (Wrenn, 1962), cross cultural research only took root in the 1970's (Atkinson, 1985). Numerous studies have examined the effects of race or ethnicity on the process and outcome of counselling and psychotherapy (Carkhuff & Pierce, 1967; Carson & Heine, 1962; Ewing, 1974; Grantham, 1973; Harrison, 1975; Lewis, Lynch & Munger, 1977; Morten, 1984; Ridley, 1986; Wolkon, Moriwaki &

Williams, 1973). Moreover, researchers and practitioners have focused on the selection, preparation and training of cross-cultural counsellors (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonslaves, 1980; Atkinson, Staso, & Horsford, 1978; Casas, Porterotto & Gutierreg, 1986; Christensen, 1984; Giorgis & Helms, 1978; Naimeyer, Fukuyama, Bingham, Hall & Mussenden, 1986; Paradis, 1981; Pedersen, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1983 a & b; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986; Sue, S., 1981; Triandis, 1975; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). Furthermore, the literature has reported a growing concern for skill and effectiveness in cross-cultural counselling and psychotherapy (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonslaves, 1980; Carney & Kahn, 1984; Ivey, 1977; McDavis, 1978; Paradis, 1981; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986; Sue, D.W., 1977 1978 a & c, 1981; Sue, D.W. & Sue, S, 1977 b; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967; Tucker, Chennault & Mulkerne, 1981). Finally, cross-cultural counselling and psychotherapy is receiving major attention because of the necessity for psychologists to meet the needs of a variety of people, across a diverse range of cultures (Ahia, 1984; Arredondo-Dowd & Gonslaves, 1980; Makinde, 1987; Marsella & Pedersen, 1981; Pedersen, 1981, 1985; Sebring, 1985; Strupp. 1971; Tidwell, 1986; Vontress, 1969).

Cultural Encapsulation

Many mental health professionals have recognised that Western psychology is sometimes inappropriate for

helping clients from other cultures (Padilla, Ruiz and Alvarez, 1975; Sue, D.W., 1977; Sue, D.W. & Sue, D., 1977a; Sue, S., 1983; Vontress, 1969, 1970, 1971). Some factors considered to be impediments when counselling cultural minorities are (a) ignorance of the client's background, (b) client's unfamiliarity with counselling, (c) client's reluctance toward self-disclosure, and (d) difficulty in establishing and maintaining trust or rapport between client and counsellor (Vontress, 1969, 1970, 1971). Racial and ethnic factors may serve as barriers to establishing an effective helping process, and often lead to (a) alienation, (b) under-utilisation of mental health services, and (c) premature termination (Sue, D.W., 1977; Sue, D.W. & Sue, D., 1977a). Furthermore, three cross-cultural elements that hinder the formation of a good counselling relationship have been identified: (a) language barriers, (b) class bound values, and (c) culture-bound values (Padilla, Ruiz & Alvarez, 1975).

Values are recognised as critical variables which influence the counselling relationship, process and outcome (Abramovitz & Dobecki, 1977; Hadley & Strupp, 1987; Ibrahim, 1984; Lowe, 1969; Rokeach & Regan, 1980; Smith & Petersen, 1977 a & b; Strupp & Hadley, 1977; Vontress, 1979, 1983; Welkowitz, Cohen & Ortmeyer, 1967; Zavalloni, 1980). Many theorists and practitioners assert that counselling within the Western framework is a white, middle-class activity

with values that are inconsistent with the life experiences of many Third World clients (Sue, D.W., 1977, 1981). For example, three major characteristics of counselling that may act as a source of conflict for Third World clients have been identified as follows: (a) clients are often expected to show some degree of openness, expressiveness and insight; (b) counselling is usually a dyadic relationship which encourages personal discussion, and (c) the counselling situation is invariably an unstructured, permissive and ambiguous one (Sue, D.W. & Sue, D., 1977b). Other factors which have been identified as general characteristics of counselling and potential sources of conflict between counsellors and clients include (a) a monolingual orientation, (b) an emphasis on long-range goals, (c) a distinction between physical and mental well-being, and (d) an emphasis on cause and effect relationships (Ahia, 1984; Lee, 1984; Pedersen, 1982; Sue, D.W. & Sue, D., 1977b).

Wrenn (1962) coined the term "culturally encapsulated counsellor" to refer to those counsellors who disregard cultural variation in favour of applying some mistaken universal notion of technique-oriented truth. For example, counsellors operating from a universal rather than a cross-cultural perspective may offer interpretations, advice and suggestions that are probably of little value to clients of diverse cultures, as the therapist in some fundamental sense

usually fails to understand such clients properly. However, counsellors are not impersonal technicians who ply their trade in a vacuum (Giorgis & Helms, 1978; Hilliard, 1985; Strupp, 1978). Moreover, because of the variables of sex, socio-economic status, political background, etc., every counselling encounter is to a greater or lesser extent cross-cultural (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1979; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986; Pedersen, 1978). Thus, instead of being enveloped by culture, counsellors are encouraged not only to be aware of their own cultural heritage but also to structure the counselling process according to the client's cultural frame of reference(Arredondo-Dowd & Gonslaves, 1980; Christiansen, 1977; Davis, 1978; Hilliard, 1985; Ibrahim, 1984, 1985; Ivey, 1977; Lee, 1984; Paradis, 1981; Pedersen, 1982; Sebring, 1985; Sue, D.W., 1977, 1981; Sundberg, 1981). Counsellors who tend to respond according to their own conditioned beliefs, values, assumptions, and perspectives of reality, with total disregard for differences in world view, are said to be engaging in a form of cultural oppression (Sue, D.W., 1978b).

Cross-cultural counselling and psychotherapy literature has increasingly alluded to the importance of respect and recognition of client world view (Abramovitz & Dobecki, 1977; Ahia, 1984; Hadley & Strupp, 1977; Horner & Vandersluis, 1981; Ibrahim, 1984; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986; Smith, 1980; Sue,

D.W., 1978 a & b, 1981; Sundberg, 1981). Differences in world view of counsellor and client in the counselling relationship may result in: (a) a breakdown in communication between counsellor and client (Maruyama, 1978), (b) a tendency of counsellors to attribute negative judgements to their clients (Ibrahim, 1985; Sue, D.W., 1977), (c) counsellors being harmful rather than helpful to clients (Brammer, 1977, 1978), (d) frustration and anxiety for both counsellor and client (Ibrahim, 1985), and (e) the choice of inappropriate goals and processes in the counselling situation (Ibrahim, 1985). Thus, barriers to the helping process may arise from lack of counsellor understanding for culturally different clients. Consequently, world view appears to have important implications for cross-cultural counselling.

Contextual Psychology in South Africa

In South Africa, psychology is criticised at the levels of training, practice, and function, for being irrelevant to the nature and needs of the majority Black population (Anonymous, 1986; Berger & Lazarus, 1987; Dawes, 1986; Holdstock, 1981; Lazarus, 1985, 1986; Moll, 1983; Psychology in Society, 1983, 1986; Steyn, 1985; Swartz & Swartz, 1986). In addition, mental health services for Blacks are described as inferior, insufficient, and characterised by inequality (Vogelman, 1987). Professionals are becoming

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