

## **Racial and Personal Factors and the Complexities of Competence-Oriented Changes in a High School Group-Counseling Program<sup>1</sup>**

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*The hypothesis was explored that individuals' patterns of functioning and change and their overall effectiveness are complex, interrelated, psychosocial configurations. A group of 218 exemplary ("getting their lives together well and handling school well") and marginal ("having trouble getting their lives together and managing school well") high school students participated in a study of a group counseling program. Counseling processes impacted most differently on white and black students and reflect trade offs as well as gains, particularly for black students. The importance of studying, conceptualizing, and developing change strategies for individual psychosocial patterns and for social/community context patterns in relation to each other was stressed.*

In recent years, community psychologists have identified the notions of psychosocial competence and cultural diversity as constructs central to improved models for understanding and enhancing the well-being of people. Neither concept, however, has been well integrated into evaluations

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of community programs, e.g., prevention consultation, social action, or counseling and psychotherapy programs. In particular evaluation research in counseling and psychotherapy has more typically been "pretty heavily oriented on the relief from distress side of things" (Waskow & Parloff, 1975, p. 300). Further, researchers have generally focused on common processes and outcomes of change (Meltzoff & Kornreich, 1970; Garfield & Bergin, 1978). Differences in the psychosocial realities with which people contend in their lives, diversity among individuals in their goals for change, and differences in the ways individuals change have not been systematically considered (Goldstein, 1974; Murrell, 1973).

This paper reports on the summary findings of a systematic study of a countywide high school group counseling program. The overall project was designed from a community perspective to provide a more balanced and integrated evaluation approach by attending specifically to the issues of well-being and psychosocial diversity and how they interact. That approach required that we deal simultaneously with the following interrelated premises about individual and systems functioning: (a) an individual's functioning involves strengths and resources as well as weaknesses and deficits; (b) the attributes underlying effective functioning may have generality but also differ in some respects for individuals with different life situations (e.g., sex or race); (c) people may change in more than one characteristic at a time; (d) a change which is helpful in itself may create as well as solve other difficulties; and (e) the patterns of change which are helpful may be somewhat different for people in different life situations.

Working from this framework, the present study employs a model of psychosocial functioning built on the concepts of effectance motivation (White, 1959) and of different styles of competence (Smith, 1966). Based on their work and related personality literature, Tyler (1973; 1978) has advanced a concept of the competent self consisting of three attributes: an active agent stance of personal control and responsibility, a realistic but optimistic level of interpersonal trust in relating to the world, and an active coping orientation towards life's events and problems. Results from several studies indicate that the elements of this configuration are inter-related, and the studies point more generally to the utility of this framework for differentiating and working constructively with diverse groups ranging from high school students to senior citizens. Fago (Note 1) found for father-absent black adolescent males, active coping orientation correlates with amount of previous work experience and the positiveness with which their most recent job experience was viewed. Evans and Tyler (1976) found that effective black community workers who scored higher on a coping skills scale tended to be more internal, had better supervisor's performance ratings, and solved family problems more effectively. Mondell

and Tyler (1981) reported that parents who scored high on internal locus of control (self-efficacy), trust, and active coping interacted with their preschool children more effectively and more warmly, and showed more enjoyment of the interaction than did parents scoring low on any of the three measures. Moran (Note 2) found that compared to controls, active mobile senior citizen residents of nursing homes gained on trust, social desirability, and life satisfaction from a 12-week therapy program.

The evaluation of a group counseling program provided a context for using this model of psychosocial functioning to test a number of interrelated questions regarding counseling changes and their relation to significant life situation factors. They include the following hypotheses:

1. Couselees will show improvement on identified psychosocial competence characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy, self vs. systems blame for racial discrimination, trust, social desirability, active coping).

2. Couselees with different life situation (i.e., race, status, sex) characteristics will change in significantly different ways in counseling.

3. Counseling associated changes on these psychosocial competence characteristics will covary.

4. Couselees with different life situation characteristics will be significantly different on competence characteristics at the end of counseling.

## DESIGN

The project which extended over a 3-year period and was divided into two major components involved an experimental-control pre—post design. It contained three basic elements:

1. Assessment of the processes and characteristics of change on a set of measures which are based in Tyler's conception of individual psychosocial competence and its development.

Each of the project components and the overall project effects were evaluated with a pre—post design. At both pre and post assessments, the competence configuration of self-attribution, self-world attribution, and coping was measured by a battery of self-report measures. They ranged from the most abstract, self-efficacy (Rotter I-E, 1966), to internal-external attribution in regard to race prejudice (Gurin I-E, 1969)<sup>3</sup> to interpersonal trust (Rotter Trust, 1967), to social approval orientation (Social Desirability Scale, Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) to coping style (Behavioral Attributes of

<sup>3</sup>The Gurin I-E Scale used in this study is comprised of the race-relevant items added to the Rotter I-E by Gurin, Gurin, Lao, and Beattie (1969).

Psychosocial Competence-BAPC, Tyler, 1978), to behaviorally anchored goal attainment (Goal Attainment Scale, Kiresuk & Sherman, 1968). For the goal attainment scale pretest, each counselor and each student identified a problem and set a goal to be attained over the 8-week counseling period in each of the four areas: career, educational, interpersonal, and personal concerns. They then independently rated student postcounseling level of goal attainment on those same scales.<sup>4</sup>

2. Arranging for counseling groups to include identifiably diverse counselees and a representative group of counselors.

Participating counselors each led two groups in a counterbalanced order. Each group had eight members selected by the counselor: two white males, two black males, two white females, two black females.<sup>5</sup> One group consisted of exemplary students (those performing effectively across major life domains) and one consisted of marginal students (those having difficulty in major life domains).

Exemplary students were included for several reasons. They provided an empirical basis (a) for defining the psychosocial characteristics of students who are managing their lives well, (b) for assessing whether such students conform more closely to the hypothesized pattern of psychosocial competence, (c) for determining the impact of counseling on such students—would it benefit them too, and (d) for determining whether counseling would change marginal students so that they would be more like those already judged to be competent. Counselors were given no further criteria than those noted above for selecting exemplary and marginal groups to avoid creating a self-fulfilling prophecy as to the nature of adolescent competence.

The study involved eight counselors in eight different high schools in the first component of the study and nine counselors in eight different high schools in the second. Two counselors were involved throughout. The counselors were all part of the county's high school guidance staff of about 200, and all volunteered to participate. There was race and sex diversity as well as a range of training, experience, and counseling approaches among the counselors. Those factors were fairly well matched throughout the study.

<sup>4</sup>For a small number of the groups, counselors and students set precounseling goals jointly and postcounseling goals independently to determine whether that approach would affect counseling outcomes. It did not, so those groups have been included in the overall sample. Further, weightings were assigned to the importance of goals. However, they were found to have no discriminatory value so they were not utilized in these analyses.

<sup>5</sup>The number of subjects reported differs somewhat in various analyses. The reasons involve attrition, and missing data on certain subjects. In the latter instance, missing data were sometimes recovered over the course of the project. In none of the analyses presented do these slight changes make a material difference in the significance of the findings reported.

All of the counselors had a minimum of master's level training plus differing amounts of experience and inservice training. Their counseling approaches varied from educational-vocational to group-process humanistic. The counseling issues grew out of the school context but ranged from specific school problems to career decisions to interpersonal and profound personal concerns. Included were problems which were severely disruptive psychologically, interpersonally, and legally. Some problems involved school supervision and/or legal action, while others involved major questions of psychological disturbance, and other issues such as changing study approaches, choosing a college, or working while attending school.

As in any field study, there was some attrition. Two counselors were able to lead only one group. Of 245 students who were pretested, 219 completed all posttest measures. Only one significant pattern related to attrition. Students who failed to posttest were significantly lower on BAPC and significantly less trusting than those who did complete the posttest. No other correlates of attrition were found which would systematically bias the findings reported.

### 3. Implementation of a counseling approach based on an integrated conception of individual psychosocial competence.

The project design involved two major components. The first component has been described in Tyler and Gatz (1977). In it counselors were directed to use their customary counseling approach. Data collected for each group included the previously mentioned conceptually related measures of individual psychosocial competence plus goal attainment, and counselor and group process measures.

The second component provided for cross-validation of initial findings, and for examination of the change process involving a larger total sample. In this component, potentially more constructive counseling approaches were identified on the basis of findings from the first component and other studies. A manual was developed to foster their use as an aid to the development of psychosocial competence as defined by our conceptual model. The manual focused on problem-solving; internal-external locus of control statements; counselor style (counselor "modeling" by treating the students as internal active agents); and understanding and facilitating the processes involved in dealing with feelings and with problem-solving.

## **Background Findings**

As a basis for examining the findings from the entire project, it is first essential to know whether the students in the two phases of the

project were different when they entered the project or changed differently as a function of being in it. To assess the initial comparability of the first and second phase (component) students, a comparison of their pattern of scores across all of the competence measures was assessed using a multivariate analysis of variance. Students in the two phases did not enter counseling with significantly different competence characteristics ( $F = 2.47$ ,  $df$  5, 210, ns).

Comparing the change findings for the second phase ( $n = 110$ )<sup>c</sup> of this project with those of the first phase provided a basis for conducting analyses with the total sample. Consequently a post-covary pre-MANOVA which included a comparison of change patterns between the two phases was conducted. Since no significant phase effects were found (Table I), students in those two study phases did not change differently. Rather, Phase 2 findings confirm (cross-validate) the generality of change patterns found in Phase 1, so the data from these phases can be combined. Data from the total sample (Table II) have consequently been used in the following tests of change pattern hypotheses.

As a basis for examining the complexities of the changes taking place in the groups and among the students, it is important to note that as the students entered counseling there were differences in their psychosocial competence characteristics. Those differences related to the life situations of the students. In brief, as they entered counseling (Tyler, 1979), exemplary students were more internally oriented and more active planful copers than were marginal students. Further, for them internality-trust-

**Table I.** Multivariate Analyses of Variance of Postcounseling Scores for All Counseled Students, Covarying Precounseling Scores<sup>a</sup>

Test	<i>df</i>	Exemplary/ marginal ( <i>F</i> )	Race	Sex	Phase
MANOVA	5, 205	1.70	3.70 <sup>d</sup>	.56	.95
Univariate					
Rotter I-E	1, 209	1.25	.37	.91	3.56 <sup>b</sup>
Gurin I-E	1, 209	.88	3.39 <sup>b</sup>	.10	.75
Trust	1, 209	1.60	.28	.16	.12
Social desirability	1, 209	2.61	7.82 <sup>d</sup>	.26	.03
BAPC	1, 209	1.36	10.05 <sup>d</sup>	1.05	.08

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external locus of control; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence; Phase = Component 1 vs. Component 2 subjects.

<sup>b</sup> $p < .10$ .

<sup>c</sup> $p < .05$ .

<sup>d</sup> $p < .01$ .

Table II. Mean Pre- and Postcounseling Scores of High School Students

Measure <sup>a</sup>	Group						Race						Sex			
	Total (n = 218)		Exemplary (n = 117)		Marginal (n = 101)		White (n = 106)		Black (n = 112)		Male (n = 109)		Female (n = 109)			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Rotter	M 11.23	11.02	10.74	10.56	11.80	11.56	11.16	10.90	11.29	11.14	10.87	10.71	11.59	11.34		
I-E	SD 3.40	3.48	3.60	3.89	3.06	2.87	3.72	3.43	3.08	3.53	3.21	3.37	3.55	3.57		
Gurin	M 6.20	6.66	6.33	6.87	6.05	6.41	5.33	6.10	7.02	7.18	6.08	6.70	6.31	6.61		
I-E	SD 2.73	2.81	2.80	3.27	2.64	2.16	2.51	2.61	2.68	2.91	2.73	2.85	2.74	2.79		
Trust	M 65.42	66.82	65.62	66.56	65.18	67.13	65.96	67.10	64.90	66.55	65.53	67.12	65.30	66.52		
	SD 7.71	7.97	7.90	8.24	7.53	7.66	7.31	8.41	8.08	7.55	7.79	8.14	7.67	7.81		
Social	M 16.04	15.80	16.37	15.60	15.65	16.03	15.26	16.06	16.77	15.55	15.49	15.34	16.59	16.26		
desirability	SD 5.19	5.14	5.23	5.46	5.14	4.76	4.79	5.17	5.46	5.11	5.17	5.08	5.17	5.18		
BAPC	M 29.85	30.33	30.72	31.30	28.84	29.21	28.76	31.08	30.88	29.63	29.83	29.94	29.86	30.72		
	SD 6.77	6.80	6.80	6.87	6.62	6.59	6.97	6.41	6.42	7.12	6.60	6.95	6.95	6.66		

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence.

active coping style, and social desirability formed a moderately intercorrelated configuration. In contrast, among marginal students those attributes were relatively independent (uncorrelated). In short, exemplary students were more like the hypothesized psychosocially competent individual. Males were more internal than females, but otherwise the sexes did not differ.

White and black students did differ in their competence characteristics. Exemplary white students were markedly internal and were active copers; marginal white students were external and quite passive copers. For black students the patterns were more complex. Both exemplary and marginal black students were active copers and were moderately internally oriented. In fact, in comparing the races directly black students were overall more active copers. They were also higher on social desirability and on systems blame in regard to prejudice (Gurin I-E). That is, they appear to reflect a heightened sensitivity to a potentially hostile environment. That sensitivity was also indicated by their competence variable intercorrelations. For them, a lower sense of personal control, of interpersonal trust, and of concern with the approval of others were associated with a *higher* sense of systems blame for discriminating against them. In contrast, for white students systems blame regarding discrimination against blacks was *positively* correlated with trust. Thus the patterns of psychosocial attributes the students presented as they began the counseling process are tied to their situations in life, particularly their race and exemplary/marginal group status.

### *Change Hypotheses*

The present analyses focus on the nature of changes among the total sample of counselees and on the differential changes associated with their life situation characteristics: group, race, and sex. Several sets of data analyses have been required to provide a complete picture of the changes occurring in this total sample.

As Tyler and Gatz (1977) have reported, in the first phase of this project it was found that counseled students, in contrast to controls, gained significantly more of their counselor-rated goals, though not of their student-rated goals. Further, counseled students gained significantly more on self-efficacy (internality) than did controls. In short, these 8-week group counseling programs did seem to have a constructive effect.

Hotelling's  $t^2$  was conducted to determine whether there were significant pre—post counseling changes on the separate competence measures and the competence measures as a group. These analyses were conducted for the total sample, and for each of the exemplary, marginal, black, white, male and female subgroups.



Table III. Hotelling's  $t^2$  of High School Student's Score Changes with Counseling

Sample	All variables			Variables <sup>a</sup> (t)						df
	F	Hotelling's $t^2$	df	Rotter I-E	Gurin I-E	Trust	Soc. Des.	BAPC		
Total	2.75	14.02 <sup>c</sup>	5, 213	-.83	2.03 <sup>c</sup>	2.55 <sup>d</sup>	-.71	1.08	217	
Group										
Exemplary	1.84	9.55	5, 112	-.53	1.71 <sup>b</sup>	1.27	-1.68 <sup>b</sup>	1.09	116	
Marginal	1.41	7.32	5, 96	-.65	1.12	2.35 <sup>c</sup>	.77	.49	100	
Race										
White	3.89	20.23 <sup>d</sup>	5, 101	-.73	2.48 <sup>d</sup>	1.44	1.76 <sup>b</sup>	3.62 <sup>e</sup>	100	
Black	3.15	16.35 <sup>d</sup>	5, 197	-.44	.49	2.15 <sup>c</sup>	-2.53 <sup>d</sup>	-2.14 <sup>c</sup>	111	
Sex										
Male	1.47	7.64	5, 104	-.47	1.90 <sup>b</sup>	1.91 <sup>b</sup>	-.30	.16	111	
Female	1.37	7.12	5, 104	-.70	.96	1.68 <sup>b</sup>	-.72	1.36	111	

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external locus of control; Soc. Des. = Marlowe-Crowne social desirability; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence.

<sup>b</sup> $p < .10$ .

<sup>c</sup> $p < .05$ .

<sup>d</sup> $p < .01$ .

<sup>e</sup> $p < .001$ .

**Table IV.** Statistically Significant Repeated Measures Analyses of Variance of Pre-Post Changes in High School Students with Counseling

Variables	Mean			<i>F</i> ( <i>df</i> = 1, 214)
	Sample	Pre	Post	
Main effects				
Trust	Total	65.42	66.82	6.44 <sup>b</sup>
Gurin I-E	Total	6.20	6.66	4.13 <sup>b</sup>
Interactions				
Pre-Post × Race				
Social desirability	White	15.26	15.55	9.31 <sup>c</sup>
	Black	16.77	16.06	
BAPC	White	28.70	31.08	17.25 <sup>d</sup>
	Black	30.88	29.63	
Pre-Post × Group × Race				
Rotter I-E	Exemplary white	10.03	10.48	8.91 <sup>c</sup>
	Exemplary black	11.42	10.63	
	Marginal white	12.52	11.40	
	Marginal black	11.15	11.72	
BAPC	Exemplary white	30.81	32.31	4.72 <sup>b</sup>
	Exemplary black	30.63	30.30	
	Marginal white	26.29	29.58	
	Marginal black	31.15	28.87	
Pre-Post × Group × Sex				
Social desirability	Exemplary male	16.88	16.66	4.26 <sup>b</sup>
	Exemplary female	15.86	14.56	
	Marginal male	16.26	15.80	
	Marginal female	15.04	16.26	

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external locus of control; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence.

<sup>b</sup>*p* < .05.

<sup>c</sup>*p* < .01.

<sup>d</sup>*p* < .001.

A post-covary pre-MANOVA was used to determine whether there were any differential patterns of change *across* all of the competence measures. Groups compared were respectively, the exemplary and marginal, white and black, counselees (see Table I).

Repeated measures ANOVAs (Table IV) were computed to assess differential patterns of change on each of the competence measures considered separately. Groups compared were, as before, exemplary and marginal, white and black, counselees.

The major findings can be summarized as follows:

1. For the entire sample there was significant change over the counseling period on the *set* of competence variables as indicated by the Hotteling's  $t^2$ . Overall, subjects became more internal, more system-blaming, more trusting, less social-desirability oriented, and more active copers. Separate  $t$  tests and repeated measures ANOVAs indicated that the gains on trust and systems blame (concerning discrimination against blacks) were also significant by themselves.

2. Neither the exemplary nor the marginal subgroup taken alone (Table III) changed significantly, nor was there significant differential change between them (Table I). However, marginals gained significantly on trust.

3. There was an overall change for the white students and for the black students (Table III). Further, the pattern of change was significantly different (Table I) between them. On the specific competence variables, the differences involved the following patterns:

*Gurin I-E.* There was a trend toward a differential race-related change (Table I). Whites increased significantly; blacks did not (Table III).

*Rotter Trust.* Blacks increased significantly; whites did not (Table III).

*Social Desirability.* There was significant differential change (Table I). Blacks decreased significantly; there was a trend for whites to gain (Table III).

*BAPC.* There was significant differential change (Table I). Blacks decreased; whites gained—both significantly (Table III).

4. There were two variables on which there was a significant exemplary/marginal by race change interaction (Table IV).

*Rotter I-E.* Exemplary whites and marginal blacks became more external; exemplary blacks and marginal whites became internal.

*BAPC.* Exemplary whites gained moderately ( $M$  increase = 1.50); marginal whites gained substantially ( $M$  increase = 3.29; exemplary blacks declined slightly ( $M$  decrease = .32); marginal blacks declined substantially ( $M$  decrease = 2.28).

In sum, students in general showed significant prosocial change over the counseling program (Hypothesis 1). That change was most generally manifested in gains on trust and on systems blame with regard to black discrimination. At the same time, specific patterns of change were related to the life situations of the students (Hypothesis 2), particularly the stu-

dents' race. These patterns are complex and are considered in more detail in the Discussion section.

The data also seem to indicate that change occurs in functionally meaningful patterns; that is, the dimensions of change themselves are interrelated (Hypothesis 3). These patterns become apparent in at least two ways. First, there are the race-related patterns of mean score changes on the competence dimensions. The black students, initially more sensitized to a potentially hostile environment, became more trusting, less social-desirability oriented, and less active and planful in their coping. White students, initially less concerned and less active, manifested a different pattern of change. They became more social-desirability oriented, more systems-blaming, and also more active and planful copers in their own behalf. Second, functional interrelations are also reflected directly across all students in the intercorrelations among the dimensions of change. As indicated in Table V, a number of low level but significant correlations were found for the total sample among the change scores on the competence dimensions. Changes toward increased internality related to changes toward increased social desirability, trust, and coping skills, increases in coping skills also related to increases in systems-blame and social desirability. These findings then support Hypothesis 3 that the dimensions of change are functionally interrelated. Thus, these findings suggest that a better estimate of the impact of counseling may be the aggregate change measured across several variables.

Hypothesis 4 is concerned with differential outcome characteristics for people with different life characteristics. Relevant findings are presented in Table VI. They can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a significant overall exemplary/marginal postcounseling configural difference. Further, at the individual variable level, exemplary

Table V. Change Score Intercorrelations for High School Students in Group Counseling ( $n = 218$ )

Variable <sup>a</sup>	Rotter I-E	Gurin I-E	Trust	Soc. Des.
Rotter I-E	—			
Gurin I-E	.03	—		
Trust	-.10 <sup>b</sup>	-.09 <sup>b</sup>	—	
Social desirability	-.17 <sup>d</sup>	-.08	.11 <sup>b</sup>	—
BAPC	-.15 <sup>c</sup>	.12 <sup>c</sup>	-.04	.18 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external locus of control; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence.

<sup>b</sup> $p < .10$ .

<sup>c</sup> $p < .05$ .

<sup>d</sup> $p < .01$ .

Table VI. Multivariate Analysis of Postcounseling Scores for All Counseled Students

	<i>df</i>	Exemplary/ marginal ( <i>F</i> )	Race	Sex
MANOVA	5, 210	2.61 <sup>b</sup>	2.23 <sup>b</sup>	1.12
Univariate				
Rotter I-E	1, 214	4.58 <sup>b</sup>	.28	1.82
Gurin I-E	1, 214	1.48	8.14 <sup>c</sup>	.05
Trust	1, 214	.28	.26	.30
Social desirability	1, 214	.37	.52	1.74
BAPC	1, 214	5.23 <sup>b</sup>	2.48	.73

<sup>a</sup>I-E = internal-external locus of control; BAPC = behavioral attributes of psychosocial competence.

<sup>b</sup> $p < .05$ .

<sup>c</sup> $p < .01$ .

students are significantly more internal and more active planful copers. These differences were also present when these students entered counseling (Tyler, 1979).

2. There is a significant overall race postcounseling configural difference. On entering counseling, there was also an overall race difference with black students significantly higher on Gurin I-E, on social desirability, and on BAPC (Tyler, 1979). On leaving it, the Gurin I-E difference remains. However, black students are now lower than white students on social desirability and BAPC, though not significantly so.

As already noted, there were identifiable subgroup differences at the beginning of counseling and identifiable common changes with it. There were also different subgroup changes with counseling, and there were overall postcounseling group differences related to exemplary/marginal status and to race. It would seem that for the exemplary and marginal groups there is change toward efficacious competence characteristics and a continued difference in these characteristics which favors the exemplary groups. Those findings support the general value of counseling both for those already doing well and for those currently troubled (Hypothesis 2). In contrast the different patterns of change and different outcomes for white and black students are consistent with the Hypothesis 4 prediction of different counseling outcomes for individuals with different life characteristics.

## DISCUSSION

The potential complexities of counseling-related change have been explored in this study of a psychoeducationally oriented high school group counseling program by use of a pre—post design with a partial

cross-validation. Further, change was assessed on a conceptually integrated set of measures. The study design permits study of changes in patterns and levels of psychosocial functioning as interrelated phenomena. Finally, students who were identifiably diverse in level of current functioning, race, and sex were included to determine the nature of psychosocial patterns of functioning and of similarities and differences in their responses to the counseling process, and in their counseling outcomes.

### *Effective Functioning*

The findings bear first on the nature of effective patterns of psychosocial functioning. Previous competence-oriented research and present precounseling findings indicate that persons identified as functioning more effectively (exemplary students) are more internal, and more active planful copers. They are somewhat, though not significantly, more trusting, social-desirability oriented, and systems-blaming for discrimination against black students. These variables are more consistently intercorrelated among exemplary students. Further, the students who completed counseling were significantly higher on active coping and trust. Finally, as noted elsewhere, an active planful coping style before counseling was also predictive of both student and counselor rated goal attainment (Gatz, Tyler, & Pargament, 1978). In sum, the psychosocial characteristics of these high school juniors and seniors are related (in a manner which is consistent with the hypothesized competence configuration) to their effectiveness in school and to their persistence in and gains and changes from counseling.

### *Counseling and Enhanced Functioning*

As a function of counseling it was expected that students would become generally more effective. Over the entire project counseled students did show a significant overall pattern of gain across the competence variables. Significant increases in trust and systems-blame occurred. Students also changed in the direction of greater internality, more active planful coping skills, and less of a social desirability orientation. According to counselors and students themselves, students made significant progress towards the attainment of psychological and educational goals. Finally, Tyler and Gatz (1977) reported from the first component of the study that counseled students gained more than control students on internality. Thus, the results indicate that the students as a group became more effective over the course of counseling. That is, they did generally become

more self-efficacious. They also became more trusting, and more active planful copers—in fact more like exemplary students. There are no existing conceptual bases for defining desirable levels of social desirability or systems-blame concerning black discrimination. Nevertheless, an enhanced concern about the latter and a tempering of the former seem consistent with effective prosocial individual functioning.

### *Life Situation Correlates of Counseling Changes*

The competence configuration described in this paper was conceptualized as one applicable to a variety of groups. In this study, sex, race, and exemplary/marginal status of students were identified and explored as meaningful life variables. For the most part, sex differences in the competence characteristics of students were not found. Neither exemplary nor marginal students taken alone showed overall change with counseling, nor did they exhibit differential change. Exemplaries at postcounseling were still more internal and more active copers than marginals. Even so, generally positive changes were made by the total student sample. It would seem that high school group counseling is similarly useful for male and female and marginal and exemplary students.

However, it seems clear that we cannot assume that white and black students will enter or respond to a shared counseling process in the same way nor be equally well-served by the same psychosocial approach to life. For a community psychologist as well as for clinicians and counselors that finding is perhaps the most important one stemming from this project. That is, while generally desirable changes occurred for the total sample with counseling, race differences were substantial and warrant further attention. They emerged before, during, and after counseling. Prior to counseling, black students were more systems-blaming, more social-desirability oriented, and more active planful copers. Further, for them systems-blame correlated *negatively* with internality, trust, and social desirability; for whites it correlated *positively* with trust. An interaction between race and exemplary/marginal status at pretest is also marked. White exemplary students are more internally oriented active planful copers, as are both exemplary and marginal black students. White marginal students are more externally oriented passive or impulsive copers. These differences suggest that the psychological impact of their general life situations is not the same for black and white students. Rather, as noted elsewhere (Tyler, 1979), both exemplary and marginal black students can be characterized as trying to discover and deal with (active coping) the rules which will permit them to survive (social desirability) in a perceived alien environment (high systems-blame). Consistent with this overall

picture for blacks is the negative correlation between systems-blame and other competence-oriented attributes.

These differences forecast other race-related dissimilarities in patterns of counseling-related change and outcome characteristics (Gatz et al., 1978). For whites, moderate internality was generally more predictive of goal attainment; for blacks, externality was. The dissimilarities suggest the most efficacious level of a competence characteristic (e.g., self-efficacy) may differ for individuals whose life situations differ.

Furthermore, black students change in a significantly different fashion from white students and remain significantly different from them at postcounseling. In the process of counseling, black students become less social-desirability oriented and less active copers, scoring lower at posttest than white students (who gain on both), and gain less on systems-blame. They also become more trusting and more internal, as do white students. It would seem that counseling has reduced their sense of being in a hostile environment (lower social desirability, higher trust) and changed how they deal with it. They relax and become somewhat less active copers (particularly marginal students).

We need a much better understanding of the psychosocial competence characteristics underlying effective functioning for these black students and of the patterns of change, of counseling, and of programs which will help them to attain those characteristics. For example, reported gains in trust of black (as well as white) marginal students may serve them well. It is not clear that the reported reductions in level of active coping of marginal black students are indeed in their best interests.

Finally, facilitative patterning among changes was found. These patterns are illustrated, in part, by the interrelations among competence-related pre—post changes for the entire sample and for subgroups of students. Students who gained more on competence attributes tended to gain more on others as indicated by the low order but significant intercorrelations between the change scores on the psychosocial competence dimensions. Yet for white and black students, there were significantly different patterns of change. Those for the white students were consistent with the expected pattern of change of an overall more competent (self-efficacious, trusting, active coping) orientation. For the black students, change was more equivocal.

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that significant psychosocial changes can be generated by group-counseling approaches in a high school setting, in a relatively short period of time, and by group counselors with intermediate levels of training. Thus they support the value and potential importance of community-based programs staffed by intermediate level personnel as significant resources for improving the quality of individuals' lives.



These findings also underscore the complexity of the change process; a process which occurs at a variety of levels interrelated to each other and to the particular life status of the individual. They point up the necessity of incorporating cultural, and especially racial, perspectives into our formulations about helping programs, into our program development and counseling practices, and into our judgments about psychological distress and well-being. These phenomena seem to be substantially more psychosocial (in contrast to exclusively psychological or social) than we have previously thought. More specifically, white and black adolescents live in quite different real and psychological worlds.

These findings provide us no modal psychosocial pattern of functioning that we can define as serving the black adolescent well psychologically and in coping with a hostile and threatening world. Our findings do suggest that at an individual change level we should at least be very cautious about programs which result in black students coping less actively. At a program or systems level it seems imperative that we focus our efforts on creating real-world conditions that are less discriminatory if we are to expect black students to develop or be served well internally and externally by a positive and coherent set of self-world expectations.

In closing, these findings do support the utility of a psychosocial competence-oriented configural conception as a guiding framework for clinical and counseling research as well as for current clinical and counseling practice. They also support the utility of such a conception for psychosocially oriented community interventions. Finally, these findings suggest that community-oriented and individually oriented research, conceptions of well-being, and approaches to creating prosocial change must take cognizance of each other. To pursue either out of the context of their interrelation is at best to be of limited effectiveness; at worst, to do more harm than good.

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