

Emotional Expression and Personal Disclosure among Bicultural Individuals:

Testing of Cultural Priming and Ethnic Matching Hypotheses

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June, 2012

Abstract

In the present study, the influence of two cultural variables, namely, counselor ethnicity and session language, on emotion expression and personal disclosure was examined using semi-structured counseling sessions. It was aimed to test two apparent contrasting lines of literature, i.e. ethnic matching and cultural priming, on the relationship between the aforementioned cultural variables and emotion expression and personal disclosure in the context of counseling. Participants included 109 Hong Kong Chinese individuals who were bilingual in Cantonese and English (34 males and 75 females). Analyses of covariance revealed that participants demonstrated more ease in personal disclosure and higher allowance of emotion expression in the face of Caucasian counselor rather than a Chinese counselor. In addition, participants perceived more empathic understanding from the counselors in sessions conducted in English compared to sessions conducted in Cantonese. Limitations and directions for future research were discussed.

Keywords: counselor ethnicity, language, emotion expression, personal disclosure