

# Broaching the Subjects of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture During the Counseling Process

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The authors define *broaching* as the counselor's ability to consider how sociopolitical factors such as race influence the client's counseling concerns. The counselor must learn to recognize the cultural meaning clients attach to phenomena and to subsequently translate that cultural knowledge into meaningful practice that facilitates client empowerment, strengthens the therapeutic alliance, and enhances counseling outcomes. A continuum of broaching behavior is described, and parallels are drawn between the progression of broaching behavior and the counselor's level of racial identity functioning.

Demographic shifts in U.S. society necessitate that counselors possess the requisite awareness, knowledge, and skills to work effectively within and across varying racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (Constantine, 2001; Day-Vines, Patton, & Baytops, 2003; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). Currently, ethnic minorities constitute 30% of the U.S. population; however, projections indicate that by 2050, ethnic minorities will be a numerical majority (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). Such projections sound a clarion call for culturally relevant counseling practice (Hobson & Kanitz, 1996; D. W. Sue et al., 1998). Despite these rapid demographic changes, the counseling force remains virtually homogeneous. This discrepancy between an increasingly diverse client composition relative to a predominantly White European American counseling force creates the potential for cultural schisms during the counseling process, especially given that counseling professionals often rely on theories, ideologies, and techniques that are not always congruent with the client's worldview (Clarkson & Nippoda, 1997; Hayes, 1996; Vontress, 1996).

Factors related to cultural conflict and mistrust can stem from perceived insensitivity to the personal and cultural meaning of clients' experiences, the consequence of which may be the underutilization of and premature departure from counseling services (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). Among White European American clients, the premature termination rate hovers around 30% compared with 50% for clients from culturally diverse backgrounds (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). Although there is a paucity of research on mental health care for members of diverse cultures, a report (U.S. Public Health Service, 1999) by former Surgeon General David Satcher cites a concern about client mistrust of the mental health system along with evidence of racial and ethnic bias by counselors. This issue warrants considerable concern among counselors because people of color will seek mental health services in greater numbers as they strive to surmount school, family, and

career issues that may be complicated by the consequences of racial inequality (Brinson, 1996). Counselors have an ethical responsibility to deliver culturally appropriate counseling interventions as prescribed by mandates from the *ACA Code of Ethics* (American Counseling Association, 2005).

Proponents of multiculturalism have been reproached for devoting a disproportionate amount of attention to the critique of traditional counseling methodologies as opposed to the actual development and implementation of innovative theories, techniques, and frameworks for use with culturally diverse populations (Weinrach & Thomas, 1998). In this article, we attempt to address some of the criticisms lodged against the multicultural counseling literature by proposing a culturally relevant strategy for considering how race shapes clients' presenting concerns. More specifically, we present an empirically supported rationale and conceptual framework for broaching or introducing the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process. In the absence of consistent terminology used in the professional literature to describe the counselor's effort to examine racial and cultural factors during the counseling process, we have coined the term *broaching*. Essentially, broaching refers to the counselor's ability to consider the relationship of racial and cultural factors to the client's presenting problem, especially because these issues might otherwise remain unexamined during the counseling process. An emerging body of research has indicated that acknowledgement of cultural factors during the counseling process enhances counselor credibility, client satisfaction, the depth of client disclosure, and clients' willingness to return for follow-up sessions (D. Sue & Sundberg, 1996).

We begin with a definition, rationale, and empirical support for broaching cultural factors during counseling. We then present a continuum of broaching styles; identify parallels between the counselor's broaching style and her or his level of racial identity

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functioning; address possible client reactions to the counselor's broaching behavior; and close with a set of implications for theory, research, and practice.

## Defining Broaching Within Therapeutic Conversations

It is bell hooks's (1992) contention that U.S. citizens reside in a society that is rooted in denial and repression. This silence precludes the acknowledgment of painful differences and realities about race. Many individuals promote "color blind" counseling as a means of appearing bias free, but, in reality, an orientation that ignores the salience of race may operate as a shield for concealing hidden biases (Patton & Day-Vines, 2005). Failure to consider issues of race and representation may prevent a counselor from recognizing the inevitable encounters with racism that minority group members experience (Tatum, 1997; Wiley, 1992). Broaching creates an opportunity for healing this legacy of silence and shame by providing an environment of emotional safety within which the counseling relationship can transition from a level of superficiality toward a measure of intimacy that is crucial to embracing difference. Broaching invites the counselor to help the client examine the extent to which sociopolitical factors such as race and ethnicity influence the client's counseling concerns.

*Broaching behavior* refers to a consistent and ongoing attitude of openness with a genuine commitment by the counselor to continually invite the client to explore issues of diversity. In essence, the counseling relationship becomes the vehicle for navigating a discussion concerning issues of difference related to race, ethnicity, and culture. As an example of broaching, the counselor may indicate, "We're both from different ethnic backgrounds. I'm wondering how you feel about working with a White European American woman on your concerns." During the context of counseling, the counselor creates facilitative conditions such as warmth, empathy, positive regard, openness, and genuineness. In addition to establishing rapport and counselor credibility, a recognition that race *may* contribute to the client's presenting problem functions as a vital element in building a working alliance. Broaching functions as one facet of therapeutic responsiveness that places the onus of responsibility on the counselor to initiate race-related dialogues; otherwise, such dialogues might remain unexamined, reflecting, in large measure, the taboo nature of race within a racially charged society.

The following scenario demonstrates a counselor's inability to consider issues of race and representation and the consequential impact on counseling outcomes.

During a counseling session with his White European American counselor, Tyrone, an African American male adolescent, reveals his reluctance to shop in retail stores because he believes that he is constantly under surveillance by sales personnel due to their perceptions that he is a thief and not a paying customer.

Instead of acknowledging and validating his concerns about racial profiling, the counselor countered by suggesting

that such situations more accurately represent a normative experience for young people irrespective of race. In his effort to place trust in the therapeutic alliance and expose his vulnerability, Tyrone felt doubly wounded, first by the racist assault he experienced while shopping and then by the counselor's invalidation of his interpretation of the shopping incident. The counselor's dismissive attitude ignored the prevalence of racial profiling encountered by a disproportionate number of African Americans, decreased the counselor's credibility, reinforced negative assumptions Tyrone harbored about the counseling process, and contributed to his uncertainty about returning for a follow-up session. More important, the counselor may have done irreparable damage to the therapeutic alliance for the following reasons. First, the counselor neglected an opportunity to enhance his own understanding of the endemic nature of racist encounter and assault for minority group members in general and for Tyrone in particular. Consequently, the counselor furthered his own cultural encapsulation. Second, the counselor disregarded Tyrone's feelings of personal violation, anger, and confusion. In so doing, the counselor neglected an opportunity to explore Tyrone's reaction to this incident by normalizing his feelings, critiquing pervasive systems of dominance, and empowering Tyrone to manage subsequent encounters with racism and discrimination more effectively. Third, the counselor operated as an agent of the status quo wherein cultural conditioning mandated that he remain oblivious to his own unacknowledged privilege by ignoring the social realities associated with racial stratification and social inequality (McIntosh, 1989).

Counselors must, at the very least, present clients with an option to consider the embeddedness of racial politics within their personal experiences. Even as we discuss the importance of broaching race within the confines of the counseling dyad, we fully recognize that issues related to race and representation will not undergird every counseling issue; however, when issues related to race, ethnicity, and culture are germane to the presenting problem, as determined by the client's self-avowal, the counselor has an ethical obligation to help the client determine the relevance of these issues to her or his counseling concerns. The inability or refusal to address cultural factors can impede the therapeutic alliance and damage counseling outcomes; it also represents an egregious violation of the counselor's ethical responsibility to deliver culturally appropriate counseling interventions. Concurrently, counselors must refrain from practicing in domains for which their training or competency is lacking (Arredondo, 1998; Hobson & Kanitz, 1996; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Wehrly, 1995). A counselor's refusal to both develop and exercise multicultural counseling competence represents a potential act of malfeasance toward clients (Kiselica, Changizi, Cureton, & Gridley, 1995; Ponterotto & Alexander, 1996; Reynolds, 1995; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003).

In the next section of this article, we differentiate among and between the terms *race*, *ethnicity*, and *culture*. We maintain that racial considerations warrant added emphasis during the counseling process because of the difficulty of addressing racial concerns relative to other aspects of one's identity struc-

ture, such as gender, class, sexual orientation, or religiosity, during the broaching process.

## Rationale for Emphasizing Race

In this article, we explore the overlapping and interacting dimensions of race, ethnicity, and culture. We acknowledge that although these terms are often used interchangeably, they represent related yet not synonymous constructs that are difficult and impractical to disentangle. Originally, the term *race* had biological connotations referring to phenotypic characteristics of homo sapiens; currently, however, the term is used as a social construction that refers more to systems of dominance that subordinate non-White groups than it does to skin color, genetic, or biological features. *Ethnicity* describes groups in which members share a cultural heritage from one generation to another (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Attributes associated with ethnicity include a group image and a sense of identity derived from contemporary cultural patterns (e.g., values, beliefs, and language) and a sense of history. Whereas race reflects physical characteristics and social status, ethnicity encompasses issues related to nationality and country of origin. *Culture* has been defined as the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication, action, customs, beliefs, values, and instructions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group (Leighton, 1982). We acknowledge, however, the controversy that exists regarding inclusive versus exclusive definitions of the term *culture* (Fong, 1994) and the spirited debate that guided the preparation of this article.

In this article, we place added emphasis on the social construction of race because race represents, by far, one of the most divisive issues in U.S. society. In fact, as early as 1903, noted sociologist W. E. B. DuBois (1903/1996) stated that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of the color line. Another century has been ushered in, replete with even more complexities related to issues of difference and, still, race represents a pervasive and harmful issue that threatens to unravel the fabric of U.S. society (Patton & Day-Vines, 2005). Although we underscore the significance of race in this article, we proffer that this discussion is not exclusive of other identities that shape the client's experience. In fact, several scholars have addressed the importance of considering multiple identities of the client during the counseling process (Day-Vines et al., 2003; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). For instance, issues related to gender, social class, sexual orientation, disability category, and religiosity may also shape the client's sociopolitical experience. Yet for persons of color, who constitute visible racial ethnic groups (VREG), race can operate as the most salient identity (Helms, 1990). We fully expect that future scholarship will explore the intersection of multiple identity categories as it pertains to broaching; however, in this article, we emphasize the impact of race on the client's counseling concerns.

## Empirical Support for Broaching Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

A small but emerging body of quantitative and qualitative research has provided support for broaching race and ethnicity

during the counseling process. It has been noted that counselors who demonstrate cultural responsiveness are consistently perceived by clients of color as being more credible and competent (Atkinson, Casas, & Abreu, 1992; Gim, Atkinson, & Kim, 1991; Knox, Burkard, Suzuki, & Ponterotto, 2003; Pomales, Claiborn, & LaFromboise, 1986). Knox et al. concluded that addressing race with clients of color occurred less frequently for European American than for African American therapists. In spite of this discrepancy, when race was addressed, both African American and European American therapists perceived these discussions to have a positive effect on therapy. This finding supports earlier research by Gim et al. (1991), who found that counselors who actively acknowledged the importance of culture were perceived as being more credible by clients of color. In contrast, failure to address issues of race and ethnicity can perpetuate cultural bias by imposing a dominant cultural imperative on minority clients (Granello & Wheaton, 1998). Therapists working with culturally diverse clients must be cognizant of this threat and must, therefore, explore the extent to which race shapes a client's experience. This collaborative exploration of racial dynamics enables the client to feel that the counselor has an awareness of her or his sociopolitical experience, thus increasing the counselor's credibility with the client (D. W. Sue et al., 1998).

Thompson, Worthington, and Atkinson (1994) used verbal statements that were reflective of a cultural orientation, such as "Tell me how your feelings of loneliness reflect your experiences as a Black student on this campus" (p. 158). The authors concluded that this broaching behavior was significantly related to the depth of client disclosure, in this case African American women who were working with either African American or White European American female counselors. Clients in this study reported a greater willingness to return to counselors who broached the issue of race.

We maintain that broaching must be accompanied by a consistent and ongoing attitude of openness with an authentic commitment by the counselor to continually invite the client to explore issues of diversity. More important, it is incumbent upon the counselor to recognize the cultural meaning of phenomena assigned by the client and to translate cultural knowledge into meaningful practice that results in client empowerment. The counseling relationship becomes the vehicle to navigate a discussion about issues of race and ethnicity that may be off-limits elsewhere. In therapy sessions, this discussion fosters intimacy and forges a therapeutic alliance that can enhance counseling outcomes.

We acknowledge that some clients may have considered the impact of race and representation on their presenting problem but may harbor apprehensions about addressing these issues in therapy because of concerns that the therapeutic alliance may not represent a safe environment within which to disclose racial issues. That is, many acculturated minority group members recognize that their survival depends upon their socially conditioned ability to compartmentalize their lives. This accommodation of Whiteness, whereby clients avoid issues of race unless prompted to do so, results from concerns about the

power differential between the counselor and the client in which the counselor wields the balance of power (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). The client may also have trepidations that the counselor will withdraw emotional support and empathy, negate and deny the existence of the client's interpretation of phenomena, and possibly pathologize the client as paranoid, militant, or overly sensitive (e.g., the case of Tyrone). In the next section of this article, we establish broaching behavior as a multicultural counseling competency.

## Broaching Race as a Multicultural Competence

The Multicultural Counseling Competency Model provides standards for culturally aware and effective practice. Within this model, there are three categories of competencies: (a) the counselor's awareness of her or his own assumptions, values, and biases; (b) understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients; and (c) development of appropriate interventions for use with these clients. Within each of these categories, individual competencies were divided into three areas: awareness, knowledge, and skills. Arredondo et al. (1996) operationalized this list of 31 competencies with 119 explanatory statements. Although the list was further expanded to 34 competencies in 1998, the 31 competencies model has received the most research attention and the endorsement of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and two divisions (17 & 45) of the American Psychological Association (Arredondo et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; D. W. Sue, Bernier, et al., 1982; D. W. Sue, Carter, et al., 1998). There is growing support for the view that the competencies provide guidelines for best practice (Arredondo, 1998; Corey, 1996; Vinson & Neimeyer, 2003). Specifically, Multicultural Counseling Competence III.C.7 appears to support the need for counselors to take responsibility for acknowledging cultural factors present in the counseling relationship (D. W. Sue et al., 1992), which we conceptualized as the broaching process. We underscore the fact that broaching represents a necessary yet far from sufficient condition for demonstrating cultural competence. However, we propose broaching as a tool that may be used to comply with multicultural counseling competencies. In the section that follows, we enumerate a continuum of broaching styles that unfold from less to more complex, adequate, and differentiated counseling behaviors.

## Continuum of Broaching Styles

In this section we present a conceptual framework for differentiating among five broaching styles: (a) *avoidant*, (b) *isolating*, (c) *continuing/incongruent*, (d) *integrated/congruent*, and (e) *infusing*. The discussion of each broaching style is accompanied by a description of the particular broaching behavior, representative counselor attitudes toward broaching, the counselor's interpretation of her or his own broaching proficiency, and an application of broaching to a hypothetical vignette.

Maria Rodriguez is a first generation Latina college student who has sought services from the college counseling center because of difficulties getting acclimated to her freshman year. Maria is from a major metropolitan city and has received a prestigious scholarship to attend a small liberal arts institution several hours from her home. Maria has experienced difficulty with motivation, feels out of place in her new college environment, and recognizes that her grades are slipping rapidly. Concerned that her academic performance may jeopardize her ability to maintain her scholarship, Maria schedules an appointment in the college counseling center.

Counselors demonstrating avoidant behaviors maintain a race-neutral perspective, arguing that issues related to race and representation warrant little attention. They tend to minimize racial differences, contending instead that people are united by their humanity and that racial oppression should not exist. Although there is considerable evidence to support this premise, the reality remains that VREG differences contribute significantly to racial oppression (Helms, 1990). Arguing about the impropriety of racism does little to eradicate such a pernicious system of oppression.

In addition to maintaining a posture that ignores or minimizes race, avoidant counselors can exhibit a posture of naïveté that results from lack of awareness, or the avoidant counselor may exude an air of resistance and defensiveness when expected to consider clients of color in a cultural context. These particular dispositions may be the result, at least in part, of inappropriate training and preparation as well as unexamined attitudes, biases, and assumptions. Greiger and Ponterotto (1995) suggested that many counselors lack sufficient preparation to assess and intervene with culturally diverse clients. Without appropriate preparatory experiences, counselors may not gain insight into the importance of exploring issues related to race, which may be reflected ultimately in missed opportunities to help clients such as Maria recognize the relationship between her personal experiences and certain sociopolitical issues that govern her life.

Avoidant counselors might regard Maria's difficulties as part of a constellation of universal behaviors that apply broadly to college freshmen who may need assistance with organizational skills, stress management, and interpersonal development. Although Maria may experience each of these issues, it is likely that her difficulties relate equally to issues of acculturative stress and social alienation that have resulted in her sense of disconnection in her new environment. During the counseling process, minority group members need opportunities to explore their experiences without feeling that they are being judged or devalued. Avoidant counselors may fail to realize that failure to broach cultural factors can prevent clients such as Maria from profiting fully from the counseling process. Sadly, many avoidant counselors may even regard their inattention to race as completely appropriate.

Unlike the avoidant counselor who makes no attempt to broach cultural factors during the counseling process, the isolating counselor does broach issues of race and representation, albeit in a simplistic and superficial manner. Among



these counselors, broaching behaviors operate merely as a single statement or question that counselors feel an obligation to address at least once during the counseling process. After the initial broaching effort, the counselor may assume that she or he can remove this activity from a prescribed list of counseling responsibilities. In this sense, broaching operates as a particular technique or event that remains disconnected from other aspects of the client's sociopolitical experience.

When working with Maria, the isolating counselor may acknowledge cultural differences between the counselor and the client on a single occasion but may never consider seriously how cultural factors affect Maria's well-being. The isolating counselor may not have an adequate perspective about how race, ethnicity, and culture shape the client's presenting problems. Such a posture may result in large measure from insufficient training and preparation, lack of counseling efficacy, and concern about how clients may perceive the counselor's broaching behavior. That is, the counselor may fear reprisals from the client, harbor concerns about offending the client for acknowledging cultural factors, or support the premise that race represents a taboo subject that remains off-limits as a topic of counseling concern. Isolating counselors are likely to regard their broaching style as effective, regardless of its effect on the client because, at the very least, the counselor posed a single broaching question. We believe that many beginning counselors may exhibit this type of broaching behavior.

Continuing/incongruent broachers will invite clients to explore the relationship between their presenting problems and issues related to race and representation. These counselors may ask about race several times. Unlike the isolating counselor, the continuing/incongruent counselor does not lack efficacy or maintain a preoccupation about the client's reaction to the counselor's broaching behavior. In fact, continuing/incongruent counselors are anxious to consider cultural factors that influence the client's concerns but may have a very limited skill set within which to fully explore issues of race and representation in a manner that empowers the client.

The continuing/incongruent counselor may exhibit the elements of effective broaching behavior. For instance, these counselors may display ethnic magazines and artwork in their offices, provide organizational literature that appears diverse, and demonstrate a healthy appreciation of the client's worldview; however, these counselors experience difficulty translating their appreciation of cultural difference into effective counseling strategies and interventions. That is, they may only be able to examine the cultural features of clients' lives in a stereotypic fashion by making assumptions about the client on the basis of the values and preferences of an entire racial or cultural group. To these counselors, broaching represents merely a skill.

In Maria's case the counselor expressed acceptance of her racial heritage and recognized that Latinos/Latinas encountered certain difficulties at this institution. Nonetheless, the counselor may not have created an environment of openness toward Maria's cultural experience and ethnic heritage, resulting from the lack of an in-depth understanding of some very critical is-

ues. For instance, the counselor attributed Maria's difficulties to poor study skills and difficulties transitioning into college. Not once did the therapist acknowledge that the transition to college may have been exacerbated by issues related to acculturative stress or concerns: as a first-generation college student, Maria's educational aspirations might distance her physically, emotionally, and psychologically from her family. In reality, numerous factors combined to influence Maria's transition into college. A culturally proficient counselor would need to understand Maria both as an individual and in a cultural context (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2003). From an individual perspective, the counselor would need to understand Maria's unique personal experience; from a cultural context, however, the counselor must also understand some systemic issues that may contribute to Maria's experience. For example, the college lacked an infrastructure that addressed diversity issues, enrolled and hired few minority students and faculty, implemented limited strategies for the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse faculty, maintained an inhospitable campus climate for students and faculty from minority groups, instituted minimal programming initiatives to promote diversity, and provided an inadequate number of curricular offerings. All of these factors combined to have an impact on Maria's experience. The counselor's lack of awareness limited her ability to help Maria process and make sense of her experience. Moreover, the counselor was not in a position to normalize Maria's experience so that Maria did not blame herself for structural shortcomings within the university, nor did the counselor help Maria identify culturally appropriate coping mechanisms.

The counselor professed her ability to understand Maria's plight, yet Maria detected some flagrant contradictions between the counselor's alleged orientation and her observation of the counselor's behavior. Although the counselor appeared duly supportive of Maria, she mistakenly assumed that Maria was not a U.S. citizen and referred to Maria as a Mexican immigrant; in reality, Maria is Puerto Rican and a U.S. citizen by virtue of the fact that Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. This example illustrates the fact that counselors operating from a continuing/incongruent orientation may consider themselves culturally proficient, despite social and cultural blunders and an inability to make connections between the client's presenting problem and certain sociopolitical realities.

Integrated/congruent counselors not only broach the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture effectively during the counseling process, but they have integrated this behavior into their professional identity. For them, broaching is not just a technique but represents a routine practice of considering how race shapes the client's personal and sociopolitical experience. These counselors accept and encourage their clients to make culture-specific interpretations of their counseling concerns. Moreover, they do not apply their understanding of culture in a stereotypic fashion that suggests that people of color represent a monolithic entity. Unlike counselors operating at lower levels along the broaching continuum, integrated/congruent counselors can distinguish among and between culture-specific behaviors and unhealthy human functioning, recognize complexities associated with

race, and acknowledge the vast heterogeneity that characterizes culturally diverse clients.

When working with Maria, for example, integrated/congruent counselors accommodate and accept multiple aspects of her identity structure. They recognize her needs as a student, a minority group member, a woman, and as an individual immersed in an unhealthy campus climate. Integrated/congruent broachers recognize that sociopolitical issues, cultural values, and experiences with oppression—both historical and contemporary—are inextricably bound to Maria's presenting problem. Moreover, integrated/congruent counselors would make sure that Maria does not blame herself by internalizing her experiences. These counselors would help Maria understand that her problems were connected to a larger constellation of systemic issues.

Integrated/congruent and infusing counselors have a somewhat similar profile. The primary difference between these two broaching styles is that for infusing broachers, broaching represents a way of being and is not just incorporated into the counseling process as a professional obligation. Essentially, broaching operates as a lifestyle orientation that requires complex comprehension of sociopolitical issues and a commitment toward helping clients understand and reconcile the ramifications of race and representation. These counselors also have an enduring commitment to social justice and equality that transcends the bounds of their professional identity. We proffer that infusing counselors can function as change agents. In Maria's case, a type of systemic change might involve petitioning the university to consider how the institutional climate affects issues related to recruitment and retention for minority group members. Another form of systemic change might involve the counselor working conjointly with the counseling center to expand its programmatic initiatives to include a support group for Latinas or women of color. Infusing broachers are personally and politically committed to the eradication of all forms of oppression that permeate their personal and professional lives. In the next section of this article, we examine parallels between broaching behavior and racial identity functioning.

## Broaching and Racial Identity Functioning of Counselors

Racial identity functioning pertains to the degree and quality of identification that individuals maintain toward individuals with whom they share a common racial designation (Helms, 1990). More specifically, racial identity models delineate one's sense of affiliation or disassociation with others who share the same racial heritage. Racial identity theories consider the vast heterogeneity of individuals. That is, although people may share a common racial designation, they may have very distinct perceptions and attitudes about people of their own or others' race. In short, racial identity models help avoid the tendency to view people as monolithic entities.

Racial identity functioning unfolds along a continuum from a minimal awareness of diversity to an increasingly integrated understanding and appreciation of the similarities and differ-

ences between oneself and others (Helms, 1990). Helms devised the White Racial Identity Development (WRID) Model in an effort to describe the transformations that occur among Whites as they transition from having negative and stereotyped attitudes about people of color to the adoption of a nonracist identity.

We propose that the unfolding of broaching behaviors parallels the counselor's level of racial identity functioning (see Table 1). The proposed continuum of broaching behaviors appears in alignment with Helms's (1990) WRID. Given (a) the prevalence of White European American counselors presently in the field and (b) the research demonstrating that White European American counselors feel less comfortable addressing issues of race and appear to do so less frequently than counselors of color (Knox et al., 2003), attention to Helms's WRID appears justified.

We surmise that White European American counselors with a preponderance of avoidant broaching behaviors are likely to operate in Helms's (1990) contact status. White persons operating within this status generally remain oblivious to issues of racism and often adopt a color-blind perspective, vacillating between two extremes: uncritical acceptance of White racism or blatant disregard of racial differences. Endorsing the attitude that race is unimportant provides counselors with justification for not broaching issues of race and representation during the counseling process.

During the disintegration status, individuals experience some conflict, which results from contradictions in their beliefs. For instance, counselors may regard themselves as nonracist, yet harbor negative attitudes and assumptions about people of color. The dissonance in these viewpoints leads to feelings of shame and guilt. In an effort to resolve this dilemma, individuals may avoid contact with people of color, avoid thinking about issues of race, or maintain that they are not culpable for their attitudes. Counselors who are in the disintegration status may vacillate between avoidant and isolating styles, which is consistent with a sense of cognitive dissonance that results from new conflicts that emerge about race.

During the reintegration status, counselors resolve their cognitive dissonance by returning to initial stereotyped attitudes and behaviors. As the counselor regresses, she or he once again idealizes Whiteness and shows indifference and contempt toward people of color. Such individuals may also vacillate between avoidant and isolating broaching behaviors because of internalized conflicts about race.

During the pseudo-independence status, counselors continue to work toward adopting a nonracist identity. The counselor may have difficulty accepting racism and may even begin to identify with people of color. Often, people in this status make a conscious effort to interact with people from different racial and cultural groups. Ironically, while attempting to help people of color, White people in this stage may inadvertently impose dominant values and viewpoints on minority group members. Consequently, understanding during the pseudo-independence status occurs more at an intellectual level.

The counselor who is in the pseudo-independence status may operate from the continuing/incongruent broaching orientation in that she or he may broach, albeit in a very mechanical manner. It is disturbing that these counselors may describe themselves as culturally competent, yet individuals from culturally diverse groups may disagree with this interpretation of the counselor's



**TABLE 1**  
**Broaching and Racial Identity Development**

Racial Identity Status	Description of Racial Identity Functioning	Attitude Toward Broaching
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oblivious to own racial identity</li> <li>Uncritical acceptance of racism or color-blind perspective about race</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoiding broaching style</li> <li>Refusal to broach</li> <li>Broaching regarded as unnecessary</li> <li>Adopts a posture of naïveté, resistance, and defensiveness when asked to broach</li> <li>Refuses to consider contextual dimensions of race, ethnicity, and culture</li> </ul>
Disintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First acknowledgment of White identity</li> <li>Conflict that results from contradictions in their belief system; current beliefs as compared with racial realities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacillates between avoiding and isolating broaching style</li> <li>Isolating broacher broaches only once</li> <li>Does not recognize relationship between cultural factors and culturally appropriate counseling interventions</li> <li>Recognizes the need for broaching but may avoid broaching because of discomfort, lack of skill, concern about negative reactions from client</li> </ul>
Reintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Idealizes Whites; denigrates people of color</li> <li>Assumes original stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacillates between avoiding and isolating broaching style</li> <li>Isolating broacher broaches only once</li> <li>Does not recognize relationship between cultural factors and culturally appropriate counseling interventions</li> <li>Recognizes the need for broaching but may avoid broaching because of discomfort, lack of skill, concern about negative reactions from client</li> </ul>
Pseudo-Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intellectualized acceptance of own and others' race</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing/incongruent broaching style</li> <li>May broach the subject of race several times, albeit mechanically</li> <li>Cannot translate recognition of cultural factors into effective counseling strategies and interventions</li> </ul>
Immersion/Emersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Honest appraisal of racism and significance of Whiteness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated/congruent broaching style</li> <li>Conscious understanding of need for broaching</li> <li>Incorporates broaching into counseling efforts as appropriate</li> <li>Accepts risks involved in broaching</li> <li>Identifies culturally appropriate interventions</li> </ul>
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internalizes a multicultural identity with non-racist Whiteness at its core</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infusing broaching style</li> <li>Considers broaching integral to effective counseling efforts with clients</li> <li>Recognizes and acknowledges the impact of race on client's presenting problems</li> <li>Maintains an enduring commitment to social justice and equality that transcends bounds of professional identity</li> </ul>

orientation toward diversity. Continuing/incongruent broachers have a very intellectualized understanding of how race shapes a client's sociopolitical experience. These counselors may also exhibit inconsistencies between their stated convictions and their actual behavior. That is, they may articulate their commitment to culturally competent counseling, yet exhibit behavior that contradicts their professed orientation toward racial difference. The reader will recall that the continuing/incongruent counselor had stereotyped Maria as a Mexican immigrant when she was actually of Puerto Rican descent. Additionally, these counselors may recognize the need to broach but may lack the depth of understanding necessary to execute this skill with integrity.

Counselors operating within the immersion/emersion status begin to ask what it means to be White. They want to understand the meaning of racism and how they have profited from White privilege (McIntosh, 1989). In this status, people move from trying to change people of color to the development of an effective understanding of racial politics. During this status, many White persons engage in an honest appraisal of Whiteness.

These counselors recognize the contextual dimensions of race and its impact on the client's experience and would likely exhibit integrated/congruent broaching styles. Counselors who display advanced levels of broaching and who have heightened levels of racial identity functioning are likely to promote trusting and open relationships with their clients and foster an appreciation of diverse perspectives and sociopolitical realities.

Finally, during the autonomy status, counselors reduce their feelings of guilt and begin to accept both their individual and collective roles in the perpetuation of racism. They value diversity and are no longer fearful or intimidated by issues of race and representation. People in this status internalize a multicultural identity with nonracist Whiteness as its core. These counselors exhibit infusing broaching styles wherein they have an integrated understanding of the client's sociopolitical experience and can identify culturally appropriate counseling interventions as well as operate as agents of change. We expect that future research will confirm a relationship between a counselor's willingness to broach race and her or his levels of racial identity functioning.

Levels of broaching and counselor racial identity development are likely to have an impact on the counselor–client relationship. Counselors who display advanced levels of broaching and possess heightened levels of racial identity functioning are likely to promote trusting and open relationships with their clients that accommodate a range of social and cultural experiences. On the other hand, counselors with low levels of broaching behavior and racial identity functioning have the potential to foster threatening and apprehensive relationships and, perhaps, refuse to acknowledge the significance of race in a client's life. It is important for the counselor to be prepared to reconcile her or his own issues and reactions, especially because issues of race and ethnicity may evoke strong reactions in both the client and the counselor. Thus, the counselor must be fully prepared to examine all personal reactions and simultaneously manage the client's reactions. Inasmuch as a counselor may possess a particular orientation toward broaching issues of race and representation, the client may also exhibit a particular disposition when a counselor uses broaching behavior. The final section of this article explores possible client reactions to the counselor's efforts to broach racial and cultural issues during the counseling process.

## Client Reactions to Broaching

We contend that it is important to consider variations in client reactions to the counselor's broaching behavior. We hypothesize that clients may react to broaching invitations in a manner that is consistent with their own racial identity functioning. Client reactions to the counselor's broaching behavior can serve as a diagnostic tool that provides implications for subsequent counseling efforts. Clients with low levels of racial identity functioning are likely to reject the counselor's invitation to broach because they may possess low salience attitudes about race. For instance, they may have other identities that assume more significance in their lives such as their religious affiliation or occupational status (Vandiver, 2001). Counselors who encounter these clients may want to accept and explore the client's reaction to issues of race and representation. In addition, counselors may choose to recognize that, at some point, it may be helpful to prepare the client to deal effectively with racist encounters; otherwise, clients may be apt to blame themselves or make excuses about systems of dominance when confronted with certain circumstances.

Clients who have a strong sense of connectedness and affiliation with their own race may react with more volatile emotions, such as anger and hostility. Counselors who encounter such clients should not personalize their clients' reactions because such responses likely represent antipathy against a system of oppression and not negativity toward the counselor per se. When confronted with these clients, counselors may want to help the client identify experiences and circumstances that contributed to their strong reactions (Vandiver, 2001). Moreover, counselors may want to determine psychoeducational interventions that help clients manage their strong emotions outside the counseling setting (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). Clients who have a healthy sense of their racial identity functioning are likely to appreciate a counselor's willingness to explore how race shapes their presenting problems.

Consistent with Helms and Cook's (1999) interaction model, cultural conflict and mistrust will likely result when counselors who operate at low levels of racial identity functioning counsel clients who operate at higher levels of racial identity functioning. Such a mismatch can contribute to client dissatisfaction and premature termination from the counseling relationship. On the other hand, when both the client and the counselor operate at low levels of racial identity functioning, the content and outcome of the counseling sessions may remain superficial and prohibit the client from maximizing psychological growth. Ideally, counselors should exhibit more advanced levels of racial identity functioning to facilitate positive behavior change, more effective problem solving, and client empowerment.

## Summary and Implications

Given the empirical support demonstrating that an ability to consider the relatedness of race to a client's presenting problems can enhance counseling outcomes (Gim et al., 1991; Knox et al., 2003; D. Sue & Sundberg, 1996) and the support in the professional literature for broaching behavior as a multicultural counseling competence (D. W. Sue et al., 1992), we hope that the conceptual framework we have articulated in this article provides an impetus for counselors to broach the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture in a substantive and meaningful manner. In addition, we enumerated a continuum of broaching styles and demonstrated parallels between the progression of broaching behavior and the unfolding of racial identity attitudes.

Subsequent scholarship could continue in a number of obvious directions. First, researchers may want to operationalize the continuum of broaching behaviors in an effort to provide empirical support for each of the styles enumerated herein. Second, researchers may examine the relationship between broaching behavior, multicultural counseling competence, and racial identity functioning. Third, researchers may want to investigate the extent to which counselor educators prepare counselor trainees to engage in broaching behaviors. Specifically, which particular didactic, clinical, and supervisory preparation activities help trainees improve upon their ability to broach the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process. Fourth, researchers may consider whether broaching behavior changes based on one's particular counseling discipline. For instance, do school and mental health counselors have similar broaching styles? Finally, what are clients' perceptions and reactions to the broaching process? These and other questions remain unanswered at this time. We expect that further research, theory, and practice will support the importance of broaching as a multicultural counseling tool.

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