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An Exploratory Descriptive Study of Factors Influencing Students to Seek or Not to Seek
Personal Counselling on a College of Applied Arts and Technology Campus Located in
Southern Ontario

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Abstract

This descriptive-exploratory study examined factors which were perceived by students at a College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) campus as influencing them in choosing to come or not to come for personal counselling and why they would or would not return. A total of 250 students selected through a sample of convenience were surveyed. A questionnaire survey was conducted with quantitative data collected using a 4-point, forced-choice Likert scale and yes/no questions and qualitative data collected using open-ended questions and invited comments. The responses were analyzed using means and modes for the Likert responses and percentages for the yes/no and check-off questions. The narrative responses were subjected to content analysis to identify themes. The mean score findings on factors influencing students to come for personal counselling were at or close to the mid- point of 2.5. Personal distress was the only variable found to have a negative response, meaning students would not come to counselling if they were in personal distress. On factors that would keep them from choosing to come to counselling, students seemed to trust counsellors and feel accepted by them and rejected the notion that peer pressure or the first session being unhelpful would keep them away from counselling. The counsellor's relationship with the student is the major determinant for repeat sessions. When asked what factors would influence students to not return for personal counselling, students rejected the variables of peer pressure, the extra time needed for counselling, and not getting what they wanted in a session, but, in one instance, indicated that variables regarding the counselling relationship would keep them from returning.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

This study focused on factors influencing the decision of College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) students considering coming for personal counselling at the campus counselling centre. I wanted to learn why students come for personal counselling, why they might return, and why they might stay away. I have counselled college students for over 7 years and have noticed that students seem reluctant to come for continuing personal counselling. In my experience many students come only once, even if their issues are very serious and are affecting their school work negatively and often their home lives as well, and despite their ongoing personal distress. Students may have multiple problems, such as medical, financial, relationship-based, and social adaptation issues, as well as academic and psychological issues. And yet my experience and my personal records (1997-2002) indicate that almost 90% of students who come for counselling come only once. If they return, it is usually only for one additional session. Furthermore, of the 10% who say they wish to return and make an appointment to do so, approximately half do not show up for the session; some of them do not even cancel their appointments.

Maturity in terms of career, educational, and life-style plans may be a main factor in their coming for assistance in the first place and in returning for counselling (D.J. Tinsley, Hinson, Schwendener Holt, & Tinsley, 1990). In my experience, approximately 5% of those who come for three or more sessions appear to be generally more mature psychologically than the other 95%. Those who are mature are frequently good candidates for counselling: They often have an interest in better understanding themselves and their needs; they are able to recognize that they have a problem that is

incapacitating them, and they are willing to do concentrated work on the problem to improve their lives. Most of my clients have been women, as are most of the 5% mature students. Another factor is the students' readiness for counselling. Gough and Heilbrun (1980) found that students who scored low on the Adjective Check List with respect to responsibility, sensitivity to social appearance, psychological mindedness, and social insight were insecure, anxious, and pessimistic about their abilities to solve problems and hence are less ready to come for counselling. My experience is that those who are secure and optimistic have an ability to reflect and to take responsibility for their actions or they are willing to learn how to do so. They realize that there are consequences of their actions and inactions. This last point is part of the reason they are seeking counselling—because they can see that by doing nothing to address their circumstances, their situation will either not improve or will get worse.

This study sought to determine whether or not my perceptions were accurate. A more important reason for studying these phenomena was that I would like to improve the personal counselling effectiveness of the counselling centre in my college. Students are not well served by coming only once when they have serious counselling issues. I feel our department has a responsibility to find out why students are “dropping out” of counselling when it would seem like they need to continue for at least 5 to 10 sessions to realize even a marginal change in their lives. Hence this study sought to learn what are the factors influencing the decisions of students to come for counselling or not, and as important, why they terminate personal counselling prematurely.

Statement of the Problem Situation

My experience and records indicate that students who come for counselling for personal issues often come only once. It does not seem to matter if their issue is simple or complex. It may be a personal conflict or it may be contemplated suicide. Frequently students come only once to discuss these matters. As well, students seem reluctant to discuss personal matters with counsellors. They commonly seem more willing to discuss openly their study skills and career development than their personal problems. I can only assume that many students do not ever access counselling even if they would benefit from doing so.

Personal counselling is just one area of service in most college counselling offices. Usually the offices also address study skills and career counselling. Personal counselling is of particular importance to me because, occasionally, I have had students return for several visits and there has been much progress. I would like to know why some students choose to return and others do not avail themselves of counselling of a personal nature, and one might even say some students avoid it. Another reason I'm interested in personal counselling is that I have training as a psychotherapist (Diploma) and am at ease with the issues that arise in personal counselling; I have skills I wish to offer the students, as do my colleagues. My perception is that some students have serious troubles but do not want to discuss them with a college counsellor.

The context for the study was one of three main campuses of a College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) in a large urban centre in southern Ontario. The campus where the survey was conducted (campus one) had approximately 2,500 students (in each

case numbers include international students) enrolled in college and university upgrading and transportation apprenticeship programs of 1 and 2 years in duration. At campus one, there was one counsellor. Campus two was slightly larger than campus one with a student population of 2,800 and had mostly applied arts students in programs such as nursing, corrections, and social service work in 2- and 3- year programs. There were two counsellors at this campus. With a population of 6,000 students, campus three was much larger in population than the other two campuses. It housed business and engineering technology programs of 2 and 3 years in duration. Campus three had three counsellors.

The responsibility of the counselling centres on each campus was to assist students with personal, career, and study skills issues. Referral was open to the students (self-referral) or to faculty and to staff. There was no fee for the counselling service. The counsellors generally had master's level training in counselling or social work. Because of the nature of their programs (largely transportation), campus one is predominantly male, campus two (applied arts) is mostly female, and campus three (business and engineering) is fairly evenly mixed, male and female. Entrance requirements varied depending on the programs, but the basic entry requirement was either a grade 12 diploma or as mature students at the age of 19. The students were culturally diverse across all three campuses. The influence of certain cultures on students may actually be part of the reason that students seem to avoid coming for personal counselling (Bernstein & Nash, 2002; Corey, 1996; Feldman, 2000). The literature points out that some cultures, such as the Chinese, emphasize avoiding talking about a personal problem that is upsetting, and some Asian and Hispanic cultures focus on solving problems within a family context and not by outside professionals (Corey, p. 28; Feldman, pp. 498-99).

Some cultures see having a psychological problem as a sign of weakness, and hence there is often a delay in seeking help (Bernstein & Nash, p. 414). These influences of certain cultures may make the trust relationship between a prospective client and counsellor less effective than it could be (Bernstein & Nash, p. 471), thereby causing a barrier to coming for counselling or to returning after coming once. My experience with a number of my clients is indeed that they report that their cultures frown on coming for counselling. Occasionally this is because of a male-controlled home life. In one case, the husband of a client came to speak to me to ask that I divulge what his wife was talking about. In other cases, husbands accompany their wives to the sessions and are agitated when they are asked to leave. My experience is also that some cultures believe that anyone seeking counselling is psychologically damaged to the point of having to be avoided.

Based on my experience, another possible contributing factor that diminishes the use of counselling services may be the lower than average socioeconomic levels among the student population as compared to other colleges in the same urban area. This is related partly to the geographic area in which the college is located and from which it draws the majority of its students. A large proportion of its student population is of working class families and new immigrants, particularly from lesser developed countries. The college states that its identity is in part fashioned by that lower socioeconomic profile, thereby making it distinct in the city. However, lower socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and the students' families usually mean lower educational backgrounds as well. Lower educational backgrounds may contribute to what I believe is a fundamental lack of understanding about what counselling is. My experience tells me it is possible there may even be a bias against asking for help "from a professional" since

the professional is likely from a socioeconomic group other than that of the client and may therefore hold and possibly advocate values different from those of the client and the client's community.

My literature review indicated that factors influencing the decision to go for personal counselling on campus have been much studied in the U. S., focusing on criteria such as: cultural mistrust and opinions about mental illness (Nickerson, Helms & Terrel, 1994), race of counsellor and client sex (Terrell & Terrell, 1984), and counsellor content orientation (Thompson, Worthington & Atkinson, 1994). Counsellor content orientation, according to Thompson et al., is either cultural or universal. A cultural content orientation means that counsellors make explicit reference to culture in their communication with the student. A universal orientation avoids explicit reference to culture in the communication unless it is a subject in the counselling session (Thompson et al.). Client expectations and preferences (H.E.A.Tinsley & Benton, 1978; H.E.A.Tinsley & Harris, 1976), level of psychosocial development and counselling readiness (D.J.Tinsley et al., 1990), mistrust between black clients and white counsellors (Watkins & Terrell, 1988), and trust and self-disclosure among black students (Williams, 1974) are other criteria identified in this literature. However, I have found little in the literature of a corresponding body of research in Canada. Furthermore, any literature on counselling in the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology which I have found to date does not address the issue at all. There appears to be a gap in the literature on this topic. If we do not know what the factors are that affect students' decisions to go for personal counselling, then we can not actively address what seems to be underuse of the counselling services available. The services may not be addressing the factors which would increase the likelihood of students

coming for counselling and making continued use thereof. As well, it is possible counsellors are not presenting themselves in a manner which is conducive to college students' needs when it comes to personal counselling. Or there may be something in the process of counselling which inhibits students seeking out more counselling.

At the departmental level in the college studied, there was a lack of interest in personal counselling. There were no case conferences, and rarely was a personal counselling issue raised at our meetings. There was an emphasis on brief counselling, interpreted as single-session counselling, and an implied preference that the counsellors not see students on an ongoing basis but rather refer these students to community agencies. In my view, the department emphasis was on numbers seen, not the quality of the interactions. Reports emphasize total numbers seen, not the depth with which the clients were counselled or the impact on the students' lives. The reason for the brief counselling approach was that it was a perceived solution to limited counsellor resources and time. Using this approach, more students could be seen, though only once. The assumption was that seeing larger numbers of students was better service than seeing fewer numbers of students but for longer periods of time if needed. Sending students out to community agencies took pressure off the department to handle students with ongoing problems. Another justification was that community agencies may have more expert counsellors in specialized fields. However, in my experience, students are reluctant to attend off-campus agencies for a number of reasons including extra time spent in transit and waiting lists and, not least, the costs involved. In some ways, when a counsellor sees clients for more than one session there can be a perception that that counsellor is not contributing to the departmental goal of increased numbers of clients seen. Additionally,

it should be noted that I was the only counsellor trained in long-term treatment of personal issues, which may have been part of the reason for the lack of interest in longer term counselling. Most of the energy of the department was focused on client satisfaction policies and data collection, which were used to justify the importance of the department to the college community.

Another factor which I believe helps contextualize the problem is that this particular college, along with many if not most of the other colleges, emphasizes, in its advertising and also its curriculum, what are called technical vocational skills, such as computing, accounting, or mechanics. The college is primarily “career” oriented, as opposed to “educationally” oriented. The college’s advertising focuses on job attainment. What is emphasized in its mission statement is “Our job is to educate for career success.” What goes unnoticed and is almost never alluded to is “personal growth” which is the second point in the mission statement. So there is, in my opinion, a narrow focus on jobs and careers, with much less emphasis on personal development. However, that does not mean that overlooking personal development is best for the students or for the society in the long run. If the college does not pay attention to the personal needs of its students at the curriculum level, then it seems to follow that students will be reluctant to spend time on the personal growth area. The students may feel that it does not seem necessary in terms of graduation or job attainment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about some of the factors which influence students in this college in choosing whether or not to come for and continue with personal counselling. With this knowledge, we may be able to enhance access to

counselling and thereby help more students achieve a more fulfilling personal and academic life. Factors affecting why students choose to come or not come for personal counselling and continue to come was researched so that a deeper understanding could be gained into these phenomena, thereby helping counsellors to help students at a deeper, more comprehensive level, that is, obtain a richer form of personal development, and to remove barriers to continued counselling.

Questions to Be Answered

The following research questions were addressed as perceived by students surveyed:

1. What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?
2. What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?
3. What factors influence students in choosing to return for personal counselling?
4. What factors influence students in choosing not to return for personal counselling?

Rationale for the Study

This problem needed to be investigated because students with personal problems are at risk of losing out on their education if their personal issues are not addressed. From my experience, I believe that students with significant personal problems who do not ask for and receive counselling are affected negatively in some of the following ways: (a) they fail courses, which costs them time and money; (b) they switch into easier programs but usually do not do any better there; (c) they drop out of the program; (d) if they graduate, they are less prepared for their careers and jobs than they could be otherwise;

and (e) they end up taking less satisfying, less challenging, and less rewarding jobs than they could take. My experience tells me that students who asked for and received personal counselling while experiencing these problems were more likely to attain their goals, academically and socioeconomically.

Another rationale for this study was that I feel that the personal development aspect of this college's mission statement is important, and when attention is not given to personal counselling, then, indirectly, that aspect of the mission is being ignored and the students are not being served as well as they could be. Personal counselling can lead to an enhanced relationship, with oneself and those around oneself: families, colleagues, and friends. Since the college says that it is concerned about serving its students, there is a need to know why students are not taking full advantage of an important service that is available to them. Also, the counselling service has a responsibility to provide counselling as effectively as possible. With increased understanding of the expectations of personal counselling, our delivery of service to students can be enhanced.

A further rationale for the study was that by not attending to students' needs for more than one brief counselling session, the department may inadvertently be harming the college's goal of attracting as much provincial funding as possible. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include the students' perceptions of the college's services, including counselling. If students rate the service low because they have not had a personal issue fully dealt with in counselling, then the college risks losing a percentage of its funding because of a lower score.

My counsellor colleagues and I have a need to know how to better serve our clients. Learning about the factors affecting personal counselling will help the counsellors

to better serve their clients. Faculty want to know why the referrals they make for personal counselling are not followed up on by the student or why the student drops out after one or two visits.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Personality According to Carl Rogers (Sharf, 1996)

In Rogers's framework, an important part of psychological development is self-awareness. As children grow, they become more self-aware. As this self-awareness increases, the need for positive self-regard also increases. They need love from others and to be emotionally and physically touched and valued and cared for. They develop either a positive or negative sense of worth depending on whether they are given unconditional positive regard or conditional positive regard. Throughout life, people experience conditions in which their sense of worth is influenced by the beliefs and values of others. If others give them positive sense of worth, then their development proceeds favourably. If it is negative (i.e., if there is conditional regard), then development is compromised. To balance out conditions of worth, another person must offer them unconditional positive regard so that their self-regard can be enhanced.

In terms of therapist-client relationships, Rogers emphasizes congruence, the process of the therapist accurately experiencing and being aware of the communication of another person. Relationships improve when the person being listened to feels understood, empathically listened to, and not judged. For relationships to improve, there has to be a sense of congruence, (i.e., the client needs to feel that the therapist is in tune with the client's communication and experience). Human development is a positive movement or growth. To become fully functioning, individuals need positive self-regard

for themselves and to feel it from others. Once this need is met, the individual can reach his full potential psychologically in terms of openness, creativity, and responsibility.

How Does Rogers's Theory Apply to My Topic?

Those clients who are self-aware and consciously aware of their need for positive self-regard will be more likely to seek personal counselling as a possible solution to their distress because they are aware that their sense of worth benefits from the unconditional positive regard they are likely to get from a counsellor. For example, they might face a period of academic weakness, but because they are self-aware they would likely recognize their shortcoming earlier rather than later. As well, since they would likely be used to feeling a positive self-regard, they would likely seek help through counselling because academic weakness would be challenging their positive self-regard. On the other hand, if clients are lacking in self-awareness, then their academic weakness may take a while to register. As well, if they have a negative self-regard, then they are not likely to want to share it with a counsellor. Their self-concept and self-worth would be weakened if they were to admit to others that they were having troubles they could not handle themselves. So even though they need help more than anyone, they are less likely to ask for it than are those with a positive self-regard. Therefore, some sense of self-awareness and a need for positive self-regard/self-worth is likely necessary before clients would seek out personal counselling.

The students' sense of worth is dependent in part on how others see and interact with them. Unfortunately, if their experience is negative (i.e., if their only experience of interacting with others is based on conditional sense of worth), then it is not likely clients will seek counselling. This is a doubly negative situation, as students need to experience

some unconditional positive regard simply to be able to ask for more of it. If they do not get the unconditional positive regard as they are growing, their development will be compromised. For example, if they are feeling personal stress, then it is likely that their positive self-regard/self-worth is threatened because it has been based on conditional returns. They may believe that to be in personal stress is a sign of failure so they would not receive the positive regard from others. Consequently, they would not seek out counselling since, once again, they would have to admit to a problem in their life. They would likely anticipate that a counsellor would also treat them with conditional positive regard and therefore likely criticize them for their failure in personal stress terms. On the other hand, someone with a personal stress who has an experience of unconditional positive regard would likely seek out a counsellor because their self-concept would be threatened as a result of the stress but they would know that by reaching out they could get unconditional positive regard to help them deal with their distress.

Applied to personal counselling, this means that a counsellor has to attempt to be congruent with the clients, understand what they feel and what they are saying. If this is achieved, then the positive self-regard of the clients will be enhanced and the relationships will progress. This means that there is a greater likelihood that clients will continue to come to counselling on an ongoing basis if the counsellor is able to achieve congruence. If there is a failure on the counsellor's part in achieving congruence, then the client's positive self-regard will not be enhanced, the relationship will falter, and the client will likely discontinue coming for counselling. If clients are able to experience positive self-regard coming from themselves and from others, for example, a counsellor, then they increase their chances of becoming fully functioning people. If, for some

reason, neither the client nor the counsellor is able to give them this positive self-regard, then they will be less open, creative, and responsible (i.e., less fully functioning than they might normally be able to be).

In order to take advantage of counselling, students need to be psychologically open. If they are also creative, and responsible, then their chances of achieving personal and academic success are even greater. They have to believe they can change and that others can help them. This is part of being fully functioning. For example, a financial stress may come along which challenges their sense of worth and their self-concept. If they are open, creative, and responsible, then they are likely to seek counselling help. On the other hand, if they have a personal stress, then a poor self-concept and negative sense of worth will likely result. Under these conditions, they are not likely to see themselves as adaptable, creative, and responsible beings and are consequently less likely to seek out counselling than if they did.

Unless a person is emotionally present, meaning they are aware of how they feel and able to speak about their feelings, and can work at a psychological level, no counselling is possible. Rogers's theory focuses on the relationship that exists once a person has arrived for counselling. He is concerned with what happens in this relationship. That a psychological level of relating is necessary for counselling to take place underscores that anyone that does not possess an ability to relate psychologically will not likely choose to go for counselling. Some courses in college introduce psychological concepts, and this may positively influence students to come for counselling as they begin applying these concepts to their own lives.

Students arrive for counselling feeling a discontinuity all the time. They are self-aware enough to recognize that the gap which they are experiencing needs addressing. By deciding to go for counselling, they are trying to close the gap between their perception of themselves and what they are truly experiencing. They may see themselves as successful at the one level, but recognize that at another level they are not successful. If they are unaware of the lack of congruence, they will likely not seek counselling, as it will not occur to them that a gap between their experience and what they imagine exists. Any sense of dishonesty about who the therapist is in reality will undermine any effectiveness in counselling. Students may or may not be consciously aware of this, but it will still have a negative effect on the counselling, compromising the first interview whereupon the client would be unlikely to return. Also, if the counsellor is unable to accept the clients for who they are and what they bring in terms of issues and attitudes to the appointment, it is unlikely that relationships will form and that counselling will be successful. Furthermore, the client is unlikely to return and also possibly indicate his dissatisfaction to others, who would then be disinclined to attempt counselling.

According to Rogers, for counsellors who are able to maintain an unconditional positive regard with their clients, there is a higher likelihood their clients will return and possibly tell others of the helpful experience, thereby possibly opening the way for others to seek counselling. The client has to feel that the counsellor is willing to experience the client's world without dragging along the counsellor's assumptions and values. If this is successful, chances are that the student will open up to the counsellor. If it is not the case, then the student is likely to remain closed in the first session and will likely not return. The counsellor must not only be empathic and accepting, but be seen by the client in this

light. If the client perceives the counsellor as perceptive and empathic, there is a possibility the client will open up to the counsellor and return for future sessions.

Another factor in counselling is responsibility. Clients who begin experiencing responsibility are more likely to take an active interest in their own therapy and are more likely to continue coming to sessions and to not miss any. Without a sense of responsibility, clients are less likely to continue coming to counselling.

Furthermore, clients who feel cared for are more likely to want to return for sessions. Students regularly experience fear and anxiety. By experiencing the care of the therapist, they are more likely to want to continue coming in order to further explore what the fear and anxiety are about. Without the care of the therapist, they are likely to be subjects of that fear and anxiety without learning from it. By deciding to come for personal counselling, students are often acknowledging that they live with a mask. Counselling gives them an opportunity to see favourable aspects of their lives. Students begin to change as a result of counselling, and sometimes the change is personally threatening, and sometimes it threatens members of the household. Consequently, there is often an increased need for regular contact with a counsellor when the change is dramatic.

Rogers's Theory of Counselling and Psychotherapy (Sharf, 1996)

According to Rogers, the goals for the counselling must come from the client and not the counsellor. Through counselling, clients move from discontinuity toward integration. As they better understand their complexity, they are better able to accept themselves and others. By becoming more self-directed rather than other-directed, they become more realistic in their perceptions and more at ease or less defensive with others.

Rogers lays out six conditions which are “necessary and sufficient” for therapy to take place. First, there must be psychological contact: A relationship must exist where the two are able to have some impact on one another. This openness to being affected by another is the way change is possible for clients. Second, there must be incongruence which is often experienced as distress. A gap must exist between how the client sees them and how they actually are. Coming to grips with the discontinuity becomes the challenge. Third, congruence and genuineness must be present: The counsellor must be genuinely himself/herself; otherwise a loss of trust between client and counsellor will occur. Fourth, there must be unconditional positive regard or acceptance: The therapist must have no conditions of acceptance, but rather accept the client for who he/she is. Acceptance does not imply agreement, but rather a nonjudgmental welcoming of the person in difficulty. Fifth, there must be empathy: The therapist must be able to enter the client’s world without being influenced by the therapist's own understandings of life. Last, there must be a perception of empathy and acceptance: The client must perceive that they are being understood and accepted.

The following are what Rogers feels the clients experience in therapy. They learn they are responsible for themselves, both in the therapeutic relationship and beyond. They experience the therapist’s care, which opens them up to caring for them. They experience the process of exploration, again as a result of feeling the care of the therapist. They can enter into fear and anxiety for the purposes of greater development, which they were unable to do before. They experience the self: They get behind the mask and begin to see that there are positive aspects in their personalities. They explore who they are, not who they should be. Finally, they experience change: They begin to feel favourable progress

even though some aspects of their lives are still confusing. Eventually they may raise the issue of stopping therapy when their sense of positive self-regard is strong enough.

Why Rogers's Counselling Approach is a Good Framework for This Study

In Rogers's approach, counsellors are expected to accept clients as they are, without preconditions. This is important, because students at this college have been reluctant to go to counselling and reluctant to continue to come when they have come once. For some reason, they do not seem to see counselling as something of benefit to them. At the same time, there is a gap in continuity between how students perceive themselves and their actual experience. They see themselves as successful in school and life, but they often are not. Rogers's approach is useful because it points out that there is a gap of continuity in the students' lives which is likely causing their poor academic performance in the present and will likely lead to low career achievement in the future.

Students put on a mask in order to cover over these discontinuities. Beneath the mask are fear and anxiety, strong emotions that they have little knowledge and few skills to deal with. For example, the discontinuities for General Arts and Science (GAS) students come in the form of wanting academic and career success but often not having the skills to achieve it. GAS students are trying to upgrade to get into college and university programs, programs they have not qualified for, often because they have inadequate high school grades to meet the baseline criteria. They often come from marginalized backgrounds, both economically and socially. They are told on the one hand that they can achieve "career success," but often do not know where to begin to get there. They are encouraged to perceive themselves as problem solvers and critical thinkers, but in reality their skills are limited. Many have trouble managing their time and money.

Their social contacts do not often support them when they must choose to put in long hours of study time at the expense of recreational activities. They are often overextended between school, work, family, and social commitments. As a consequence, a gap exists, but how to bridge the gap is not clear. So masks are worn, and the fear and anxiety that the students live with are not addressed. At the same time, the students are reluctant to take steps to look inward at their problems—to look for solutions which revolve around personal responsibility for making changes in their behaviours that will result in greater chances of success through learning new skills. It is easier to ignore the problem.

Rogers's emphasis on incongruence, discontinuity, masks, and self-awareness make this approach a good framework for this study, since it very likely applies directly to what students are experiencing. It not only emphasizes the importance of student responsibility, the willingness of students to face their issues and discontinuities, but it also provides a process whereby the clients can be helped along to become fully functioning people. It recognizes students as vulnerable and reluctant to deal with anxieties and fear; but to address that fear, it provides a counselling approach that is receptive, nonjudgmental, and accepting. It requires a great deal of the counsellor in reaching out to the client because it emphasizes that the only counsellor agenda should be to help the student. By emphasizing concepts such as positive self-regard, unconditional positive regard, and empathy, counsellors take the students' past experience of personality development seriously and can help with reshaping it in a favourable way.

The Connection Between the Research Questions and Rogers's Theory

Rogers believes that clients come to counselling because they feel there is a gap in continuity, a gap which is the difference between how they imagine themselves and what

they know they are actually really like. In terms of research question 1, by asking students what factors influence them to come for personal counselling, I am addressing whether the students are aware of this gap in their lives. The survey questions related to research question 1 specifically ask about personal distress, which Rogers says is an indicator of the gap. As well, other survey questions used for research question 1 address the perception of mental health in order to learn whether students are open to looking for and receiving help. By acknowledging their need for help, the students are admitting they have a gap in their personal lives which needs addressing. Being open to asking for help is one of Rogers's prerequisites for a successful counselling experience.

Research question 2 addresses factors that influence students to not come for personal counselling. Rogers's theory places an emphasis on the responsibility of the counsellor to be empathic, genuine, and congruent. The survey questions that generate data for research question 2 focus on issues such as the perception of the counsellor as trustworthy and accepting. The idea here is that if the students perceive the counsellors as trusting and accepting, then they will likely come for personal counselling. According to Rogers, empathy makes positive self-regard possible. As well, unconditional positive regard (acceptance) is needed for counselling to work. On the other hand, Rogers states that a judgmental and nonaccepting environment will lessen the likelihood that counselling will work. As well, research question 2 also probed the issue of whether students were self-directed or other-directed, meaning whether or not they were looking for feedback and affirmation from others or from within, for example, whether students would go to personal counselling if they were discouraged from doing so by their friends and peers. A self-directed student would go even if discouraged from doing so because

they saw a need to get help and felt a responsibility to themselves to do something about that need, whereas someone other-directed and discouraged by friends from going to counselling would likely not go.

Research question 3 addresses the issue of factors which influence students to return to counselling. Two of Rogers's six conditions for effective therapy to take place are probed in this question—whether the students are aware of a gap or a sense of discontinuity in who they are and how they perceive themselves (survey question 13, more to discuss; survey question 15, having no alternative; and survey question 16, personal stress/depression, more to do) and whether or not the students feel they are being met with congruence, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (survey question 15 having a positive relationship, positive experience; survey question no. 16, feeling understood and comfortable with the counsellor).

Research question 4 addresses factors which influence students to not return to personal counselling having gone at least once. The survey questions are connected to Rogers's constructs in that they address the issue of being either self-directed or other-directed (question 17) and responsibility and motivation (question 18 and 19).

Two Approaches to Counselling and Therapy: Behavioural and Psychoanalytic (Corey, 1996)

There are many approaches to counselling and therapy besides the person-centred approach of Rogers. While I cannot survey all of the different approaches, I can present a sketch of two approaches which might be seen as alternatives to the person-centred approach: the behavioural and psychoanalytic.

The behavioural approach is scientifically oriented, based on the idea that clients can learn new ways of changing maladaptive behaviours. Principles of learning are systematically applied to bring about new behaviours. An emphasis is placed on what behaviour and changes can be observed rather on intangible phenomena such as personal feelings. Doing is more highly prized than simple conversation.

While this approach may be appropriate for certain specific issues that are easily broken down into behavioural components, I feel it may not be as useful for clients who have unfocused problems, which is the case of many college students. The fact that it does not stress the relationship between the counsellor and student is a weakness, because when students are unfocused, they often need a helping relationship to guide them in the right direction. Students are vulnerable when experiencing discontinuity. When they try to cope with the discontinuity by letting down the mask, they need a counselling approach that will accept their feelings for what they are rather than an approach that is trying to systematically quantify their behaviours and which pays less attention to their feelings.

Another aspect of the behavioural model of counselling is that it places an emphasis on clients setting their own goals and self-managing their progress. I have found that for many students this is difficult because they are often disoriented (since they may not know specifically what their goals are). As well, the behavioural approach places an emphasis on client co-operation, client awareness, and the well-defined roles of client and counsellor. I feel this may be beyond the spectrum of what many students are initially capable of in counselling. Any counselling will require co-operation and self-

awareness, but the behavioural model seems to imply that without these being well in hand, little counselling can occur.

Last, in the behavioural model, therapists are directive and function as problem solvers, meaning that the reasons the client comes need to be clearly spelled out and that the procedures for change follow a predictable sequence. This aspect of the approach will likely not work well, because students need time to figure out what their issues are and what they can do about them. Their problems are often not easily defined or broken down into measurable units of behaviour.

Another possible counselling approach is the psychoanalytic model. It emphasizes insight as the root for change. In terms of relationships, it encourages the expression of feelings for the counsellor, but these are understood by the analyst in terms of transference. A transference relationship means that the client is seeing the analyst in terms of another person, for example, his father or mother or some other significant person in his/her life. This approach is abstract. The client has to accept the notion that the feelings being expressed toward the counsellor are actually best understood as having been transferred from someone else to the counsellor sitting in front of them. I feel that for college students this concept may be hard to grasp and harder still to work with, given that they are usually concrete learners and many of their problems may not be related to their previous relationship at all.

Another aspect of the psychoanalytic approach is an emphasis on gathering a detailed history of past relationships, including the early development of the client. To do a full analysis often takes years of sessions, which is normally not possible at a college. As well, there is a focus on the unconscious and on dreams. The unconscious is out-of-

conscious awareness, which is another difficult concept to grasp. The theory is that unconscious motives influence behaviour, and the best way to make changes is to gain insight into the unconscious. The unconscious is not directly accessible, but can become known in part through the study of the client's dreams. While discussions of dreams gives an opportunity for clients to present deeply held notions of who they are and how they feel about themselves and others, I feel the drawback, once again, is twofold: the length of time needed and also the level of abstraction at which the theory operates.

My sense of college students is that they want to be known even when they feel unknown to themselves. They want to have an opportunity to be ambivalent regarding coming to counselling and to have ambivalence accepted and not criticized. They need a forum for exploring the depth of feelings, even as they may be holding contradictory feelings. They yearn for a chance to be more than who they are. They wish to be fully functioning. They want guidance for dealing with the difficult process of removing their mask and confronting the discontinuities that lie below the mask.

To summarize, Rogers's person-centred approach to counselling works for this study because it offers students a warm, empathic relationship with the counsellor based on genuine and honest interactions. It serves students where they are at, because it acknowledges that discontinuities exist in their lives which often prevent them from further academic and career successes. It solicits their self-examination in a humane manner that honours their experience. It sets the values and feelings of the counsellor aside so that the focus can be on helping the student move toward a fuller level of functioning. It requires commitment from the student and an honest self-appraisal, but in the context of a nonjudgmental relationship. Where behavioural approaches are cut and

dried, the person-centred approach is flexible, yet encompassing. Where the psychoanalytic approach is overly abstract, the person-centred approach pays attention to the concrete experience of the client in relationship with the counsellor.

Importance of the Study

The study is important because I have not been able to find any research information on the issue of factors affecting personal counselling of college students in Ontario or in Canada. The college counsellors in Ontario's 24 CAATs would likely be interested in this research as it may provide insights which may be applicable to their students and counselling centres as well. It is possible that the findings will impact both the theory and the practice of counselling. At the practice level, it may affect the way counsellors do personal counselling. At the theory level, it may provide new insights about factors in the decision-making process for personal counselling as perceived by the students.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study addressed student perceptions of the factors which influence the students' choice to seek or not to seek personal counselling. Originally the proposal called for a survey of counsellors as well, but time limitations prevented this portion of the proposal from being completed. The sample size had been anticipated to be small (50-75) students, but 250 received the survey and 228 completed it (response rate of 91.2%). It was a sample of convenience. Additionally, the data were gathered during a limited period of time, the winter semester of 2003, and reflected only students surveyed in that time period. Only one college campus in a large urban centre in southern Ontario was included in this study. A limited number of classes and programs were surveyed. For all

these reasons, we cannot generalize the findings beyond the college campus studied.

Nevertheless, because of the paucity of research on this topic found in the literature, the findings of this exploratory, descriptive study add to our understanding of these important phenomena.

Outline of Remainder of the Document

In Chapter Two, I review the literature based on the following themes: transition, expectations of counselling, race and sex as variables, and the referral process. Chapter Three describes the research design, methodology, and procedures for sample selection, instrumentation, analysis, and interpretation. In Chapter Four, the data collected are analyzed and interpreted in relation to the research questions and the literature reviewed. Chapter Five presents the implications for further research, practice, and theory development.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

I found few articles in Canadian and American research literature in the area of reasons for students choosing to come for personal counselling specifically. I found no specific references to personal counselling, although at times, for example in articles referring to trust and expectations, it would seem that personal counselling is included as a specific topic for the students' views on counselling. What this means is that other aspects of counselling, such as career, study skills, and program information such as choice of courses, field of study, type of program—degree or diploma, are included in the overall subject of counselling. There were more American articles; however, all but one of the studies (Terrell & Terrell, 1984) were based on university students, so this needs to be kept in mind given that there are important differences between educational experiences at university compared to Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and between the American and Canadian education systems. As well, only one of the Canadian articles dealt exclusively with technical college level counselling (an approximate equivalent to CAAT), but it was a Manitoban study. Another Canadian article discussed students shifting from a technical college to a university, and this study was situated in B.C. Of the articles I found, I will discuss the literature based on the following themes: transition, expectations of counselling, sex and race as variables, and the referral process.

Transition

I found some articles that dealt with the theme of transition. For instance, in the area of counselling assisting in cultural adjustment, Marks and Green (1971) wrote about native university students in Saskatchewan who were unfamiliar with Canadian culture

and as a consequence found the transition to university difficult. Marks and Green suggested sending university counsellors into the native Indian communities in order to help create a bridge between the native world and the university world. They argued that for the native students to have trust in the counsellors, the counsellors would have to leave the university and become involved in activities at the native community level.

In another article that was related to the concept of transition, this time at a technical college involving educational counselling (Curtis, 1974), the author touched on the topic of trust. His article is a philosophical treatise which advocates for a Canada-wide community college counsellor's association. He questions the philosophy employed at his Manitoba college which gives students little choice in the courses they take. He feels that students who come from high school directly to college are better served educationally when they have a choice about what they will study. He argues that making this shift will make the transition from high school to college easier and more fulfilling for the students and will serve the college and society better in the long run. Curtis does not address the role of personal counselling in this process.

Andres (2001) conducted a qualitative study that dealt with counselling students shifting from technical college to university in the lower mainland of B.C. The kind of counselling involved seems to be educational. He studied the students' experience of transition from college to university and found that the vast majority had difficulty with the shift to university from college. No mention was made of the nature of the sampling procedure or sample size. Andres found that although most students did not regret the decision to go to university, most said they felt the colleges and universities could do

more to make that transition smoother. References were made to counsellors as people involved in the process who could have made the shift easier.

These articles did not directly address counselling on personal issues such as problems of psychological adjustment, mental health, stress, and sexual orientation, nor did they specifically address factors influencing students to choose to come to counselling or not to come.

Expectations of Counselling

One needs to take into consideration that studies found on expectations of students (Parham & Tinsley, 1980; H.E.A. Tinsley et al., 1990; H.E.A. Tinsley & Harris, 1976) were based on studying students who were in psychology classes and would likely have had some exposure to the concept of counselling, including the variety of aspects of counselling, study skills, career planning, and personal. In the CAAT programs, students will often have no exposure to psychology as a topic, let alone a course. This is especially the case in the transportation programs. As a consequence, students may not fully understand what counselling is about, nor would they have a good grasp of the issues of personal counselling and why and how one would go about getting personal counselling.

I found the studies (Parham & Tinsley, 1980; H.E.A. Tinsley et al., 1990; H.E.A. Tinsley & Harris, 1976) generally did not ask students why they chose to come for counselling. In some cases, they were asked if sex and race were factors in the decision to come, but this was usually after the respondents had decided to come to counselling. They had already made a commitment to get help. In other words, in these studies, students were already convinced of the need to come for personal counselling; they were not questioning the need.

The American studies I reviewed dealt with themes of expectations of counselling, peers and friends as counsellors, the influence of factors such as psychosocial development, and the effect of race and sex of counsellors and clients on trust. H.E.A. Tinsley and Harris (1976) found that university students' strongest expectations were of a "genuine, expert and accepting counsellor they could trust" (p. 173). They studied the relative strengths of these students' expectations of counselling and the relationship of these expectations to other client characteristics. Tinsley and Harris studied responses from 287 undergraduates in introductory psychology classes, aged 22 years or less, with no previous counselling experience. Twenty students were selected using a quota-sampling procedure. Expectations of the counsellor's ability to understand and be helpful to the students themselves, as well to experience a favourable outcome, were somewhat lower than the expectations of the counsellor's attitudes and behaviours (trust, genuineness, and openness) and the ability of the counsellor to help people in general. Differences in expectations based on sex and class were found. Females expected greater acceptance from the counsellor than did males, and males expected greater directiveness. Freshman classes had higher expectations of counsellor expertise than did junior and senior classes.

H.E.A. Tinsley and Benton (1978) examined both expectations and preferences in counselling. The questionnaire measured preferences for expertise, genuineness, trust, acceptance, understanding, outcome, and directiveness. These data were compared with data previously obtained about university students' expectations of counselling and the relationship between sex, university class, and preferences for counselling. The sample size of this study was 161 undergraduate students, aged 22 years and younger, with no

previous counselling experience. The students were selected from freshmen, sophomore, and junior years. The sampling process was not stated. The major findings were that these students' expectations and preferences for counselling appear to differ significantly regarding four aspects of the counselling procedure. The students' preferences to see an experienced counsellor, to understand the purpose of what happens in the interview, to take psychological tests, and to do assignments outside of the counselling interview exceeded Tinsley and Benton's expectations. In every instance in which significant differences occurred, the students wanted more out of counselling than the researcher expected. Another finding that was surprising to the researcher was that the expectations that the counsellor accept the client as a person of worth and that the counsellor be trustworthy were rated as more important to these students than beneficial outcomes.

Parham and Tinsley (1980) studied what was expected from a counselling session with a close friend. Their sample for students' expectations of friends was obtained from 167 undergraduate university students taking an introductory psychology course at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Most of the students surveyed were 22 years of age or younger. The sample regarding students' expectations for counsellors was taken from 441 undergraduates. While the sampling process was not described, these independent samples were selected in the same manner from the same subject pool using the same subject recruitment procedure. Therefore the samples were believed to be comparable. Their findings suggested that students highly value genuine, accepting, confrontive friends whom they can trust. Less importance was placed on a friend being empathic, expert, and directive. Females valued genuineness, trust, attractiveness, openness, concreteness, and nurturance significantly more than males. Because the

students' expectations of counsellors were positive, Parham and Tinsley believe that, although students in this study seemed willing to go to their friends for psychological help as a first step, students would seek out counsellors when other forms of help were no longer adequate.

D.J. Tinsley et al. (1990) studied group differences in expectations about counselling, as well as the level of psychosocial development, perceived level of psychological difficulty, and counselling readiness. Their sample consisted of 172 undergraduate university students taking introductory psychology courses at a large midwestern U.S. university. The sampling process was not described. The main findings were that after the variance in expectations attributable to gender, age, and year in school had been extracted, there were significant relationships between students' expectation about counselling and their scores on the Student Developmental Task Inventory (2nd ed.), which measured maturity in career, education, and life-style plans.

Race and Sex as Variables

Another group of research papers discussed peer counselling as well as whether race and sex of counsellors and clients affected the clients' experience of trust in the relationship. While Williams (1974) was not specifically looking for race-related information, it was a component in his research. He researched whether professional counsellors (all of whom happened to be white) were better than peer facilitators (all of whom happened to be black) at facilitating trust and self-disclosure in black students. The sample consisted of 18 university students living in undergraduate university residences. The sample selection process was not described. The main findings were that the levels of trust and self-disclosure between black students and professional white counsellors

were equal to those of black students with black peer counsellors. He concluded that white counsellors were as effective with black clients in facilitating trust and self-disclosure. The corollary was that black, minimally trained peer counsellors are or can be effective facilitators of trust and self-disclosure among black clients.

On the theme of race and mistrust, Watkins and Terrell (1988) examined the effects of cultural mistrust on counselling expectations of black clients assigned to both black and white counsellors. The sample consisted of 189 black subjects (95 male, 94 female), 18-23 years of age, with socioeconomic levels ranging from lower class to lower middle class, and coming from a predominantly black college in a southwestern American urban centre. The sample selection process was not described. The participants completed the Cultural Mistrust Inventory and a questionnaire on expectations about counselling. The major finding was that client mistrust level interacted significantly with counsellor's race. When assigned to a white instead of a black counsellor, highly mistrustful blacks expected the counsellor to be less accepting, less trustworthy, and less expert and expected less in terms of counselling outcomes.

Terrell and Terrell (1984) also examined whether a relation existed between race of counsellor, client sex, cultural mistrust level, and premature termination rates among black clients. Their sample consisted of 135 native-born blacks, mostly lower-class outpatients of a community mental health centre. The sample selection process was not described. Clients were assigned either a black or white counsellor based on an intake interview. Hierarchical regression analyses were completed to learn whether a relationship existed between variables of class, race, mistrust level, and clients' sex and the variable of premature termination. A significant relationship was found between

counsellor race and termination rates of blacks. Black clients were more likely to terminate from counselling prematurely when seeing a white rather than a black counsellor. It was noted, however, that the results may have been affected by the fact that the counsellors were selected from a limited pool. Had the pool been larger, the results might have been different. A significant relationship was also found between counsellor race, mistrust level, and premature termination rates of blacks. In other words, highly mistrustful blacks, when seen by white counsellors, had a higher drop-out rate than did highly mistrustful blacks seen by black counsellors. A significant relationship between sex of client and termination rates was not established.

Nickerson et al. (1994) studied the relationships among mistrust of whites, opinions about mental illness, and help-seeking attitudes among black university students. One hundred and five black undergraduate students enrolled at a predominantly white university in the southwestern U.S. volunteered for the study and composed their sample of convenience. The main findings were that the hypothesis that higher levels of cultural mistrust would predict negative help-seeking attitudes was generally supported by the findings when subjected to regression analyses. Greater mistrust of whites was associated with more negative general attitudes about seeking help from clinics staffed primarily by whites and with an expectation that the services rendered by white counsellors would be less satisfactory.

Thompson et al. (1994) investigated the effects of counsellor content orientation, counsellor race, and participants' cultural mistrust levels on the frequency and depth of participant self-disclosures, ratings of counsellor credibility, and willingness to self-refer. These scholars define counsellor content orientation as either cultural or universal. A

cultural content orientation means that counsellors make explicit reference to culture in their communication with the student. A universal orientation avoids explicit reference to culture in the communication unless it is a subject in the counselling session. The randomly selected sample consisted of 100 black women undergraduate students at a major, predominantly white university located in a predominantly white community on the west coast of the U.S. The main findings were that counsellor content orientation related significantly to depth of disclosure and willingness to self-refer, with participants revealing more intimately and reporting greater willingness to return to counsellors when exposed to the cultural as opposed to the universal content orientation. Lower cultural mistrust levels were also found to be related to a greater number of disclosures with black counsellors.

Referral Process

Shelton and Corazzini (1974) studied the way in which referral is handled between one campus agency and another. They found that there has been little written about the process and less effort expended evaluating it. They argued that some effort in making a good referral (providing students with names and specific directions as to where to find the counselling centre) resulted in larger numbers of students following up on the referral to go to counselling.

Reasons For Not Coming to Counselling: Denial

Weiten (2004) and Bernstein and Nash (2002) state that denial is a defense mechanism used by people under stress to cope with conflict. Students with personal problems generally experience conflict which causes stress. By making use of the denial defense, they are able to ignore the problems, but by doing so, they may distort reality. In

the short term, they cope with their problem because in their mind it does not actually exist. Since the problem does not exist, there is no motivation for going or continuing to go to counselling.

Dealing with Peer Pressure: Assertive Behaviour

DeVito (1996) defines assertive behaviour as “behaviour that enables an individual to act in his or her own best interest without denying or infringing upon the rights of others” (p. 359). Some students with assertive behaviours can cope with peer pressure by being assertive. In the case of deciding whether or not to come for counselling, if an assertive person faces peer pressure encouraging him or her not to go to counselling, he or she would be able to set aside that pressure and make the decision that best meets his or her needs and is not based on what others want him or her to do.

Rogers’s Approach to Counselling: Person Centred

In Rogers’s approach to counselling (Corey, 1996; Sharf, 1996), the client and counsellor will determine the progress of the therapy. If the counsellor is able to offer unconditional positive regard, that is, acceptance of the client for who they are, then the client’s self-worth or self-regard will likely become positive. If not, negative self-regard is possible. This negative sense of self can inhibit favourable personal and psychological growth and lower the chances of the client returning to counselling.

In order for counselling to be successful, clients need to operate on a psychological level, that is, they need to have a willingness to explore who they are. There will be a discontinuity in their sense of self: a difference between how they see themselves and who they really are. By taking responsibility for their own lives and experience, counselling has a chance of succeeding. Some positive steps begin to become

visible in a changed life, and students are then motivated to continue their therapy. The goals that are worked on should arise from the client in order for the work to have the greatest effect and likelihood of creating a positive change.

Summary

The literature I found did not specifically address the research questions for this study, that is, factors influencing students to come or not to come, to return or not to return to counselling.

The literature I found did not address personal counselling explicitly. Literature on expectations and perceptions implies that personal counselling would be one of the offerings of the counselling department because it questions students' expectations about matters which would be significant in a personal counselling relationship, such as student trust in the counselor and attitudes of the counselor; however, the term personal counselling is not stated explicitly. And, just because we know what students expect does not guarantee that the expectations are a significant factor in determining whether or not they will come for counselling. The usefulness of knowing expectations is that once they are made known, the department could inform the students as to whether or not the expectations may be met. This might help students decide whether or not to come for counselling, but it still does not tell us why they come.

All but three studies, two Canadian and one American, were based on university students. It is possible that university students, partly because they are likely to take psychology courses and partly because their programs are longer (4 years as compared to generally 2 and 3 years in the colleges), would have more exposure to the idea of counselling as a service and therefore be better able to respond to the surveys. Since the

university and college students are not identical in many ways, findings based on university students cannot be generalized to the college student population.

I found little in the Canadian literature on the topic of reasons why students choose to go or not go for personal counselling. The theme of transition was the common thread in the literature reviewed. The theme of the studies on transition is not whether or not students would come for counselling but rather how they experienced the shift from one cultural community or educational community to another.

The American research reviewed addressed three themes (expectations of counselling, the effect of race and sex on trust in counselling, and the referral process), with the first two themes receiving the most attention. Students expect to find counsellors they can trust and who are genuine, accepting, and experienced (H.E.A. Tinsley & Benton, 1978). At the same time, students are willing to discuss their issues with friends and peer counsellors and find these sources useful (Parham & Tinsley, 1980). Race is a barrier for counselling for highly mistrustful black clients. For these clients, white counsellors were perceived to be less accepting, less trustworthy, less experienced, and the clients expected less in terms of counselling outcomes (Nickerson et al., 1994; Terrell & Terrell, 1984; Watkins & Terrell, 1988). Black clients who experienced counselling within a cultural content could relate better to the counsellors and were more satisfied in sessions than in sessions where the cultural content was missing (Thompson et al., 1994).

Denial was explained as a defense mechanism that people under stress use to cope with conflict and which may be used by students to avoid facing troubles in their lives and consequently coming to counselling for help (Bernstein & Nash, 2002; Weiten, 2004). Assertive behaviour is used by some students to deal with peer pressure. For

example, when they are encouraged not to go for counselling, students using assertive behaviour will still make up their minds based on what is right for them (DeVito, 1996). Rogers's person-centred approach to counselling was briefly explained (Corey, 1996; Sharf, 1996)

From my experience and through the literature review, I identified variables which I thought might affect the likelihood of a student coming to counselling. The variables included previous experience of counselling by the student and the student's family, self-awareness (D.J. Tinsley et al., 1990); view of counselling and mental health (Nickerson et al., 1994); knowledge of the counselling including processes and expectations; trust in the counsellor including confidentiality and acceptance; openness to change; effects of peer pressure; motivation; willingness to return; immediate results (H.E.A. Tinsley, 1982); referral (Shelton & Corazzini, 1974); and demographic variables such as: sex (Terrell & Terrell, 1984), race (Nickerson et al., 1994; Thompson et al., 1994; Watkins & Terrell, 1988), age, first language, years in Canada (if foreign born), years of education, program of study, and socioeconomic background (e.g., parent occupation).

Outline of Remainder of the Document

Chapter Three describes the research design, methodology, and procedures for sample selection, instrumentation, analysis, and interpretation. Chapter Four presents the data collected, analysis of these data, and interpretation with respect to the research questions that drove this study and in relation to the literature. Chapter Five presents the implications of the findings in relation to further research, practice, and theory development.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study explored the perceptions of a small sample of college students regarding the factors influencing them to seek or not seek personal counselling. A questionnaire survey was conducted on students at one College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) located in a large urban centre in southern Ontario. Demographic data were collected to describe the sample characteristics, such as age and education. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed.

Description of Research Methodology

This was a descriptive-exploratory study based on quantitative and qualitative data. A quantitative approach to research presents information in terms of numbers and causes related to social facts. Its strength is in its objectivity in that, in gathering statistics numerically, one is less likely to reflect a personal bias about the subject in question. Also, one can use a single set of procedures to gather information, which increases the likelihood that information is not influenced by unpredictable factors. The quantitative researcher assumes that there is a single reality that can be measured. The purpose of research is to establish relationships between variables. The research methods are defined before the research is begun, and the data collected are based on objective numerical values (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 17).

The qualitative approach presents research information in words rather than numbers and stresses a deeper understanding of social facts, causes, and relationships. The strength of the qualitative approach is that it better reflects the perceptions and understandings of people than do numbers, especially when the issue researched is complex. In some cases there are nuances in social facts than can be better reflected in

words than in numbers. I requested qualitative data for certain questions in the form of comment sections in order to get at the nuances behind some of the influences students reported they experienced in choosing to seek personal counselling or not. The assumptions about the world for the qualitative researcher are that there are multiple realities. The research purpose is to understand a social situation, and the research method emerges while the research is undertaken (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 13).

I chose to use a quantitative method of gathering data in the form of a questionnaire survey tool using a forced-choice Likert scale because it is the most efficient way to collect information for the number of responses I anticipated (almost 230). I felt that a larger number of responses gathered quantitatively would provide a good indication of the overall student participants' perceptions on the factors influencing them in seeking to go for personal counselling. Also, because I have practiced personal counselling in a college context for 7 years, a quantitative approach decreased the likelihood that my experience would influence the interpretation of student responses.

I collected qualitative data as well. The quantitative data were collected through the use of a survey questionnaire form (Appendix A) asking students to identify factors which would make it likely or unlikely for students to seek personal counselling at the campus counselling centre. I developed the questionnaire survey tool based on themes that emerged out of the literature review and based on my experience providing counselling at a college campus counselling centre for a period of 7 years. The questionnaire was developed because none was found in the literature which addressed the specific research questions I was seeking to address. The qualitative data were

gathered in two ways on the questionnaire survey tool: open-ended questions and comments.

I originally intended to use a triangulation approach in order to enhance the face validity of the qualitative (in this case narrative) data by using different angles of inquiry on the same question in order to ferret out the patterns and themes that emerged. A pattern emerges when a series of responses is repeated from different sources. The strength of the triangulation technique is that when a pattern repeats itself despite coming from different sources, one has reason to believe the pattern reflects a social fact and is hence valid (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

For the second angle of inquiry, I intended to do a survey of counsellors in addition to students. However, due to scheduling difficulties, I was unable to complete the counsellor survey as intended. For the third angle, I intended to provide my personal narrative on each of the research questions. My narrative was to be based on a review of my notes from work with clients over the 5 year period—some who came for personal counselling once and did not return and others who came for more than one session. But Brock's ethics committee refused to grant permission to write a personal narrative on my experience with the students unless I had their written permission, which was not possible to attain since most of the students discussed in my personal narratives have graduated, some several years ago.

Research Design

The research was an exploratory/descriptive survey based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Variables identified in the literature and from my own experience which may affect the likelihood of a student coming to counselling were: previous

experience, including experience of family members, with counselling; self-awareness (D.J. Tinsley et al., 1990); view of counselling; view of mental health (Nickerson et al., 1994); knowledge of the counselling processes; expectations of the client in a counselling session; knowing what to say in a session; trust in the counsellor (confidentiality); being open to change; peer pressure; acceptance by peers (fearing judgment); giving in to peer pressure; fearing being reported by the counsellor; feeling that the counsellor is not accepting of the client; motivation; returning when more is to be done; wanting immediate results (H.E.A. Tinsley, 1982); accepting referral (Shelton & Corazzini, 1974); and demographic variables such as sex (Terrell & Terrell, 1984), race (Nickerson et al.; Thompson et al., 1994; Watkins & Terrell, 1988;), age, first language, years in Canada (if not Canadian born), years of education, program of study, and socioeconomic background (e.g., parent occupation). Quantitative and qualitative data sought to identify the participants' perceptions of these factors.

Pilot Studies

Pilot studies were conducted to enhance the content and face validity of the survey instrument. The survey questionnaire was pretested to determine face validity with a sample of 1 counsellor and 3 students. None of these were participants in the study itself. Participants were asked to complete the draft questionnaire. They were asked if the questions were clear and whether the wording, the order, or the directions for completing the survey influenced their responses in any way. As most of the responses indicated that the questions were clear, revisions were not made. Unfortunately, I missed a suggestion for adding a *not applicable* choice for survey question one. As it turned out,

implementing this suggestion would have alleviated some confusion on how to answer that question.

Selection of Participants

The context for the study was one campus of a College of Applied Arts and Technology in a large multi-culturally diverse urban centre in southern Ontario. Campus one had approximately 2,500 students (in each case, numbers include international students) enrolled in college and university upgrading and transportation apprenticeship programs of 1 and 2 years in duration. There was one counsellor at this campus. The impact that this may have had on the survey is that those who knew that there was only one counsellor on the campus would likely have been addressing their remarks with that counsellor in mind. For this reason, it would have been better to survey all three campuses. Campus two was slightly larger than campus one and had a student population of 2,800, consisting mostly of applied arts students in programs such as nursing, corrections, and social service work in 2 and 3 year programs. There were two counsellors at this campus. With a population of 6,000 students, campus three was much larger in population than the other two campuses. It housed business and engineering technology programs of 2 and 3 years in duration. This campus had three counsellors. Originally the intention was to survey students at all three campuses, but the response at campus one was larger than originally anticipated and consequently there was insufficient time to survey the other two campuses.

The responsibility of the counselling centres on each campus was to assist students with personal, career, and study skills related problems. Referral was open to the students (self-referral) and to faculty and to staff. There was no fee for the counselling

service. The counsellors generally had master's level training in counselling or social work. Because of the nature of its programming (largely transportation), campus one was predominantly male, campus two (applied arts) was mostly female, and campus three (business and engineering) was fairly evenly mixed, male and female. Entrance requirements varied depending on programs, but the basic entry requirement was either a grade 12 diploma or the age of 19 or older as a mature student.

A sample of convenience was selected from the multiculturally diverse student population (total student population 11,300). I sent a memo to the entire faculty at the campus asking those faculty for permission to survey some of their students. Those who contacted me were sent copies of the student consent form and survey questionnaire in order that they could decide whether participation would be appropriate for their students. Of the 188 faculty, 11 agreed to allow me to do the survey in their classes: 1 in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS), 2 in General Arts and Science (GAS), 4 in Automotive, and 4 in Aviation. Fourteen classes were surveyed: 1 in LBS, 4 in GAS, 4 in Automotive, and 5 in Aviation. Once a time and date was agreed upon, I conducted the survey.

The sample size was 228, higher than originally anticipated (50 to 75), with only 22 surveys returned uncompleted. The response rate was 91.2%. Given there were responses from different programs, (LBS, GAS, Automotive, and Aviation), some stratified sampling was done. Efforts were made, where possible, to get proportional samples from the different programs. The response from Automotive faculty, however, was weak (only 4 of 70 faculty); therefore the sample is not proportional to the numbers of students enrolled. Because it is a sample of convenience, no claims of generalizability to the whole population can be made.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was based in part on the *Expectations About Counselling Form B*, (H.E.A. Tinsley, 1982, with permission granted Nov. 19, 2002; see Appendix G), as well as on questions and statements formulated by me based on themes that emerged from the literature review (e.g., Nickerson et al., 1994; Shelton & Corazzini, 1974; Terrell & Terrell, 1984; Thompson et al., 1994; D.J. Tinsley et al., 1990; Watkins & Terrell, 1988) and my own counselling experience. In searching the literature, I found no tool which specifically addressed the issue of college students' reasons for coming for personal counselling. For this reason, I developed the questionnaire tool. The survey questionnaire collected primarily quantitative data, but there were opportunities for qualitative comments as well.

Of the 26 survey questions (Appendix A), 17 questions asked for responses on a Likert scale, 3 asked for yes/no responses to statements, 3 asked for students to check off from a list of possible responses, 2 asked for narrative responses; and 1 check-off and 1 yes/no question provided an opportunity for an additional narrative "comment" response. One question gave instructions only. In analyzing the Likert responses, I calculated the means and modes. For the yes/no questions and the check-off type questions, I calculated the percentages as appropriate. I subjected the narrative responses to content analysis to identify the themes that emerged. The data were analyzed and interpreted with respect to the research questions that drove this study and the findings in the literature reviewed.

Two questions, survey questionnaire questions 16 and 20, were open ended. One question, survey questionnaire question 15, asked for a response to a check-off section and then asked for additional comments. Another question, survey questionnaire 26,

asked for a yes/no response and then comments in addition. The purpose of those questions was to gain a deeper understanding of variables that make it likely for clients to return for counselling after coming once and what factors made it likely for clients to come once but then not return to seek assistance for that problem.

Data Collection and Recording

I administered the questionnaire to students using the following process:

1. In consultation with the counsellor, the teacher selected the date and time for the administration of the survey. I stated a preference for the beginning of the class, as more students were likely to participate, and was given that time slot in the majority of classes. The teacher left the classroom after I was introduced. I introduced the study and explained the voluntary nature of participation. The students were asked to volunteer to complete the questionnaire, which they were told would take about 15-20 minutes. I distributed the Letter of Information (Appendix B) and two copies of the consent forms (Appendix C; one to be returned signed and the other for the students to keep) and read both to the students. I assured the students who participated in the study that no information on individuals would be reported and no individual participant would be identifiable. Only group data would be reported. They were told they were free, without explanation or penalty, to not respond to any question(s) they felt were intrusive (Gay, 1996). They were told the findings would be made available in the form of a summary to any students who wished to have them. Students were asked to sign the consent form if they were willing to participate. The signed consent forms were then collected in order that they could be kept separate from the questionnaires to ensure anonymity. Next, the questionnaires were distributed to all students who signed and returned the consent

forms. I had pencils available, but students did not need them. I asked the students to NOT write their names on any survey materials, and they did not do so.

2. After I had read the instructions and answered any questions, I asked the students to take the questionnaire with them to be completed on their own and then to return them in the envelope provided (sealed) in the next class or to drop them off in the counselling office. I then collected the sealed envelopes in the next class.

3. Students had an opportunity to ask for clarification before and during completion of the questionnaire.

4. I was careful not to influence the students in any way in my directions or explanations or while they completed the survey.

Data Processing and Analysis

The quantitative responses were based on a forced-choice Likert scale (Gay, 1996). The weighting for the choices was as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*agree*), and 4 (*strongly agree*). The means and modes of these data were calculated.

The qualitative data were subjected to content and theme analysis (Cairns, 1994).

Methodological Assumptions

Since I was not the students' teacher, there can be no perception that I had any power to influence their well-being. For this reason, I can assume that the responses of students to the qualitative and quantitative questions reflected accurately their perceptions.

Limitations

As the data were collected from a sample of convenience, the sample size was relatively small, 228 of 11,300 students at just one college of applied arts and technology.

Additionally, the data were gathered during a specific time period, the winter semester of 2003, and reflect only students surveyed during that time period. Only one college in a large urban area in southern Ontario was included in this study. A limited number of classes and programs were surveyed.

As I was the only counsellor at the campus, it is possible that some students might have been answering with this information in mind; in other words, it is possible that some of the students may have had a counselling experience with me and that experience may have influenced their responses on the survey. This would have been more likely of the GAS program, as those students make more use of the counselling service than any other program.

Another limitation is that because of concerns by the college's ethics committee over freedom of information, I was prevented from doing the personal narrative research and therefore lost this angle of inquiry. As well, because of scheduling limitations, the intended counsellor survey could not be completed, and thus another perspective of inquiry was lost. Consequently, only the student perspective remains, and so the value is perhaps less than it could have been had the other two perspectives been available.

For all these reasons, and particularly because it was not feasible to select the study population by random sampling, the study findings are not generalizable beyond this college.

Nevertheless, as stated earlier, because of the paucity of research on this topic found in the literature, the findings of this exploratory, descriptive study have added to our understanding of these phenomena.

Ethical Considerations

The approval of the Brock University Ethics Review Council was sought and obtained before any data collection was begun (Appendix E). The approval of the Ethics Committee at the college was sought and received (Appendix F); however, because of concerns over freedom of information, the personal reflective narrative was eliminated as one of the angles of inquiry, and because of the college's Ethics Committee's concerns with a question on race in the demographic section, that question was removed. Information letters (Appendix B) were distributed, and consent forms (Appendix C) were completed by students before any data collection was begun. Only data from students who submitted signed consent forms were included in this study. A letter of appreciation to the students was posted in the counselling office (Appendix D).

Restatement of the Problem Area

The research questions this study sought to address were:

1. What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?
2. What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?
3. What factors influence students in choosing to return for personal counselling?
4. What factors influence students in choosing not to return for personal counselling?

The data sources for the research questions are found in Table 1.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the research design, methodology, and procedures followed in this study. A questionnaire survey for students was used to gather both

Table 1

Data Sources for Research Questions

Research question	Data source
1. What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?	Student Survey Questionnaire: Questions 1-6
2. What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?	Student Survey Questionnaire: Questions 7-12
3. What factors influence students in choosing to return for personal counselling?	Student Survey Questionnaire: Questions 13, 15, 16
4. What factors influence students in choosing not to return for personal counselling?	Student Survey Questionnaire: Questions 17-20

qualitative and quantitative data on the factors influencing college students to either seek or not to seek personal counselling. The survey tool was developed by me based on themes that arose in the literature reviewed and from my own experience as a counsellor. The quantitative data collected were analyzed by calculating the means and modes, and the qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. Participants were selected as a sample of convenience.

Outline of Remainder of the Document.

In Chapter Four, the data collected are analyzed and interpreted in relation to the research questions and the literature reviewed. Chapter Five presents the implications for further research, practice, and theory development.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study explored factors which were perceived by students at a college campus to encourage or discourage them to seek personal counselling. The college in this study is located in a large multiculturally diverse, urban centre in southern Ontario. While there are several campuses with a variety of programs, the students surveyed were at one campus largely dedicated to transportation training (automotive and aviation) but that also had students in general arts and science and literacy upgrading programs.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?
2. What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?
3. What factors influence students in choosing to return for personal counselling?
4. What factors influence students in choosing not to return for personal counselling?

Demographic Description of the Participants

A total of 14 classes and 250 students were surveyed: 1 class from the Literacy and Basic Skills Department, 4 classes from the General Arts and Science (3 classes were taught by one instructor), and 9 classes from transportation made up of 4 classes from automotive, both preapprentice (1) and apprentice (3), and 5 classes from aviation, where in two separate cases one instructor allowed me to visit 2 of his classes. There were 228 completed surveys returned, for a response rate of 91.2%. Table 2 depicts the response

Table 2

Number of Students Surveyed and Responses by Program

Program	Students surveyed	Responses	
		n	%
Literacy and Basic Skills	10	9	90.0
General Arts and Science	51	46	90.2
Automotive	51	47	92.2
Aviation	138	126	91.3
Total	250	228	91.2

rate by program. Of the total 228 responses, 224 responded on gender: 183 (81.6%) were male and 41 (18.3%) were female. Since the general arts and science program had 31 (75.6%) of the total number of females, only 10 (24.4%) were from the other three schools. As is to be expected on a campus where transportation apprenticeships are in the majority, females were very much a minority (Table 3).

Of 223 respondents giving their ages, three quarters ($n = 172$; 77%) were aged 25 or under, and just under one third of all the respondents ($n = 74$; 33.2%) were students aged 20 or under. This means the sample is skewed toward youth (Table 4). The question related to the level of the students' program of study (diploma or postdiploma) and school (e.g., School of Transportation, School of Engineering) generated inaccurate responses which became evident when I saw the responses. In terms of level, for example, students in diploma programs at times indicated they were in postdiploma programs, which was not the case since none of the programs offered in the classes I surveyed were postdiploma. As a matter of fact, there are no postdiploma programs offered at the campus where the survey was conducted. As well, some students in the transportation program erroneously indicated they were in the school of engineering. In this case, students in the engineering faculty take classes at another campus, so it is not possible that these students were in the school of engineering. On analyzing the reasons for these inaccuracies, it became evident that the survey questionnaire should have included response options clearly related to the level of study. For example, it would have been clearer to include a category for the Literacy and Basic Skills certificate program, as it is

Table 3

Respondents by Gender and Program

Program	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy and Basic Skills	4	44.4	5	55.6	9	4.0
General Arts and Science	14	31.1	31	68.9	45	20.0
School of Access (LBS & GAS) Total	18	33.3	36	66.6	54	24.1
PreApprentice Automotive	10	100.0	0	0.0	10	4.5
Automotive Apprentice	35	97.2	1	2.8	36	16.1
Automotive total	45	97.8	1	2.2	46	20.5
Aviation	120	96.7	4	3.3	124	55.4
School of Transportation Total	165	97.1	5	2.9	170	75.8
Total	183		41		224	
Total percent		81.7		18.3		100.0

Table 4

Respondents by Age and Program

Program	16-20		21-25		26-30		31-40		41+		Total respondents	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	0	0.0	1	1.1	0	0.0	4	4.4	4	4.4	9	4.0
General Arts and Science	24	54.5	19	43.2	1	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	44	19.7
Automotive	8	17.4	27	58.7	9	19.5	1	2.2	1	2.2	46	20.6
Aviation	42	33.9	51	41.1	14	11.3	15	12.1	2	1.6	124	55.6
Total	74		98		24		20		7		223	
Total percent		33.1		43.9		10.8		9.0		3.1		100.0

neither a diploma nor a postdiploma program. As well, the transportation programs should have had a separate category for the trade certificate level, as not all their programs result in a diploma despite being very comprehensive. Furthermore, a distinction could have been made between preapprenticeship classes and the regular apprenticeship classes. In terms of improving the accuracy of the information gathered for study level, it is possible the term “school,” although correct in an administrative sense, confused the students, so perhaps another term such as “department” would have been clearer to them. The same goes for “transportation,” in that it might have been helpful if it had been broken down into automotive and aviation. These limitations were not identified in the pilot testing of the instrument. Because of these confusions, gender data on respondents “by level” were largely excluded from the data analysis.

Of the 224 responses to the question regarding school enrolled in (survey question 5, Part B), 170 (76.2%) reported they were in transportation apprenticeships in the School of Transportation; 124 (55.4%) of these were in aviation, 46 (20.5%) were in the automotive program, and 10 (4.5 %) were in a preapprenticeship automotive certificate program. Fifty-four (24.1 %) students were in the School of Access, comprised of 45 (20.0 %) diploma students (General Arts and Science) and nine 9 students (4.0 %) in pre-diploma certificate programs (Literacy and Basic Skills; Table 3).

The information gathered on which semesters the students were in indicated that of 214 respondents, the majority, 144 (67.3 %) were in semester two, with 61 (28.5 %) in semesters three and four. Only 9 students (4.2%) were in semester 1 (Table 5).

Table 5

Respondents by Semester and Program

Program	1 st Semester		2 nd Semester		3 rd Semester		4 th Semester		Total respondents	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	3	1.4	3	1.4	1	.5	0	.0	7	3.2
General Arts and Science	1	.5	30	14.0	5	2.3	9	4.2	45	21.0
Automotive	0	.0	28	13.0	16	7.4	0	.0	44	20.5
Aviation	5	2.3	83	38.8	0	.0	30	14.0	118	55.1
Total	9		144		22		39		214	
Total percent		4.2		67.2		10.2		18.2		100.0

Of the 217 responses for highest level of education attained prior to entering their college program, 168 (77.4%) indicated they had high school, and the remaining 49 (22.5%) had either college or university education (Table 6).

Of 210 respondents indicating where they had attained their highest level of education prior to their college program, the large majority, 175 (83.3%) indicated Canada, while the remaining 35 (16.6) indicated outside Canada. Table 7 illustrates these findings.

While these figures do not provide any indication of the students' diversity in ethnicity and culture, the data on first languages do. Of 225 respondents, almost one third ($n = 73$; 32.4%) indicated their first language was other than English. As well, this group was not homogeneous in that it was constituted of 24 languages from all parts of the world, and those 24 languages were fairly evenly distributed across the 73 students with no one group having particular numerical prominence. The remaining respondents ($n = 152$; 67.5%) indicated English as a first language. Table 8 illustrates these findings.

The survey question on parental occupation seemed to confuse students at times. For example, although there was a category for *professional*, students at times put teachers, doctors and accountants in the *other* category. This happened for both mothers and fathers. But it was not just professionals who were slotted in the *other* category. Also included were cabinetmakers, farmers, hairstylists, day-care workers, and waitresses. Unfortunately, this problem was not identified in the pilot study either.

Table 6

Respondents by Highest Level of Education Attained Prior to Entering College and Program

Program	High school		College		University		Total respondents	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	3	1.3	3	1.3	1	.5	7	4.6
General Arts and Science	39	17.8	4	1.8	1	.5	44	20.3
Automotive	38	17.5	8	3.7	0	.0	46	21.2
Aviation	88	40.6	20	9.2	12	5.5	120	55.3
Total	168		35		14		217	
Total percent		77.4		16.0		6.5		100.0

Table 7

Respondents by Where Highest Education Level was Attained and Program

Program	Canada	Other country	Total responses by program
Literacy & Basic Skills	3.0	0.0	8.0
General Arts and Science	39.0	5.0	44.0
Automotive	34.0	2.0	36.0
Aviation	99.0	23.0	122.0
Total	175.0	35.0	210.0
Total percent	83.3	16.6	100.0

Table 8

Respondents by First Language and Program

Program	English	Other	Total responses by program
Literacy & Basic Skills	6.0	2.0	8.0
General Arts and Science	32.0	12.0	44.0
Automotive	39.0	10.0	49.0
Aviation	75.0	49.0	124.0
Total	152.0	73.0	225.0
Total percent	67.5	32.4	100.0

Of the 198 responses for mother's occupations, apart from the *other* category which had 84 (42.4%) responses, the two other highest concentrations were professionals for 32 (16.2%) and labourer/cashier for 20 (10.1%), giving a total of 136 (68.7%) for these three categories. The other 62 (31.3%) responses were fairly evenly spread across the other five categories of sales representative/clerk, machine operator, technical/skilled trade or occupation, paraprofessional, and management. Table 9 illustrates these findings.

Of the 201 responses for father's occupation, nearly one third ($n = 63$; 31.3%) indicated *other*, many fewer than for mothers. The three largest categories aside from *other* were 43 (21.4 %) in technical/skilled trades and occupations and 28 (13.9%) and 27 (13.4%) respectively in professionals and management, making up a total of 161 respondents or 79.9% of the total respondent pool. Table 10 illustrates these findings.

For survey question 22, there were 222 responses. When students were asked, "Have you ever gone for professional counselling on a personal issue?" the findings were that 21.6 % ($n = 48$) answered *yes* and 78.4% ($n = 174$) answered *no*. The programs with the largest *yes* responses were GAS with 34.8% ($n = 16$) and LBS with 33.3% ($n = 3$), and the lowest *yes* response was in aviation with 14.2% ($n = 17$). The 21.6% overall response for this question is higher than the figure for whether students had gone to campus counselling (survey question 14, $n = 222$; 14.9%), indicating that approximately 7% more students had gone for professional counselling for a personal issue than for on-

Table 9

Respondents by Mother's Occupation by Program

Program	LC	SC	MO	TS	PP	PR	MGT	OTH	Total
Literacy & Basic Skills	1.0	1.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	9.0
General Arts and Science	4.0	3.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	11.0	1.0	11.0	41.0
Automotive	4.0	3.0	3.0	1.0	2.0	7.0	4.0	15.0	39.0
Aviation	11.0	6.0	4.0	8.0	1.0	14.0	11.0	54.0	109.0
Total	20.0	13.0	8.0	17.0	8.0	32.0	16.0	84.0	198.0
Total percent	10.1	6.6	4.0	8.6	4.0	16.2	8.1	42.4	100.0

Note. LC = labourer/cashier; SC = sales representative/clerk; MO = machine operator; TS = technical/skilled trade or occupation; PP = paraprofessional; PR = professional; MGT = management; OTH = other.

Table 10

Respondents by Father's Occupation by Program

Program	LC	SC	MO	TS	PP	PR	MGT	OTH	Total
Literacy and Basic Skills	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	5.0	9.0
General Arts and Science	4.0	0.0	1.0	7.0	1.0	8.0	4.0	15.0	40.0
Automotive	8.0	0.0	5.0	12.0	0.0	3.0	7.0	9.0	44.0
Aviation	5.0	2.0	11.0	21.0	3.0	17.0	15.0	33.0	107.0
Total	17.0	2.0	17.0	43.0	4.0	28.0	27.0	62.0	200.0
Total percent	8.5	1.0	8.5	21.5	2.0	14.0	13.5	31.0	100.0

Note. LC = labourer/cashier; SC = sales representative/clerk; MO = machine operator; TS = technical/skilled trade or occupation; PP = paraprofessional; PR = professional; MGT = management; OTH = other.

campus counselling in general. Only 21.6 % ($n = 222$) had ever gone for professional counselling on a personal issue (survey question 22). It is possible the other 78.4% were unclear as to what counselling is and what actually goes on, even though most claimed they knew what was expected of them in terms of what to do and to say. Table 11 depicts these findings.

For survey question 23, there were only 46 responses. When students were asked to indicate where they had received the personal counselling asked about in question 22, 13.0% ($n = 6$) indicated *college*, 80.4% ($n = 37$) indicated *outside college*, and 6.5% ($n = 3$) indicated *both*. Also, of those who had gone for personal counselling ($n = 46$), only 13.0% had gone to counselling at college. Table 12 depicts these findings.

For survey questionnaire question 25 there were only 49 responses. Question 25 asked the students how many times they had gone for professional counselling on a personal issue (once, twice, or three or more); 34.6 % ($n = 17$) said once, 12.2 % ($n = 6$) said twice, and 53.0% ($n = 26$) said three or more. It was surprising to me that 53.0% ($n = 26$) said they had gone three or more times, and this was far more than I had expected. Based on my experience, most students come just once. This question, though, included responses from students who had sought counselling outside the college as well. Perhaps it means that students are more likely to return to personal counselling if they receive it off campus and are less likely to return if they receive it on campus. Table 13 depicts these findings.

Table 11

Responses for Survey Question 22, "Have you ever gone for professional counselling on a personal issue?" by Program (n = 222)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses by program			
			Yes		No	
			n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.1	3	33.3	6	66.6
General Arts and Science	46	20.7	16	34.8	30	65.2
Automotive	47	21.2	12	25.5	35	74.5
Aviation	120	54.1	17	14.2	103	85.8
Total	222	100.0	48	21.6	174	78.4

Table 12

Responses for Survey Question 23, "If yes, where?" by Program (n = 46)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses by program					
			At college		Outside college		Both	
			n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	3	6.5	1	33.3	2	66.6	0	0.0
General Arts and Science	14	30.4	1	7.1	11	78.6	2	14.3
Automotive	11	23.9	1	9.1	10	90.9	0	0.0
Aviation	18	39.1	3	16.7	14	77.8	1	5.5
Total	46	100.0	6	13.0	37	80.4	3	6.5

Table 13

Responses for Survey Question 25^a, "How many times?" by Program (n = 49)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Percent responses by program		
			Once	Twice	Three or more times
Literacy & Basic Skills	2	4.1	50.0	0.0	50.0
General Arts and Science	17	34.7	35.3	5.9	58.8
Automotive	12	24.5	25.0	33.3	41.7
Aviation	18	36.7	38.9	5.6	55.6
Total	49	100.0	34.6	12.2	53.0

^a There was no question asked at number 24, only directions given.

Research Question 1: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing to Come for Personal Counselling?

The data to answer research question 1 came from survey questionnaire (Appendix A) questions 1 through 6 and question 26 (Tables 14-19).

For survey questionnaire question 26, there were 186 responses. When students were asked, "If you have never gone to campus counselling, would you, at any time, consider going to counselling for help on a personal issue?" In the responses, 63.4% ($n = 118$) said *yes*, they would consider going for counselling even though they had never been to campus counselling before, and the remaining 36.5% ($n = 68$), over one third, said *no* they would not go. Of the 31 respondents who provided written comments, 7 (22.5%) responded *yes* with some conditions, 6 (19.3%) responded *yes* without conditions, 5 (16.1%) gave other comments that were not easily categorized into themes, 5 (16.1%) responded that maybe they would come if they could not handle the stress, 3 (9.7%) responded they would not come and 3 (9.7%) responded they would not come because they got help elsewhere, and 2 (6.5%) responded maybe they would come if the counselling help was good. Table 14 depicts these findings. Examples of comments grouped in themes written in response to survey question 26 which asked if they would consider going for personal counselling if they had never done so before:

Yes, with no conditions

- Absolutely! They can help me to deal/cope with an issue to not let it hinder my concentration for the day.

Table 14

Responses for Survey Question 26, "If you have never gone to campus counselling, would you, at any time consider going to counselling for help on a personal issue?" by Program (n = 186)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Percent responses by program	
			Yes	No
Literacy & Basic Skills	8	4.3	62.5	37.5
General Arts and Science	33	17.7	75.8	24.2
Automotive	42	22.6	38.1	61.9
Aviation	103	55.4	69.9	30.1
Total	186	100.0	63.4	36.5

- I know my personal issues can affect my performance in school. Talking to a counsellor will help me to make better decisions for my career goals.
- I have been to a psychologist before. At the time, I didn't enjoy it, but now that I look back, I understand how helpful it really was.

Yes, with conditions

- When I give up I will.
- Yes, but I would find it easier to go to a counselor that was not connected with the school.
- If I have an issue that cannot be handled on my own, then I would surely seek help.
- If I really needed it.
- Likely only if the issue was related to issues surrounding school. This is the only area in which I feel insights would be useful and valid: based on experience.

No

- I don't need counselling.
- No, I am second year student and I've never heard there is any form of counselling.
So why would I go now when I almost done with my college?
- No, because the personal problems I have aren't easily understood. I don't know how to convey them to others.

No, because I get the help I need from others

- I am lucky to have a life partner that understands me.

- I am more comfortable seeking counselling from parent or friend. This has proven effective in the past.

I might go, if I can't handle the stress, if I could express my feelings

- Maybe, depends on my feelings and if I really can't handle the stress or depression
- Depends if I could handle the situation myself or not.
- I could probably use some professional help, but have trouble sharing my issues/feelings.

I might go, if the help is good

- I would if I noticed that they cared or actually made an effort to solve my problem. Instead I just talk about it.
- Possibly, depends on the experience level of help.

Other

- I really need help.

For survey questionnaire question 1, "Someone in my family has previously participated in personal counselling and found it helpful or certainly not negative," a mistake was made in the wording which was not identified in the pilot testing. There are two variables in the question: previous participation by a family member and whether or not the counselling was helpful. In other words, there was no clear way for students to indicate that they belonged to a family that had not had any previous experience of counselling. For example, the response *disagree* could mean both that no family member had participated in counselling and also that they had participated but not found it helpful.

The mean response to this question was 2.4, almost halfway between *disagree* and *agree*. However, the mode was more favourable at 3.0, that is *agree* on the Likert scale. Only one program made up of one class (Literacy and Basic Skills) had a mean of 3.0 (*agree*), but this class represented only 3 % of all responses. Nevertheless, when compared to the other programs, this suggests these students had more experience with family participation in personal counselling than did students in the other programs. Most students ($n = 106$; 52.5%) responding to the survey came from families that had helpful experiences with personal counselling. Almost half ($n = 90$; 47.5%) came from families that had had no or less than helpful experiences with personal counselling, and this may have influenced those students to not consider going for personal counselling themselves. At the same time, the mode for all programs was 3.0 (*agree*); that is, students most often agreed that someone in their family had had a helpful or not negative experience in personal counselling (Table 15).

The mean response 2.7 (closer to *agree* than *disagree*) for survey questionnaire question 2, "I understand what would be expected of me in a counselling session" suggests that the students had some ideas of what to expect in a counselling session. The modal response for each program was 3.0 (*agree*) and for one program (LBS) it was 4.0 (*strongly agree*), suggesting that LBS students were more confident about what would be expected of them than students in the other programs.

This finding suggests that students do not stay away from counselling because they are unaware of the expectations of what is involved in a counselling session; in other

Table 15

Responses to Survey Question 1, "Someone in my family has previously participated in personal counselling and found it helpful or certainly not negative" by Program (n = 202)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
General Arts and Science	39	19.3	2.4	3.0
Automotive	44	21.8	2.5	3.0
Aviation	113	55.9	2.3	3.0
Total	202	100.0	2.4	3.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

words, the respondents indicated they were knowledgeable about what goes on in a counselling session, so presumably lack of knowledge would not be a factor keeping them away. For increased clarity, one change that should have been made in the wording of question 2 is that the word “personal” should have been inserted before the word “counselling” to distinguish it from other kinds of counselling (such as counselling related to career and study skills). This was not identified in the pilot testing of the questionnaire, but it was raised by several students during the administration of the survey. Table 16 depicts these findings.

The findings from survey questionnaire question 3, “I would go for counselling if I were in personal distress of any kind,” indicate that students were hesitant about going for personal counselling if they were “in distress of any kind.” The mean response for this question was 2.4 (closer to *disagree*) while the mode was 3.0 (*agree*). This suggests the students were not likely to come for counselling if they were in personal distress. The modal response of 3.0 (*agree*) is not surprising in that I anticipated that this variable (personal distress) would be one of the key reasons why students would want to come for counselling. It was surprising to find that with a modal response of 3.0 (*agree*), Aviation students indicated they were more likely to go for counselling than students in the other programs. Even more surprising was that the General Arts and Sciences students, whom I thought had the best grasp of what counselling was and made most use of the service compared with other programs, were the least likely (with a mean response of 2.1, *disagree*) to come for counselling if they experienced personal distress. Table 17 depicts these findings.

Table 16

Responses to Survey Question 2, "I understand what would be expected of me in a counselling session" by Program (n = 222)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	7	3.2	3.1	4.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.7	2.7	3.0
Automotive	44	19.8	2.7	3.0
Aviation	125	56.3	2.7	3.0
Total	222	100.0	2.7	3.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 17

Responses to Survey Question 3, "I would go for counselling if I were in personal distress of any kind" by Program (n = 225)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.7	2.0
General Arts and Science	47	20.9	2.1	2.0
Automotive	47	20.9	2.5	2.0
Aviation	122	54.2	2.4	3.0
Total	225	100.0	2.4	3.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

The mean response to survey question 4, “I would know what to say if I were in a counselling session,” was 2.5 (halfway between *disagree* and *agree*) while the mode was 3.0 (*agree*). This suggests that the students generally felt they had at least some idea of what they would say in a counselling session. It also suggests that students might be slightly more likely to come for counselling because they felt they knew what to say in a session. The LBS respondents’ mean score of 3.0 (*agree*) indicates a stronger sense of what to say than the rest of the students. The modal response of 2.0 (*disagree*) of Automotive students suggests that they would not know what to say in a counselling session, and this might be a reason they would stay away (Table 18).

Survey question 5, “I believe that my mental health is my private responsibility, not to be discussed with a college counsellor,” addressed whether students felt that mental health was a private issue, not to be discussed with a college counsellor. The mean response of 2.5 (halfway between *agree* and *disagree*) indicates that students had some misgivings about discussing mental health issues with a school counsellor. The modal response of 2.0 (*disagree*) suggests there was also some openness to discussing issues with a counsellor. LBS students with modes of 3.0 (*agree*) and 4.0 (*strongly agree*) and Automotive students with a mode of 3.0 (*agree*) feel more strongly than the other students that mental health is a private issue not to be discussed with counsellors. Table 19 depicts these findings.

Survey questionnaire question 6, “I would fix my own mental health problems on my own, not with the help of a counsellor,” would have been clearer if it said, “I would

Table 18

Responses to Survey Question 4, "I would know what to say if I were in a counselling session" by Program (n = 223)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	3.0	3.0
General Arts and Science	45	20.2	2.5	3.0
Automotive	47	21.1	2.4	2.0
Aviation	122	54.7	2.6	3.0
Total	223	100.0	2.5	3.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 19

Responses to Survey Question 5, "I believe that my mental health is my private responsibility, not to be discussed with a college counsellor" by Program (n = 225)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.9	Tied 3.0 & 4.0
General Arts and Science	43	19.1	2.3	2.0
Automotive	48	21.3	2.7	3.0
Aviation	125	55.6	2.3	2.0
Total	225	100.0	2.5	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

rather fix my own mental health problems on my own rather than with the help of a counsellor.” By rephrasing it this way, it would have implied that there might be other ways to address one’s mental health problems, such as going to a friend or a teacher rather than going to a counsellor. The way the question was phrased in the questionnaire (Appendix A) implies that there are only two ways to fix the problem: with a counsellor’s help or on one’s own. It is possible that some students would not have been comfortable with only those two choices, and consequently they may not have been able to answer accurately. This issue was not identified in the pilot study. However, 224 students responded to this question, indicating this was not a serious issue for them. The mean response of 2.4 (leaning toward *disagree*) suggests students would consider seeking out a counsellor to help with their mental health problems. The modal response of 2.0 (*disagree*) indicates a fairly strong preference of students to seek help. These responses were very similar to question 5, “I believe that my mental health is my private responsibility, not to be discussed with a college counsellor.” LBS and Automotive students (modes of 3.0, *agree*) suggest they are slightly more likely to handle their problems on their own. Table 20 depicts these findings.

For survey question 21, there were 221 responses. The mean was calculated to be 1.8 (leaning toward *strongly disagree*), and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The mean score indicates that the average response to the statement, “I would only go to counselling if the gender of the counsellor was the same as mine,” was to *disagree*. This

Table 20

Responses to Survey Question 6, "I would fix my own mental health problems on my own, not with the help of a counsellor" by Program (n = 224)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.4	3.0
General Arts and Science	45	20.1	2.4	2.0
Automotive	45	20.1	2.4	3.0
Aviation	125	55.8	2.4	2.0
Total	224	100.0	2.4	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

suggests that most students were willing to see a counsellor of a different gender than their own, and they would not stay away from counselling if the gender of the counsellor were different from their own. Table 21 depicts these findings.

Research Question 2: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing Not to Come for Personal Counselling?

The data to answer research question 2 came from survey questionnaire (Appendix A) Questions 7 through 12. For Survey question 7, which stated, “I would not go to counselling because I would find it difficult to trust a counsellor,” there were 223 responses. The mean was calculated at 2.2 (close to *disagree*) and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*agree*) for all programs. The mean score indicates that the average response to the question would be to disagree with the statement, although, because it is 2.2 and not 2.0, the findings indicate that there were a number of people who found it somewhat difficult to trust a counsellor. The findings suggest that distrust of counsellors is generally not a reason why these students would stay away from counselling. Table 22 depicts these findings.

For survey question 8, “I would not go to counselling if my friends discouraged me,” there were 225 responses. The mean and modal response were both calculated to be 2.0 (*disagree*). The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) for all programs. The findings suggest these students would not let friends

Table 21

Responses to Survey Question 21, "I would only go to counselling if the gender of the counsellor was the same as mine" by Program (n = 221)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.1	1.7	2.0
General Arts and Science	44	20.0	1.9	2.0
Automotive	46	20.8	2.0	2.0
Aviation	122	55.2	1.7	2.0
Total	221	100.0	1.8	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 22

Responses to Survey Question 7, "I would not go to counselling because I would find it difficult to trust a counsellor" by Program (n = 223)

Program	Number of Responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.1	1.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.6	2.2	2.0
Automotive	45	20.2	2.3	2.0
Aviation	123	55.2	2.1	2.0
Total	223	100.0	2.2	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

discourage them from going for counselling. In other words, they would still go to counselling even if their friends tried to discourage them from going. Table 23 depicts these findings.

For survey question 9, “Going to counselling would make it likely that I would be labeled a ‘psycho’ (someone who was psychologically inferior),” there were 223 responses. These students generally did not think fear of being labeled a “psycho” would keep them from seeking counselling (mean = 1.8, mode 2.0, *disagree*). The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*); however, in only one program (Aviation) did students strongly agree, and only for a total of 3 students. General Arts and Science students had the lowest mean score (1.5), indicating they disagreed most strongly with the statement. The Automotive students scored a mean of 1.6, .2 below the group mean. However, the modal response for LBS students was tied at 2.0 (*disagree*) and 3.0 (*agree*). Table 24 depicts these findings.

For survey question 10, “I would not go to counselling because I fear my friends would laugh at me or shun me as a result,” there were 226 responses. The mean was calculated to be 1.6 (stronger than *disagree*) and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), but only one program, this time Automotive, had a *strongly agree* response and only from 1 student. The mean score indicates that the average response to the question would be to disagree with the statement that students would not go to counselling because they fear their friends would laugh at them or shun them as a result. Since the mean is 1.6 and not

Table 23

Responses to Survey Question 8, "I would not go to counselling if my friends discouraged me" by Program (n = 225)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	1.9	2.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.4	2.0	2.0
Automotive	47	20.9	1.8	2.0
Aviation	123	54.7	1.9	2.0
Total	225	100.0	2.0	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 24

Responses to Survey Question 9, "Going to counselling would make it likely that I would be labeled as a 'psycho' (someone who was psychologically inferior)" by Program (n = 223)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	1.8	Tied 2.0 & 3.0
General Arts and Science	45	20.2	1.5	2.0
Automotive	47	21.1	1.6	2.0
Aviation	122	54.7	1.9	2.0
Total	223	100.0	1.8	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

2.0, there were numbers who felt they strongly disagreed with the statement. Once again, the General Arts and Science students had the lowest mean score at 1.4, .2 below the group mean, indicating they felt more strongly that this would not be a reason for not seeking counselling than did the other students. Table 25 depicts these findings.

For survey question 11, "I would not go to counselling because I would fear that I would not be accepted by the college counsellor for who I am," there were 224 responses. The mean was calculated at 1.7 (a little stronger than *disagree*) and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*agree*) for all programs. That is, the respondents felt fairly strongly that fear of not being accepted by the college counsellor for who they were would not keep them from seeking counselling. Again, students in the Automotive program felt this a little more strongly than did the other students (mean 1.6). Table 26 depicts these findings.

For survey question 12, "I would not go to counselling because I would fear that the counsellor would report me if I were honest in what I said to him/her about who I am and what I have done," there were 226 responses. Both the mean and the mode were calculated to be 2.0 (*disagree*). The students disagreed with the statement that they would not go to counselling because they would fear that the counsellor would report them if they were honest in what they said to him/her about who they were and what they have done. The Literacy and Basic Skills students were somewhat more likely to stay away from counselling for this reason (mean 2.2). The General Arts and Science students felt

Table 25

Responses to Survey Question 10, "I would not go to counselling because I fear my friends would laugh at me or shun me as a result" by Program (n = 226)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	3.9	1.6	2.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.3	1.4	1.0
Automotive	47	21.0	1.7	1.0
Aviation	124	54.8	1.7	2.0
Total	226	100.0	1.6	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 26

Responses to Survey Question 11, "I would not go to counselling because I would fear that I would not be accepted by the college counsellor for who I am" by Program (n = 224)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	1.8	1.0
General Arts and Science	44	19.6	1.7	2.0
Automotive	47	21.0	1.6	1.0
Aviation	124	55.4	1.7	2.0
Total	224	100.0	1.7	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

most strongly that this was not a reason (mean 1.7) for staying away from counselling.

Table 27 depicts these findings.

Research Question 3: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing to Return for Personal Counselling?

The data to answer research question 3 came from survey questions 13, 14, 15, and 16 (Tables 27-30).

For survey question 13, “I would return to counselling if I found the first session helpful and if I felt there was still more to discuss,” there were 228 responses. The mean was calculated at 3.2 (a bit stronger than *agree*) and the modal response was 3.0 (*agree*). The students generally agreed with the statement that students would return to counselling if they found the first session helpful and they felt there was still more to discuss. Interesting enough, students in the Aviation program, which made up the largest percent of respondents ($n = 126$; 55.3%), were the only students to lean towards disagreeing with the statement (mean = 2.4). Table 28 depicts these findings.

For survey question 14, “I have gone to a college counsellor for help at least once,” there were 222 responses. Only 14.9% of the students ($n = 33$) answered *yes*, while 85.1% ($n = 189$) answered *no* in response to the statement, “I have gone to college counselling for help at least once.” Students in the General Arts and Science program ($n = 46$; 20.7%) had the highest number of affirmative responses, ($n = 17$; 37%). Aviation students were next with 13 students, of whom 11% admitted having gone for counselling help. Furthermore, the Automotive program, with an almost identical number

Table 27

*Responses to Survey Question 12, "I would **not** go to counselling because I would fear that the counsellor would report me if I were honest in what I said to him/her about who I am and what I have done" by Program (n = 226)*

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.2	2.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.4	1.7	2.0
Automotive	47	21.0	1.8	2.0
Aviation	124	55.0	2.0	2.0
Total	226	100.3	2.0	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 28

Responses to Survey Question 13, "I would return to counselling if I found the first session helpful and if I felt there was still more to discuss" by Program (N = 228)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	3.9	3.1	3.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.2	3.3	3.0
Automotive	47	20.6	3.1	3.0
Aviation	126	55.3	2.4	3.0
Total	228	100.0	3.2	3.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

of students ($n = 45$; 20.3%), had the lowest number of *yes* responses ($n = 1$; 2.2%) and by far the highest *no* responses ($n = 44$; 97.8%). Literacy and Basic Skills and General Arts and Science, on the other hand, had high *yes* response rates (22.2% and 37.0% respectively), while the two apprenticeship programs (Automotive and Aviation) had the lowest *yes* response rates (2.2 % and 11.0% respectively). Table 29 depicts these findings.

For survey question 15, “If you have gone to campus counselling for personal counselling more than once, what were some of the reasons you returned?” there were only 49 responses. It is interesting that according to Survey question 14, “I have gone to a college counsellor for help at least once,” of the 222 students responding, only 33 students (14.9%) indicated *yes*. However, in response to Question 15, 49 students (16 more) indicated they had gone “more than once.” The top three reasons given by students who admitted they had gone to campus counselling for personal counselling more than once were, “A positive experience the first time” ($n = 22$; 44.9%), “Felt I had a positive relationship with the counsellor” ($n = 11$; 22.4%), and last, “Other” ($n = 6$; 12.2%). Table 30 depicts these findings.

The narrative responses written in addition to what students indicated by checking a box illustrate some specific reasons for coming more than once for personal counselling. Examples of statements made that can be attributed to either a positive experience the first time or a positive relationship with the counsellor are varied: A GAS student wrote, “I returned because I felt comfortable talking to a counsellor. I felt

Table 29

Responses to Survey Question 14, "I have gone to college counselling for help at least once" by Program (n = 222)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	n responses by program			
			Yes		No	
			n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.1	2	22.2	7	77.8
General Arts and Science	46	20.7	17	37.0	29	63.0
Automotive	45	20.3	1	2.2	44	97.8
Aviation	122	54.9	13	11.0	109	89.0
Total	222	100.0	33	14.9	189	85.1

Table 30

Responses to Survey Question 15, "If you have gone to campus counselling for personal counselling more than once, what were some of the reasons you returned?" by Program (n = 49)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Reasons for returning					
			A	B	C	D	E	F
			n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
General Arts and Science	21	42.9	5	23.8	4	19.0	3	14.3
			0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Automotive	4	8.2	1	25.0	1	25.0	0	0.0
			0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Aviation	24	48.9	16	66.7	0	0.0	1	4.2
			1	4.2	1	4.2	3	12.5
Total	49	100.0	22	44.9	5	10.2	4	8.2
			1	2.0	11	22.4	6	12.2

Note. A. Positive experience the first time; B. Know what to expect in counselling, e.g., had previous experience in high school; C. Saw no other alternative; D. Parents have spoken favourably about counselling; E. Felt I had a positive relationship with the counsellor; F. Other.

“They will want to help you.” A third GAS student wrote with respect to the *Saw no other alternative category*, “I suffered with depression in high school. Had no friends, was shy and abused sexually, needed someone who cared for me.” One Aviation student wrote, “[The] Counsellor was from my own country and I felt comfortable speaking with her.” In the *Other* category, a second Aviation student wrote, “Required math tutoring.”

For survey question 16, “Please list any other reasons which would make you want to return to counselling if you felt this would be helpful,” there were only 32 responses (14.0% of $N = 228$). When students were asked to list their own reasons (other than those given in Question 15) which would make them want to return for counselling, the top three reasons were: “Problem solving, received advice and information” ($n = 12$; 37.5%), “Felt understood, comfortable with the counsellor” ($n = 7$; 21.9%), and last, “Experiencing personal stress, depression” ($n = 5$; 15.6%). The GAS program had the highest number of respondents with 14 (43.8%), and Aviation was second with 11 (34.3%). Table 31 depicts these findings.

Examples of narrative responses for survey question 16 by theme are:

Felt understood

- Pretty much what I said: it’s a number of factors why I came back. Primarily it was that I felt comfortable talking to the counsellor. I felt the counsellor understood what I was going through.
- I felt that I can trust the counselor.
- Acted more like a friend than an object or someone doing their job.

Table 31

Responses to Survey Question 16, "Please list other reasons which would make you want to return to counselling if you felt this would be helpful" by Program (n = 32)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses per reason											
			A		B		C		D		E		F	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
General Arts and Science	14	43.8	3	21.4	4	28.6	2	14.3	3	21.4	1	7.1	1	7.1
	7	21.9	4	57.1	3	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Aviation	11	34.3	0	0.0	5	45.4	3	27.3	0	0.0	1	9.1	2	18.2
Total	32	100.0	7	21.9	12	37.5	5	15.6	3	9.4	2	6.3	3	9.4

^aArrived at by theme analysis

Note. A. Felt understood, comfortable with the counsellor; B. Problem solving, received advice and information; C. Experiencing personal stress, depression; D. Career/educational counselling; E. More to do; F. Other

Problem Solving

- Get tips on how to approach a person/party who is difficult to talk to.
- Give ideas to solve my problem.
- Good information; patience from counsellor; overall air of support and understanding.
- Because everyone needs help from others and will need someone to give an advice or help. Everyone has stress.

Experiencing personal stress

- Stress, depression, family.
- Personal problems.
- No other choice.
- Keep yourself free of worries, thoughts, get a load off your chest.

Career/Educational

- Being confused about what program to go into.
- Career choice.
- Helped sort out my problem; made me realize a different side to a problem.

More to do

- If I have issues that are unresolved.
- If I had more to talk about.

Other

- I would not go to campus counselling because I don't feel like I need to talk to anybody who is not a close friend.

The findings suggest that as long as the students who responded would find the first session helpful, they would return for more sessions for a variety of reasons. Of the

49 students who indicated they had gone for counselling more than once, 32 (65.3%) indicated they would want to return for counselling for a variety of reasons. This suggests students would return if they had a positive experience the first time or had a positive relationship with the counsellor. There were several themes that emerged. Other factors in returning were that they received problem solving help, advice or information; they felt understood by the counsellor and comfortable with him/her; and they were in personal stress or depression. Knowing what to expect in a session the second time, and parents having spoken favourably about counselling were not identified as strong factors in why students came back. This is somewhat surprising, as I expected as a consequence of my experience as a counsellor that the home environment would provide encouragement for students to access counselling and that knowing what to expect would be an important factor in students coming back since they would then be familiar with how a session would go and what was involved. I am not surprised that students indicated that the main reason they came back was because they had a positive experience the first time (44.9 % in survey question 15). This is a very general statement and perhaps too general to be of much help. It does indicate, however, that the students did get something of value in their visit. When I tried to find out what they might have gotten out of counselling, I was not surprised to see that most returned because they felt they received some benefit: A problem was solved, advice given and information relayed. In my experience, I have found that students are often concrete thinkers and want to get concrete help. But it is reassuring to see that they also emphasize that they had a good relationship with a counsellor based on feeling understood and comfortable, since in personal counselling it

is often the relationship that provides the context for new growth and an ability for the students to overcome the problems.

Feeling understood by the counsellor and having a positive experience relates to Rogers's counselling theory, in that it is the responsibility of the counsellor when working with a client to accurately experience and be aware of the communication of that person (Sharf, 1996). When this occurs, the client, who must be either self-aware or be seeking self-awareness, feels understood and listened to. The consequence of this is that his positive self-regard will be enhanced. Once there is an improvement in the positive self-regard, there is an opportunity for further personal and academic enhancement because confidence has been gained. As well, when there is a positive relationship between the counsellor and the client, it is more likely the client will return for subsequent sessions because they feel they are gaining something from the exercise.

Research Question Four: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing to Not Return for Personal Counselling?

The data to answer research question 4 came from survey questions 17 to 20 (Appendix A). For survey question 17, "Even if I went to counselling once, I would not return because of my friends," there were 223 responses. The overall mean was calculated to be 1.6 (*strongly disagree*) and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The mean score indicates that the students disagreed fairly strongly that this would keep them from seeking counselling. Literacy and Basic skills students had the lowest mean score (1.4) and the lowest mode (1.0), indicating they disagreed the more strongly with the statement. Table 32 depicts these findings.

Table 32

*Responses to Survey Question 17, "Even if I went to counselling once, I would **not** return because of my friends" by Program (n = 223).*

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	1.4	1.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.6	1.5	2.0
Automotive	46	20.6	1.7	2.0
Aviation	122	54.7	1.7	2.0
Total	223	100.0	1.6	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

For survey question 18, there were 225 responses. The mean was calculated to be 2.4 and the modal response was 2.0. The mean score indicates that the average response to the statement, “If I did not get exactly what I was looking for in the first session, I would not return for another,” was to *disagree*. The GAS program had the highest mean score at 2.7 ($n = 46$) leaning towards agree while the LBS program had the lowest mean at 2.2, leaning towards *disagree*, and a mode of 1.0, *strongly disagree* ($n = 9$). As a program, the LBS students disagreed more strongly with the statement, “If I did not get exactly what I was looking for in the first session, I would **not** return for another” than the other programs. Table 33 depicts these findings.

For survey question 19, there were 225 responses. The mean was calculated to be 2.0 and the modal response was 2.0 (*disagree*). The mean score indicates that the average response to the statement, “I would not go back to counselling even if the first session was helpful because going to counselling takes extra time and I have lots of other things to do,” was to disagree. There was little variation in the mean scores (from 1.8 to 2.1); however, LBS students disagreed most strongly (mean = 1.8; mode = 1). Table 34 depicts these findings.

For survey question 20, there were 88 responses. When students were asked the open-ended question, “What are other reasons you would not return to counselling?” (besides peer pressure, not getting exactly what they were looking for, and time, addressed in survey questions 17-20), the findings, arrived at from theme analysis,

Table 33

Responses to Survey Question 18, "If I did not get exactly what I was looking for in the first session, I would not return for another" by Program (n = 225)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	2.2	Tied 1.0 & 3.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.4	2.7	2.0
Automotive	47	20.9	2.4	2.0
Aviation	123	54.7	2.4	2.0
Total	225	100.0	2.4	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

Table 34

*Responses to Survey Question 19, "I would **not** go back to counselling even if the first session was helpful because going to counselling takes extra time and I have lots of other things to do" by Program (n = 225)*

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Responses on Likert Scale	
			Mean	Mode
Literacy & Basic Skills	9	4.0	1.8	1.0
General Arts and Science	46	20.4	2.1	2.0
Automotive	47	20.8	2.0	2.0
Aviation	123	54.7	2.0	2.0
Total	225	100.0	2.0	2.0

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree.

indicate that there were four top responses. “Counsellor unhelpful/not understanding”(n = 25; 28.4%) was first, and the *Other* category (n = 14; 15.9%) was second. Explanations for the *Other* category included being reluctant to come back because of a problem the student had and took responsibility for (for example, laziness), or if the advice they received was against their moral beliefs or they felt there was some kind of barrier to getting counselling, perceived or real, for example, not liking the administration or not feeling capable in the English language. Tied for the third and fourth (n = 12; 13.6%) were “Lack of comfort/chemistry” and “Lack of counsellor skill.” The remaining themes were time limited (n = 7; 7.9%), would continue to return; no reason not to return (n = 7; 7.9%), no more help needed; felt satisfied (n = 5; 5.7%), embarrassed at discussion of issues (n = 3; 3.4%), found own solutions (n = 3; 3.4%), combining to a total of n = 25; 26.4%. Examples of each of these themes follow. The highest number of responses were from the Aviation (n = 43; 48.9%) and GAS programs (n = 30; 34.0%). Table 35 depicts these findings.

Examples of themes that emerged from question 20 include:

Counsellor unhelpful/ not understanding

- If I felt the responses were not helpful to my situation, I would not return, I find it pointless and not helpful. Talk goes around in circles and it doesn't really solve anything because even when you leave a counselling session the problems are still there.
- If it was not helpful.

Table 35

Responses for Survey Question 20, "What are other reasons you would not return to counselling?" by Program (n = 88)

Program	Number of responses	Percent of total responses	Reasons for returning								
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
			n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	%
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Literacy & Basic Skills	2	2.3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.0
General Arts and Science	30	34.1	5	13	2	1	3.3	1	2	3	6.6
Automotive	13	14.8	2	2	1	1	7.6	1	1	2	15.3
Aviation	43	48.9	4	10	0	5	11.6	1	3	2	23.2
Total	88	100.0	12	25	3	7	3	5	12	7	15.9

Note. A. Lack of comfort/chemistry with counsellor; B. Counsellor unhelpful/not understanding; C. Embarrassment at discussing issues with counsellor; D. Time limited/work schedule prevented it; E. Found own solutions for problems; F. No more help needed/felt satisfied with level of service; G. Lack of counsellor skill; H. Would continue to return till issues dealt with; no reason not to return; I. Other.

- That the counsellor was not understanding me.
- Maybe I might feel that the counsellor doesn't really know how I am and believe he/she cannot make a correct judgment.
- If I did not go in the first place; If I did not like the counsellor. If counselling was a waste of time the first time I went.
- Counsellor will not (or did not, wasn't able to) understand what I really felt.

Other

- I really don't like the administration here. They are a bunch of
- Laziness.
- I'm really paranoid and feel any information about my personal feelings known to others will be used against me. I'm stoic and tend not to talk to people.
- Other reasons I would not return to counselling is because my English speaking is not that great.
- If advice was given that did not match my moral beliefs.

Lack of comfort/chemistry with counsellor

- If I did not feel comfortable with that person.
- If I was not comfortable discussing my problems with a counsellor.
- No (or lack of) chemistry with the counsellor.
- Scared of the counsellor's analysis of me. Don't want to face the real "truth."
- Incompatibility with the counsellor or their method of counselling.

Lack of Counsellor Skill

- I would not return to counselling if I felt my personal problems would not be kept confidential.

- If the counsellor expressed any sort of homophobia.
- If the counsellor was biased in opinion, not open-minded, not discrete, not helpful.
- Did not believe me.
- If I felt the counsellor was incompetent.
- Felt counsellor was not listening; worked out problems.

Time limited/work schedule prevented it

- Very time consuming.
- Work.

No reason not to return. Would continue to return till issues dealt with

- I would try to go back to counselling because I want to find about what's wrong with me. Time is a big factor that people don't go for counselling. College students have a lot of work from school and work. For me I would come back if counselling helped me.

No more help needed/felt satisfied with level of service

- If I felt satisfied.
- No further counselling seemed necessary. One session was sufficient.

Embarrassment at discussing issues with counsellor

- Embarrassed by what you told the counsellor the first session.
- If I felt I couldn't say some things because of embarrassment. Some problems cannot be discussed without feeling this embarrassment because of the nature of the problem.

Found own solution for problems

- You've solved some or all of your problems.
- Need to learn things on your own sometimes.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

In the literature review I conducted, I did not find any research or article that identified specific reasons or factors that influence students to come for counselling other than race and gender. Unfortunately, race as a variable was a factor that I was unable to assess in the survey because of the college's ethical review committee's concerns, and gender seemed less important than a number of other factors. Other factors noted in the literature, such as transition (Andres, 2001; Curtis, 1974; Marks & Green, 1971) and the referral process (Shelton & Corazzini, 1974), did not directly address factors influencing students to come to counselling and so were not used for the survey questions. Most of the literature I reviewed discussed student counselling in university settings which, while informative, did not address the specific issues I felt were important in the college context.

What was surprising in the findings was how consistent the responses were between those who seemed to be interested in using the counselling service and those who would rather not do so. The mean scores of the responses for the first six survey questionnaire questions varied only .3, from 2.4 to 2.7.

Interpretations for Research Question 1: What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?

With regard to research question 1, the modal responses indicated what I anticipated. With respect to all but one factor (personal distress), student responses suggested that the variables of previous participation, expectations in a session and knowing what to say, mental health as a private responsibility, and fixing mental health problems on their own influenced their likelihood of seeking personal counselling. I had

assumed, before I did the survey, that if students knew what to say and were aware of the ground rules in counselling (knew what to expect in a session) and also believed that mental health could involve another person in a helping function, then they would come for personal counselling if the need was there, and this is what the data bear out. My findings on knowing what would be expected of students and knowing what to say in a session are consistent with those of H.E.A. Tinsley and Benton (1978). Tinsley and Benton found that understanding the purpose of what happens in the interview is among the top expectations and preferences students have in counselling. The findings on mental health perceived to be a private responsibility as well as mental health that should be managed alone are in keeping with the findings of H.E.A. Tinsley and Harris (1976). Tinsley and Harris found that students rated more highly than any other expectation the expectation that counsellors' attitudes and behaviours would manifest trust, genuineness, and openness. Because these students were concerned with the counsellors' trust, genuineness, and openness, one would expect that they might seek them out to discuss personal and confidential matters. This implied that these students saw mental health as something not solely a private responsibility but also something they could use help with. My data (modal scores on the variables of mental health perceived to be a private responsibility and mental health being a problem that should be managed alone) indicate that students want help with mental health. With regard to consistency with Tinsley and Harris, my findings on personal distress using the mean score are unclear. If "personal distress" is interpreted as a particular problem, then one could argue my findings are consistent with Tinsley and Harris, because the students he surveyed expressed a reluctance to come for counselling when they needed help with a specific personal

problem. The students I surveyed reflected a similar reluctance to come to counselling when in personal distress. On the other hand, if “personal distress” is interpreted in a general, nonspecific sense, then my findings are not consistent with Tinsley and Harris since Tinsley and Harris, did find that students did expect to get help from counselling in a general, nonspecific sense. I found no research on how previous family experience with counselling influenced students to come for counselling themselves.

The modal response for the personal distress question (survey question 3) was what I had expected. Students said they would not come for counselling because of personal distress. This is understandable given that the modal responses for the other factors identified above indicated that there was some predisposition and openness toward coming for personal counselling should the need occur.

It is informative to compare the means and modal responses. The modes indicate the most frequent response was that students knew what was expected of them, that they would come to counselling if in personal distress, and they knew what to say in a counselling session (3.0, *agree*). They disagreed (2.0) that mental health was a private responsibility not to be discussed with a counsellor, and they disagreed that they would deal with their mental health problems on their own, not with the help of a counsellor (2.0, *disagree*). The mean scores for these factors were 2.7, 2.4, 2.5, 2.5, and 2.4 respectively. The findings on knowing what to expect, what to say, and fixing mental health problems on one’s own indicate some confidence in going to counselling when in need of help on personal issues, but not a strong commitment, since none of the means were 3 or higher. And yet, it should be noted that because the mean scores for knowing what to expect, personal distress, and knowing what to say were lower than the modes,

some students indicated less confidence by strongly disagreeing with the first three issues (they did not know what was expected, would not go if in personal distress, and did not know what to say). As well, by strongly agreeing with the latter two issues (they saw mental health as a private matter and would prefer to deal with their mental health problems on their own), these students also showed a lack of confidence in counselling. So the mean and modal findings indicate the students are prepared to go for counselling when influenced by certain factors (understanding what is expected in a session, knowing what to say in a session, and fixing mental health problems) but less likely to go “if in personal distress of any kind,” or because they see mental health as a private responsibility. For the factor of personal distress, three out of four programs (LBS, GAS, and Automotive) had modal responses of 2.0 (*disagree*), but the Aviation program had a modal response of 3.0 (*agree*) and also had 54.2 % of the responses for that question ($n = 122$).

The mean findings indicate students would not go for counselling if “in personal distress of any kind.” By way of explanation, it may be that the phrase “personal distress” denoted a state that was too emotional; that is, students might have felt vulnerable in such a state and preferred to handle matters on their own or with friends if they were in that state. As well, the words “of any kind” may have been too general. Perhaps some students thought that they would not go to a counsellor if they were in a minor state of distress, for example, if they had locked themselves out of the house or they had failed to make a payment on their credit card. These would likely qualify as instances of “personal distress” but might seem to be too trivial to bring to a counsellor. Or they may have felt that personal problems are not dealt with by school counsellors. Again, this issue was not

identified in the pilot testing. The intent was to assess if the students thought they could come to counselling with any personal matter.

The other matter to note with regard to the relationship of the mean to the modal responses is that in every case there is enough weight going in the opposite direction of the mode (either *strongly disagree* when the mode is *agree* or *strongly agree* when the mode is *disagree*) to move the mean in the other direction, in some cases, up to half a point. This indicates that while the most frequent response of students was to agree they know what to say and expect in a session and would go to counselling if in distress and to discuss mental health issues and to get help with mental health problems, there are some students who strongly disagree with those statements and hence would seem to not know what to expect or say in a session and would not feel comfortable going to counselling if in personal distress or to discuss mental health issues or to get help with mental health problems from a counsellor. That there were enough responses to move the mean toward or to the midpoint (2.5) in most cases indicates that many students felt strongly about these factors and implies that this is an area where we can enhance student readiness for counselling.

The issue of trust (Marks & Green, 1971) could be seen to be a component in survey questions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 where issues of understanding expectations, seeking help for personal distress, mental health as a personal responsibility, and getting help with mental health problems were raised. The mean findings in the responses to these questions suggest that trust was present for some of the students (the ones who indicated an interest in coming to counselling) but not present for the other students who did not indicate an interest in coming to counselling. The mean score for the issue of personal

distress was low (2.4), indicating a lack of trust or lack of clarity about the role of a school counsellor. I assumed students would come to counselling if they were in personal distress if they trusted counsellors. At the same time, the modal responses, if they reflect some trust in counsellors, indicate that the students had some trust in counsellors on identified issues. In general, the findings are inconsistent with those of Marks and Green, who found hardly any trust between native Indians and non-native university counsellors. However, the two student populations are not identical.

H.E.A. Tinsley and Harris's (1976) findings on expectations may be consistent with my findings about whether students would seek counselling if in distress and, to a lesser degree, whether they wanted to discuss mental health issues with school counsellors. In Tinsley and Harris's findings, the students had little confidence in the ability of the counsellors to actually understand, be helpful, and experience a favourable outcome. In Tinsley and Harris's findings, counsellor attitudes, behaviours (trust, genuineness, openness), and ability to help people in general were found to be important. What I found in this study was that students said they knew what to expect in counselling and what to say—perhaps indicating an acceptance of counselling—but at the same time, they were unlikely to go to counselling if in personal distress, reflecting a lack of faith in counsellor ability in this area. They may be saying they have some confidence in counselling, but when it really comes down to serious personal distress and getting help, they might go elsewhere for help.

In my review of the literature, I found studies that explored the relationship between trust and race of students, and counsellors generally found that when counsellors were white and students were black, the level of trust and the belief they would be helped

decreased (Nickerson et al, 1994; Terrell & Terrell, 1984; Watkins & Terrell, 1988). However, in 1974, Williams found that the trust and self-disclosure level for black students with black peer counsellors was equal to that of black students with white professional counsellors. These findings may indicate that trust and the belief that students may be helped are factors influencing students to come to counselling. No peer counselling program currently operates at the college where this study was done.

Watkins and Terrell (1988) found that race affected the level of client mistrust of black students in a predominantly black college with white counsellors. Mistrust was higher and expectations of counselling were lower in that students felt that the white counsellors would be less accepting, less trustworthy, and less experienced, and they had fewer expectations of a favourable outcome. Given that some of the students in the college campus that was the context of my study were people of colour and that the counsellor at that campus was white, it is possible that race may have been an element in some of the responses in my survey. It is possible the findings indicate that black students or, in our context, students of colour (approximately 50% of students) since these make up a larger number than simply black students, may feel less trust in counsellors and counselling and be less willing to discuss mental health problems with a white counsellor and consequently be less willing to choose to come for personal counselling. This interpretation may explain in part the response mean of 2.5 to survey questions 1 to 6. Unfortunately, the college ethics review committee did not grant permission to explore this variable. It is possible that race may be a factor influencing students in choosing to come for personal counselling, a variable that should be researched in a subsequent study.

Shelton and Corrazzini (1974) found that a good referral would help students to decide to go for counselling. I am assuming part of a good referral would be coaching the student in knowing what to expect in counselling and what to discuss (what to say). I did not survey for referrals as a factor because, based on the literature review, it seemed to be less important than the other variables assessed. But it could be a factor influencing whether students come for counselling or not.

Based on the literature review and my own experience, I assumed that the response to the factors surveyed in research question 1 (survey questions 1-6) would be useful in predicting whether students would choose to come for personal counselling or it might imply what needs to be done to encourage them to do so. I anticipated that if the students understood the expectations of counselling, knew what to say, and felt the counsellor could help with personal distress, they would come. Also, if they felt mental health was more than a private responsibility and if they had problems with mental health, I thought they would come. But the questions I posed did not specifically ask students to identify what the factors are that would bring them for personal counselling. It may be useful to ask that question clearly in future research, perhaps offering a choice of responses and then a comments section for any other factors which I did in research question 4.

Another important variable that I did not ask about was whether or not they had previously heard about counselling and, second, whether they had been referred by anyone. Information on through whom or what they heard may be informative, as well as what they knew or did not know about personal counselling.

Since most students surveyed disagreed that they would go to counselling only if the gender of the counsellor was the same as theirs, it would appear that the counsellor's gender would not be a factor in influencing students to come or not come for counselling (survey question 12, mean = 1.8).

When Rogers's concepts (Sharf, 1996) are considered in conjunction with the findings, we find that the mean response of 2.4 suggests that the students surveyed were aware of a "gap" in their functioning, making them good candidates for successful personal counselling. These were students who reported they would go to counselling if in personal distress. On the other hand, this weak response may also indicate they would not go to personal counselling if in personal distress, which, according to Rogers, means that the students would not be considered good candidates for successful personal counselling. These students would either be unwilling to go to personal counselling, ignoring their distress, or unaware that the presence of a gap would be an indication that they could likely benefit from personal counselling.

In the same way that students were divided over going to personal counselling when in personal distress, they were also divided on their perceptions of mental health, which for Rogers is a sign of whether or not they would be open to looking for and receiving counselling help. The mean response rate of 2.5 leaned towards disagreeing with the statement that mental health was a private responsibility not to be discussed with a counsellor. This can be interpreted to mean that they perceived mental health to be something they would indeed discuss with a counsellor. As well, the mean response of 2.4 suggests that the students surveyed disagreed that they would fix their mental health problems on their own. According to Rogers, these findings indicate that the students

would be agreeing that if they perceived a gap in the functioning of their personal lives, they would look for help by going for counselling. Once again, about half the students perceived mental health to be a private matter not to be discussed with a mental health counsellor. These students would, according to Rogers, not benefit from counselling because they would be unwilling to acknowledge their need for help.

Interpretations for Research Question 2: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing Not to Come for Personal Counselling?

The factors which I thought might keep students from coming for counselling did not seem to affect them. Neither the relationship (difficulty to trust, not being accepted, fear of being reported) with the counsellor nor peer pressure (friends would discourage them from coming, they would be labelled “psycho,” they would be laughed at or shunned) would keep students from bringing personal issues to counselling. That these students seem to trust counsellors and would feel accepted by them and that they would not fear being reported by counsellors implies that they have some level of confidence in the integrity of the counsellors. These findings are not particularly surprising. However, what is surprising is that peer pressure was not perceived to be a factor which would keep them from coming for personal counselling. I anticipated that peer pressure would be particularly strong in the transportation programs since these students spend almost all of their time together with the same students, whereas students in GAS are often with a different cohort in each of their five to six classes. However, students in the automotive program felt most strongly (for survey question 8, mean = 1.8 compared to the overall mean of 2.0) that peer pressure in the form of friends discouraging them from coming to counselling was not a factor in choosing whether or not to come to personal counselling.

It is possible that age played a part in the responses given on peer pressure (survey questions 8, 9, and 10). The GAS program had the youngest group of students, with 97.7% (43 out of 44 students) in the ages of 16-25, and the next youngest group was Automotive with 76.1% in this same age range. The GAS program had two out of three of the lowest mean scores (i.e., they disagreed most strongly) for these questions, with 1.5 for survey question 9 on being labelled “psycho” for coming to counselling and 1.4 for survey question 10 on fearing people would laugh or shun them for going for counselling. The Automotive program had the lowest mean score for survey question 8 regarding friends discouraging students to come for counselling with 1.8. Perhaps the younger students have downplayed the effect of peer pressure on the likelihood of their coming for counselling, which is inconsistent with social development theory regarding vulnerability to peer pressure of teens.

These findings raise the question, what, then, are the reasons why students do not coming for personal counselling? Or what might be keeping them away? If they have confidence in the counselling process and do not feel peer pressure is keeping them away, then what might be stopping them from coming? It is possible that the vast majority of students do not feel that they have personal problems that could be helped with counselling intervention. This would be a rather puzzling finding given my 7 years of experience as a college counsellor and that of my colleagues. Professors and staff frequently report to me that students are in need of help. I have found that students often come for help only once, even though they are nowhere near resolving their issues. So they may perceive that they have no personal counselling issues and may not realize that they do in reality.

A possible explanation of the behaviour is denial (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 379; Weiten, 2004, pp. 532-533), which is one of the defence mechanisms that may be used by people under stress to cope with conflict. If students are somewhat aware of not doing well in their studies as a consequence of a problem in their lives, for example an unresolved personal issue, they might resort to self-deception, where reality is distorted in order to cope with the unpleasant reality. Instead of coming to grips with the difficulty they are experiencing, which may involve facing painful aspects of themselves and requiring significant changes in how they handle themselves, through denial, they actually tell themselves there is nothing the matter and there is no need for seeing a counsellor. Through denial, in the short term, they have managed their stress by pretending the problem does not exist. However, in the long term, denial is usually not a successful strategy (Weiten), as it is unlikely to result in a successful resolution of the problem. Therefore, if students are using denial to help them cope with stresses at college, it is unlikely they will seek out a counsellor even if it would help them with their problems (Weiten, pp. 668-669).

Research question 2 addresses the factors influencing students to choose not to come for personal counselling. I anticipated that lack of trust in counsellors would be a strong barrier for students to overcome were they interested in or needing counselling. Marks and Green (1971) addressed trust as a factor in students seeking counselling. Andres (2001) also implied that trust was a component in the way counsellors dealt with students when student respondents said that counsellors could have helped them make the shift from technical college to university easier. It seems that students were ready to trust counsellors by talking about their problems in making the shift, but concluded that, since

counsellors were actually, in the end, uninvolved in helping them make that shift, there was a reason not to trust them in the future or there was no reason to look to the counsellors for further help.

H.E.A. Tinsley and Harris (1976) found that one of the strongest expectations American university students had of counsellors was that they would be “experienced, genuine, expert and accepting whom they could trust” (p. 173). My findings in response to research question 2, “What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?” are consistent with Tinsley and Harris in that the responses for survey question 7 (would not go because I would find it difficult to trust a counsellor), 11 (would not go to counselling because I would fear that I would not be accepted by the college counsellor), and 12 (would not go because I would fear the counsellor would report me) are that these students did not feel they would have difficulty trusting counsellors. They disagreed that they would not feel accepted by the counsellor, and they did not fear that counsellors would report them. These responses indicate that the students do trust the counsellors, so lack of trust is not keeping them from coming for counselling. Students need to feel trust and acceptance and to feel they would not be reported. The students who participated in this survey seem to trust counsellors, and consequently a lack of trust would not keep them from coming to counselling. As well, it is possible that my findings support H.E.A. Tinsley and Benton’s (1978) findings that beneficial outcomes in counselling are less important than the fact that students want to find counsellors who accept the client as a person of worth and that the counsellors be trustworthy. This is consistent with my findings on trust in that students seem to want a

counsellor whom they can trust, but are not necessarily going to go to them when they are in personal distress.

On the other hand, American research on lack of trust by blacks of white counsellors (Nickerson et al., 1994; Terrell & Terrell, 1984; Watkins & Terrell, 1988; Williams, 1974) is strong, so my findings need to be qualified with the possibility that race could be an important factor influencing students not to come for personal counselling. This variable was not explored in the study because of the concern of the Ethics Review Committee at the college where the study took place. However, even though the counselling staff at this campus was white and about half the students were of colour, the students' responses did not suggest a lack of trust in the counselling staff.

Findings on whether friends and or peers would influence students to choose to not come for counselling were largely that friends and peers are not factors in students' decisions to come to counselling (survey questions 8-10). The respondents in my study disagreed that friends or peers would discourage them from coming, that being labelled "psycho" as a result of coming, and that being laughed at or shunned would cause them to choose to stay away from personal counselling.

These findings are important for two reasons. They are some of the strongest feelings expressed, with mean scores of 1.6, 1.8, and 2.0 (*disagree*). Only one other survey question (17, "Even if I went to counselling once, I would not return because of my friends") had a score of 1.6, and it was about the same issue. Parham and Tinsley (1980) indicated that students would likely seek out their own friends for help on counselling-related issues before they would seek help from a counsellor. My findings are not consistent with those of Parham and Tinsley in that although the students in my

study may hold friends in high regard, their disapproval is not a factor in making a decision to see a counsellor. This study found that this holds true for peers as well. Parham and Tinsley did not address peer impact in their study. The respondents in my study disagreed that being a subject of ridicule would disincline them from going for counselling. They disagreed that fear of being shunned and laughed at for going to counselling would keep them away. These findings indicate a fair degree of self-assertiveness, confidence, and a strong self-image: the ability to go one's own way despite what friends say and a determination to be different if they need to be. These students seem to be able to display behaviours that allow them to get what they need despite possibly having friends who might be trying to distract them from making the right choices for themselves (DeVito, 1996, pp. 359-361). There may also be a different way of interpreting the findings. Perhaps what these students are saying is that colleagues would not refer to peers as psycho, and that the friends they have are good friends who would not laugh or shun friends to mock their decisions (whether or not they agree with them).

I anticipated more agreement on these factors, especially from automotive students because, in my experience, they generally exhibit a more direct style of communication. For example, they are more inclined to say what they feel even if that may hurt colleagues and friends and or make them feel bad. But, if the students do not care what their friends think of their choices, these findings on peer pressure make sense. These findings seem to be consistent with Parham and Tinsley (1980, p. 524) regarding counselling from a close friend, where they value "genuine, accepting, confrontive friends whom they can trust." My interpretation of this is that either students would

confront friends or peers but they would not diminish friends or peers, or students feel they can take this kind of confrontation with a grain of salt and not let it stand in their way of going to counselling if they so wished.

According to Rogers's concepts, a successful personal counselling relationship is possible when student perceptions of counsellors are favourable. These conditions were met with respect to the findings for research question 2. Since students perceived counsellors to be trustworthy, accepting, and worthy of receiving confidential information (survey questions 7, 11, and 12), Rogers would say the counsellors were not an impediment for successful personal counselling to occur. Furthermore, students responded to statements about the influence of friends and peers (survey questions 8, 9, and 10) in a way that indicated they would come to counselling even if their friends discouraged them or mocked them for their choice to go. Since these students would be attending to a responsibility they felt needed attention despite the discouragements of friends and colleagues, Rogers would consider these students to be self-directed rather than other directed and therefore good candidates for personal counselling. Rogers would not feel that the factors probed in research question 2 would keep students away from personal counselling.

Interpretations for Research Question 3: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing to Return for Personal Counselling?

The focus of research question 3 was to find out the reasons why students returned after coming for personal counselling once. If, as a school counsellor, I want to encourage students to return for counselling for a second session and more as needed, then knowing why the students surveyed would return is useful information. I wondered

if the following factors would influence students to return for counselling: if the first session were helpful and there was still more to discuss, if there was a positive experience the first time, if they knew what to expect, if they saw no other alternative, if parents had spoken favourably about counselling, and if they felt they had a positive relationship with the counsellor.

The findings in my study suggest that while students agree with the notion that they would return (for example, in survey question 13, with 228 responses, 216 either agreed or strongly agreed that they would return, the mean was 3.2 and the mode was 3), when they were asked if they had actually gone to counselling, only 14.9% (33 students) said *yes*. This is a much smaller number than the 216 who responded with *agree* or *strongly agree* to question 13. It is strange that in survey question 15, 49 responded to having come to counselling more than once, which is 16 more than those who indicated *yes* in question 14 to having gone to college counselling at least once. As well, in question 16, only 32, and not 49 as in question 15, responded to the question asking them to list other responses that would make them want to return to counselling. The number 32 responses is closer to the number of respondents who indicated they had gone to personal counselling on campus in question 14 (14.9%).

It is not clear why there should be such a discrepancy in the number of responses to survey questions 13, 14, 15, and 16. It is unclear why only 33 students (14.9%) in question 14 said they had come to counselling once when 49 gave reasons why they had returned to counselling a second time in question 15 and, additionally, why only 32 gave “other” reasons for wanting to return to counselling in question 16. These numbers do not seem to add up correctly, since the 49 in question 15, if they had come to counselling for

a second time, should also have indicated they had come the first time in question 14. Perhaps there was a misunderstanding in what the questions were actually asking. One possible explanation for the drop from 49 (question 15) to 32 (question 16) is that question 15, which got 49 responses, was a check-box type, while question 16, which got 32 responses, was strictly narrative, requiring more thought and effort than simply checking off a box. In this case, it is possible that some of the 49 who checked the boxes in question 15 did not write comments in question 16. As well, since question 16 is really a supplement to or an elaboration of question 15 soliciting reasons why students returned for counselling other than those they had given in question 15, it is possible the students in question felt they had no further reasons to add. However, this interpretation still does not explain the increase in the number of students from 33 (question 14) who indicated that they had gone to counselling at least once to 49 (question 15) who indicated they had gone to counselling more than once.

The responses to the factors that influenced students to return for counselling were largely as anticipated. Students agreed they would return if they found the first session helpful and had more to discuss and indicated that having a positive experience the first time was the most important reason for returning. Based on my experience, I anticipated that the relationship with the counsellor would be the most important factor for students returning, but in one question (15) “Felt I had a positive relationship with the counsellor” was rated second ($n = 11$; 22.4%) and with half the frequency after “positive experience the first time” ($n = 22$; 44.9%), which may mean the counsellor is likely seen as a vehicle for working out issues rather than someone to get to know in a personal way. This interpretation was confirmed in that “problem solving” and “receiving advice and

information” scored first ($n = 12$; 37.5%) in a list of factors arrived at by theme analysis for the next question (16), where only narrative responses were required and given. At the same time, the relationship with the counsellor seemed at least a second-place factor in question 16, because it was indicated by the students in a variety of ways brought together under the phrase, “Felt understood, comfortable with the counsellor” ($n = 7$; 21.9%). As well, it is possible that in question 15 those choosing “positive experience the first time” may have been including the idea of a positive experience with the counsellor, not just an impersonal positive experience of getting help handling a problem. As well, “positive experience the first time” was the first on the list of possibilities to be checked, so it is possible that some assumed it meant positive experience in a relationship with a counsellor, checked it off, and did not read down the list to the forth of five options, “positive relationship with a counsellor.”

In terms of interpreting the findings, it seems odd that the vast majority of students said they would want to return if the first session was perceived to be helpful and there was more to discuss, but at the same time very few had actually tried personal counselling even just once. This may mean they had no reason to go, or it may indicate a lack of trust or denial when it comes down to the reality of making the decision to go or not. While this interpretation is not consistent with my findings, it is possible it could be explained in terms of a discrepancy between espoused beliefs and beliefs in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1987), meaning that while students may indicate on paper that they trust counsellors and the counselling process, when it comes down to acting on that trust, they shy away from doing so. For those who said they returned because they had a positive experiences and a positive relationship with the counsellor,

trust in the counsellor and the counselling process was likely part of their experience.

This is also likely the case for those who returned because they got information, solved problems, and dealt with personal stress, but perhaps it was less of a factor for them.

Some reasons for returning were unspecified, simply listed as “other.”

Terrell and Terrell (1984) found that mistrust is a factor in black students prematurely terminating from counselling with white counsellors. This implies that trust is a factor in whether or not students return to counselling for black, and perhaps white, students. Thompson et al. (1994) found that a willingness to return for counselling was related to counsellors' use of a cultural content orientation, meaning an explicit reference to culture in communication with the student as opposed to a universal orientation which does not include the reference. The comments responding to survey question 15, “If you have gone to campus counselling for personal counselling more than once, what were some of the reasons you returned?” seem to bear this out indirectly, in that students who returned for counselling indicated that “positive experience” the first time and positive relationship with the counsellor were the top two reasons for returning. This is consistent with the comment made by an Aviation student in response to survey question 15, that since the counsellor was from her own country she felt comfortable speaking with her. Positive experience could mean different things but does not exclude trust and cultural orientation. A positive orientation with the counsellor would imply a trusting relationship and could also be related to counsellor orientation, although no effort has been made to research counsellor orientation in this study. As well, the other reasons students gave for why they had returned for counselling indicated that problem solving was the top reason

($n = 12$; 37.5 %), but the second ($n = 7$; 21.9%) was that respondents said they “felt understood, [were] comfortable with the counsellor,” which once again implies trust.

According to Rogers (Sharf, 1996), a gap in functioning can be one of the factors that brings people to counselling. In research question 3, this gap can be seen as a factor that contributes to their returning. The findings in research question 3 indicate that students were aware that a gap or discontinuity in their lives would be grounds for returning to counselling. For example, in survey question 13, they agreed with a mean of 3.2 that they would return for subsequent sessions if there were more to discuss. As well, students indicated, although in fewer numbers, that other factors such as seeing no alternatives, needing problem solving, feeling personal stress and or depression, and having more personal counselling work to do would be grounds for returning to counselling. All these factors can be interpreted as being evidence of a gap in their lives that brings them back to counselling.

Another factor, according to Rogers, that makes for successful counselling is the relationship with the counsellor. In research question 3, some of the factors that were probed were related to this relationship: having a positive relationship, a positive experience, and feeling understood and comfortable with the counsellor. Students indicated in varying degrees their sense of comfort in the relationship, and their responses can be interpreted as indicating a satisfaction with the relationship to return to sessions. In other words, according to Rogers, it would seem that most students who responded to the questions related to research question 3 would return to counselling because they felt confidence in the relationship with the counsellor.

Interpretations for Research Question 4: What Factors Influence Students in Choosing to Not Return for Personal Counselling?

I was surprised to see that students rejected the suggestion that it would be friends' peer pressure (survey question 17) or lack of time (survey question 19) that would keep them from returning for counselling, having gone once. With a mean of 1.6 for survey question 17, the students were about in the middle between disagreeing and disagreeing strongly, leaning just slightly toward disagreeing with the notion that friends would keep them from coming back to counselling. The program with the strongest rejection of the statement was LBS (with 1.4), and the weakest were Automotive and Aviation (with 1.7). Nevertheless, there was only a difference of .3 from the highest to the lowest mean, and both mean scores were still in the realm of disagreeing and disagreeing strongly, indicating that the students in all the programs rejected the statement. A substantial number of students in all the programs must have felt very strongly that they disagreed with the statement, because the overall mode was 2.0 and the mean was 1.6. In comparing the response to this survey question to survey question 8, "I would not go to counselling if my friends discouraged me," there is a difference in the overall mean scores; survey question 8 generated a mean of 2.0, and survey question 17 a mean of 1.6. The overall modes, however, are the same, at 2.0. Given this information, what the students may be saying is that if they make a decision to go to counselling once, they would not allow their friends discouraging them from doing so to prevent them. Furthermore, if they decided to return, they would be even less likely to be swayed from returning by their friends.

Also rejected as a reason not to return to counselling was the idea that it would take too much time (survey question 19), with a mean score of 2.0 (*disagree*). The students seem to be saying it is not the extra time needed that is keeping them from retuning to counselling. The range of responses by program was only .3, with LBS having the lowest score (1.8) and GAS having the highest (2.1). Once again, there seems to be a consensus around the statement from students in all programs surveyed.

On the matter of whether the students would return if they did not get exactly what they wanted in the first session (survey question 18), I was mildly surprised by the findings which indicated that students did not see not getting exactly what they wanted as a reason not to return (mean of 2.4). The range of responses for the mean scores by program was .5, with LBS at the low end (2.2, leaning to *agree*) and GAS closer to agreement (2.7, *agree*), slightly wider than for survey questions 17 and 19 where the range of responses for the mean scores was only .3. GAS was the only program that had a mean score leaning toward *agree* (2.7). The overall modal score was 2.0. The LBS program had a tied modal score of 1.0 (*strongly disagree*) and 3.0 (*agree*), which suggests that students were divided into two camps: those who felt that not getting what they wanted would be a reason not to return and those who did not. The range of responses were from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) for all programs. When the mean scores for the GAS (2.7), Automotive (2.4), and Aviation (2.4) programs are compared to the programs' modal scores (2.0 for each), we can see that a substantial number of students would have agreed with the statement, especially in the case of GAS. Nevertheless, with an overall mean score of 2.4 for this survey question, we can say that students indicated that if they did not get exactly what they wanted the first time in a

counselling session, they might still come back. Or, another way of putting it, students disagreed that not getting exactly what they wanted in a first session is the reason they would not come back. At the same time, enough students agreed with the statement to bring about a mean score of 2.4 even though the mode was 2.0, meaning that if they did not get what they were looking for the first time, that was a reason not to return.

Since students rejected the idea that friends or the extra time counselling takes would discourage them from returning to counselling and felt that not getting what they were looking for in the first session was also not a reason to not return, the question still remains as to what is it that will keep students from returning to counselling? Survey question 20 seems to provide some answers to this question.

In survey question 20, only 88 of the possible 228 respondents, or 38.6% of respondents, answered the question, in contrast to survey questions 17, 18, and 19, which had response rates of 97.8% (17) and 98.7% (18, 19). This is likely because survey question 20, similar to survey question 16, asked for narrative responses only, whereas 17, 18, and 19 were check-box types of questions which are faster to answer and do not require thoughtful explanation which question 20 sought.

In responding to the question, the students seemed to be saying that it was mostly the counsellors, either because they were unhelpful ($n = 25$; 28.4%) or because they were uncomfortable with the counsellor ($n = 12$; 13.6 %) or because the counsellor was lacking in skill ($n = 12$; 13.6%) that would keep them from returning to a session after they had come once. When these numbers for these three themes are added up, we find that 49 out of the 88, or 55.6%, felt that counsellors were the reason they would not return. This

seems like a strong statement, and unfortunately a negative statement against the counselling staff in terms of getting students to return to counselling.

At the same time, some students, though few in number, seemed to be saying they were satisfied with the counselling they were getting and presumably satisfied also with the counsellors: 7 (7.9%) indicated there was no reason not to return, and 5 (5.7%) said they were satisfied with the service or did not need any more help; in other words, there was no need for further counselling at that time. These two themes add up to 13.6%. Another group that did not seem to be holding the counselling staff responsible for not returning were those who had found their own solutions to their problems ($n = 3$; 3.4%).

Another group of students seemed to be facing some kind of barrier to continuing counselling. Seven students (7.9%) indicated they had no time to return to counselling or their work schedules prevented them from doing so. Three students (3.4%) indicated they were embarrassed about talking to a counsellor. The “other” category ($n = 14$; 15.9%) indicated a variety of factors, including administration, language, laziness, fear, or uneasiness with the idea of counselling.

While 49 of 88 (55.6%) respondents to the question, “What are the other reasons you would not return to counselling?” seem to be saying they felt the counsellors were the reason, it has to be pointed out that many students were likely speculating about the reasons they would not return because, once again, in survey question 14, only 33 of 222 respondents (14.9%) indicated that they had come to college counselling at least once, and 189 (85.1%) indicated they had not. So, in survey question 20, some of the 49 respondents who seemed to be saying the counsellors were responsible for their not

returning had, according to survey question 14, never come and were speculating as to why they might not return if they were to come once.

While the Aviation program made up the largest number of respondents for survey question 20 ($n = 43$; 48.9%), only 13 (11.1%) indicated in survey question 14 that they had come to college counselling at least once. Furthermore, in the best possible scenario for survey question 20, where all of the respondents (13) who indicated they had come to counselling once (survey question 14) make up part of the 43 who responded to survey question 20, this group, answering the question with reported experience, only makes up 30.2% of all the Aviation respondents. This means that a very large number, (30; 69.8%) who answered survey question 20 did so without reporting previous experience of campus counselling and were then likely speculating on why they would not return to counselling. This is important, because since their responses made up almost half the total, they would heavily influence the findings. While speculation was invited, the fact that it seems to have resulted in such a negative commentary on the counselling staff—pointing to counsellor skill and helpfulness as being the main reason for not returning—implies that the responses are based on perception rather than experience. This makes one wonder whether the speculation is grounded in any reality.

For question 20, next to the Aviation program, the GAS program had the second highest number of respondents with 30 (34.1%). For survey question 14, 17 GAS students (37%) indicated they had come for counselling at least once. This means that if, in the best possible scenario, all 17 GAS student who indicated in survey question 14 that they had gone to counselling at least once made up a portion of the 30 who answered survey question 20, then more than half (56.7%) of the GAS respondents for survey

question 20 would theoretically have had previous experience in counselling, almost double as many as the Aviation students. What this means is that the GAS students' perceptions of the reasons for not returning for counselling would likely have been based in actual experience, whereas the Aviation students' may not. The assumption here is that the GAS students' responses may have been more reliable based on their experience, compared to the Aviation students. One question that seems to arise is why did the students feel that the counselling staff would be the main reason to not return for counselling, and since Aviation students made up almost half the respondents to this question, is there a particular reason that Aviation students felt this way?

The literature surveyed indicates that for black students seeing white counsellors, mistrust and counsellor content orientation (where white counsellors did not use a cultural content orientation) were reasons students did or did not return for counselling. However, the studies I found in the literature did not indicate why white students did not return, although H.E.A. Tinsley and Harris (1976) indicate that trust is high on the list of expectations of most students. Tinsley and Harris did not break down the data according to race.

For research question 4, students indicated they would not be discouraged from returning to personal counselling by their friends (survey question 17, mean of 1.6), which can be interpreted as being an indication of being self-directed. According to Rogers (Sharf, 1996), self-direction is necessary in an effective counselling experience. In terms of being motivated and taking responsibility for their lives, the responses to survey question 19 indicated some willingness to stick with counselling even if it took extra time. However, that commitment to responsibility and level of motivation seemed

to be diminished in their responses to survey question 18, where just over half indicated they would return if they were not getting exactly what they were looking for (mean of 2.4). These findings indicated a variety of levels of commitment to ongoing counselling which can be interpreted in the context of Rogers to mean a wavering of commitment to counselling. For survey question 20, the relationship with the counsellor was portrayed significantly differently than it was in survey question 16, where students indicated a fair degree of comfort with the counsellors. In survey question 20, the responses indicated that the relationship with the counsellors was the main reason students would not return for counselling. Counsellors were perceived as unhelpful, not understanding, lacking in skill, and lacking in comfort and chemistry. All these factors could be interpreted in the light of Rogers to be indicators that the counselling relationship would not work out.

Implications for Further Research

In terms of using triangulation in further research, if student waivers were obtained, it might be possible to use the researcher's experience of students documented through clinical notes and journals in one-on-one sessions on the factors influencing students to come for counselling. As well, it would be advantageous to incorporate the perspective of the counsellors on these issues. This would enable exploration of three perspectives on the research questions. In order to be able to generalize the findings, the research should be expanded beyond one campus to include all campuses at this college as well as other colleges.

On the Likert scale questions, for factors influencing students to come to personal counselling, five out of six mean scores were either 2.5 or 2.4, close to the middle point (2.5) between *agree* and *disagree*. The modal scores and the direction in which the mean

scores leaned (toward either *agree* or *disagree*) were usually anticipated based on my expectations given my experience as a college counsellor. The surprise was the mean score for the personal distress variable. Here students responded with a mean of 2.4, indicating they disagreed that being in personal distress would be a factor which would bring them to counselling. The mode was 3.0, *agree*. As a consequence of this surprising finding, the personal distress variable needs to be explored further to determine why students responded the way they did. As well, it should be clarified to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation by students doing the survey. An implication for the research process is that the use of interviews and focus groups might get at deeper perceptions held by students on topics such as personal distress. Since the modal and mean responses indicated that about half the students would not come to counselling if they were in personal distress, it would be important to determine why that is.

Given that over 53.1% ($n = 26$) of students in survey question 25 indicated they had gone to personal counselling three or more times and my experience is that students using college counselling services come just once if they come at all, it may be that students are using off-campus services for counselling. Further research should explore why students seem more likely to use these off-campus services in the first place and why they are more likely to return to counselling if they are using off-campus services for counselling. What are the perceived differences between the two types of service? Is the issue one of confidentiality? That is, are students reluctant to return to campus counselling because they are afraid their teachers will be notified or others, for example, peers, will know about the nature of their counselling visits?

Since the findings on previous counselling experience of the family and the possible impact it might have on students making the choice to come for counselling were inconclusive, further research is needed in this area.

Responses for some survey questions (e.g., 13 – 16, 20, 25, and 26) were inconsistent. Further research could track individual students' responses, which would give an opportunity to see patterns in consistency of responses and also help to determine the reliability of the information given. As well, by following the response pattern of students throughout the survey, a profile related to specific characteristics (e.g., ages and sex) could be developed, and not just along program lines.

Since a fair number of respondents indicated they had not had experience in counselling, yet at the same time claimed that the counsellors are the main reason for their not returning, further research should examine why students made this statement. This is especially true in the Aviation program and less so in the GAS program. Do the students actually feel this? What are these expressions based on? Has counselling unwittingly contributed to this, for example, possibly by giving impressions to students that make it unlikely they will return? Can counselling do something to address the sentiments in these findings?

While the mean score findings on what influences students to come for personal counselling show students know what to expect, what to say, and disagree that they would fix mental health problems on their own, the findings were only weakly in the direction that was anticipated (agree or disagree, respectively), and so further research should be done on these factors. Further research should also be done on the remaining factors which were in the direction, also weakly, that was not anticipated: past

experience, personal distress, and mental health as a private responsibility. Students also indicated that it was neither time nor peer pressure, nor getting exactly what they wanted in the first session that was keeping them from returning to counselling, but since very few said they did return, there is an implication that something might be discouraging students from returning for sessions. Further research should focus on the identification of expectations and inhibitions related to mental health.

The qualitative data seemed to be most expressive of the reasons students gave for not coming back to counselling, especially when they felt that counsellors were responsible for their early termination. Further research should expand the use of qualitative data to include factors influencing students to come for counselling. This could be done in the form of a checklist and a comments section, which was used to solicit reasons students did not return to counselling. This and other questions could ask whether they had previous knowledge of counselling, through whom that knowledge was communicated, and if they had been referred, who provided the referral.

The literature on peer pressure, also referred to as social influence and pressure to conform, indicates that peer pressure affects adults (Alcock, Carment, & Savada, 2001; Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2002) as well as children and teens (Kendall, Murray, & Linden, 2000; Schaefer, 2001). Given this, my findings that peer pressure is not perceived to be a factor influencing students to not come to counselling and also not to return to counselling is inconsistent with the literature. As a consequence of this, and also because I believe students may be denying the influence that peers have on them, further research on peer pressure and counselling is needed. As well, because it is possible students are using denial as a way of dealing with the discontinuities they experience at college, the

issue of denial should be examined in further research as a possible reason for students not coming to counselling. There should be an examination to find out if students are actually experiencing personal problems that counselling could assist with but are refusing to admit to themselves, along the lines of Rogers's gap in continuity (Sharf, 1996).

The findings indicated that students seemed to trust counsellors, though not with great confidence. At the same time, this trust does not seem to be translated into greater numbers of students coming for counselling. That is, why are the responses for going to counselling if they have a mental health issue so inconclusive? How trusting are students of counsellors and the counselling process? Further research on student trust and counselling is needed. The researchers could ask questions about trusting the counsellor in a different manner from the survey. For example, what are the reasons, if any, you would not trust a counsellor? Would not trusting the counsellor make it less likely that you would (a), come for personal counselling? Or (b), not return having come once? Once again, interviews and various probes could be used to gather data.

Rogers's approach to counselling, which has provided the theoretical framework for this study, emphasizes the need of the counsellor to be congruent with the client. That is, the counsellor needs to understand the clients as they are, without allowing their own feelings to come between them and their work with the clients. As well, there must be unconditional positive regard for the client in order to engender the client's positive self-regard and self-worth. When in a relationship with the counsellor, the client needs to feel cared for, and the goals of the counselling need to be the client's goals and not those of the counsellor. If these qualities are present in the counsellor, the counselling relationship

has a chance to flourish. If the qualities are not present, then the relationship is weakened and the likelihood of a successful relationship is dramatically decreased.

Just as Rogers has expectations of the counsellor in the counselling relationship, he has expectations of the client. Self-awareness, the experience of discontinuity between perception and reality, and the use of masks can be seen to be part of student experience in the counselling relationship. While counsellors strive to be congruent with the students, reaching out in empathy to embrace the student's life experience, the student is responsible to bring self-awareness—the ability to reflect on his or her personal emotional experience—in order for the counselling relationship to succeed. In addition, if the student fails to acknowledge the existence of a discontinuity between their perceptions and of reality itself, in other words, to concede that a gap exists between how they present themselves and who they really are, then the counselling relationship will also likely fail. In this regard, there must be a willingness to admit the use of masks which are used to protect themselves from the experience of discontinuity. If the use of masks is not admitted to, the counselling relationship will fail.

In terms of students not returning following only one session when it is clear to the counsellor that further sessions would be useful to address the student's complex issues, it is possible that a form of denial sets in after a successful session with the counsellor. The client, having met with the counsellor, may feel like they have unloaded their burden and experienced a short term period of relief, long enough anyway, in order to decide not to return for more help since the problem seems to have been dealt with. However, the reality may be that the problem has not actually gone away: it is simply being denied. Further research is needed on this topic to determine whether this is a

possible reason why students do not return after one session when more seem necessary from the counsellor's perspective.

Given my findings on the relationship with the counsellor and whether the counsellor can be trusted, there is much room for further research. The findings on reasons for returning and not returning are contradictory. In both cases the counselling relationship is seen as one of the main reasons, in one case positive, in the other negative, that the clients either returned or did not return. Consequently, the relationship with the counsellor needs further research, especially in the light of the importance Rogers puts on it as a factor in successful counselling (Sharf, 1996). This research should include factors such as students' self-awareness levels, openness to doing psychological work, and perceptions of discontinuities in their lives including espoused beliefs and beliefs in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1987). The counselling relationship needs to be studied with regard to the counsellor's ability to provide a congruent approach to the clients, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Apart from these factors, the impact of the culture and race of students and counsellors should also be researched.

Implications for Practice

Given that on the mean scores students only weakly agreed they knew what to say in a session, knew what to expect, and weakly disagreed that they would fix mental health problems on their own, efforts should be made to address these conditions by reaching out in the form of an educational campaign helping students to gain confidence in knowing what to expect and what to say in a counselling session and to strengthen their notion that getting help from a counsellor to fix mental health issues is a wise choice. As well, some form of education could be aimed at teaching students that

personal distress is usually a sign that tells people they need to see a counsellor and that mental health can be discussed with a counsellor—it need not be handled alone—and that they can be helped with favourable results.

Given that so few students—only about 15%—had made use of the college counselling services, efforts should be made to cultivate the idea that the counselling service is available to help students with personal issues. Posters emphasizing the following could be hung across the campus for student viewing: confidential nature of counselling, counsellors are professionals who do not report your conversation and issues to your teacher or parents, unlike high school guidance.

Given that in one survey question more than 50% (combining categories) of the students saw the counsellors as unhelpful, lacking in skill, and lacking in the ability to make students comfortable, the department should do a review of the counsellors' skills, in the form of reflective practice, to see if these perceptions of counsellors are justified and to see in what way counsellors may have inadvertently contributed to those perceptions and can make improvements in practice if they have. Informal surveys could be conducted with students to gather the following information: How counsellors could be more (a), helpful, (b), skilful, and (c), adept at making students more comfortable in a session and to solicit examples of how counsellors have been (a), helpful, (b), skilful, and (c), adept at making students more comfortable in a session. The department should put some effort into educating students in those programs with the most negative perception of counsellor relationships with students (e.g., Aviation) by communicating the goals of counselling, which include being helpful, skilful, and making the students feel comfortable in a session. As well, consideration should be given to see if there needs to

be a particular approach to counselling different programs, for example, one for apprentice programs and a different approach for the others in order to address the differences in program needs.

Summary

This study was about understanding what brings students to personal counselling and what keeps them from coming and from returning for subsequent sessions. In my experience as a counsellor at this college, I am aware of the high level of personal problems students deal with. The roots of these problems lie in financial instability, being overwhelmed with demands on their time (e.g., single mothers and fathers), working too many hours at jobs, not studying enough, poor choices in relationships and social networks, and lacking in the basics of study skills.

Although students apply to the college with the hope and promise of getting skills for a career that will move them out of their desperate circumstances, the reality is that before long, even in the first semester of the first year, the students are beginning to fail and drop courses, which inevitably is a sign they will be withdrawing from the program or will be placed on academic probation and, later, without major changes to their lives, be suspended. In some cases, 30-50% of students who start programs end up dropping out. As a counsellor wanting to help students through their difficulties, I began this study wondering why so few students made use of the personal counselling service and why, when they did come, so few returned for subsequent sessions, especially when it was obvious their troubles were far from over. My interest was keen because I knew that, in some cases, when students persevered in personal counselling, they experienced notable changes in their lives—they were able to make better choices in relationships and in how

they spent their time, they felt better about themselves and were more accepting of their weaknesses, and they were better able to focus on their studies and both graduate and achieve some measure of career success that they would not have managed had they not finished their program. So, the study was really a way of systematically researching what it was that would influence students to come to counselling and what would keep students away.

The students studied attended a College of Applied Arts and Technology campus in a large multiculturally diverse urban center in Southern Ontario. The campus population was 2,500 in Transportation (Aviation and Automotive), General Arts and Science, and Literacy and Basic Skills upgrading programs ranging from 1 to 2 years. A sample of convenience was used, with 250 students surveyed and a response rate of 91.2%.

A survey questionnaire tool was designed based on themes found in the literature and based on my experience as a counsellor. The themes were developed into variables. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data using a 4-point Likert scale, yes/no questions, check-off lists, and comments sections. The data were analyzed and interpreted based on responses to the research questions that drove this study and the findings in the literature reviewed. The four research questions that guided my research were:

1. What factors influence students in choosing to come for personal counselling?
2. What factors influence students in choosing not to come for personal counselling?
3. What factors influence students in choosing to return for personal counselling?

4. What factors influence students in choosing not to return for personal counselling?

All six of the modal scores on the factors influencing students to come for personal counselling were anticipated. The mean scores for these factors were partly expected and partly not. Three of the mean scores (for knowing what to expect, what to say, and fixing mental health problems on their own) were anticipated, but were only weakly in the direction that was expected, *agree* or *disagree*). Two mean scores were not anticipated, those of personal distress and mental health as a private responsibility. On factors that would incline students to not come for counselling, students seemed to trust counsellors and feel accepted by them, but not with a great deal of confidence. They rejected the notion that peer pressure would dissuade them from coming to counselling or prevent them from returning to counselling. Students returned to counselling because they had a positive experience and or had a positive relationship with the counsellor. Surprising, and in a single finding only, students contradicted the findings on the student-counsellor relationship just mentioned indicating they would not return to counselling because counsellors were perceived by them to be unhelpful, lacking in understanding and skills, and unempathic.

The main implications for further research and practice are that the personal distress variable needs to be explored given that the mean score findings on it were unexpected. Further research is needed on why so few students use personal counselling services on campus and why students seem to prefer to use off-campus counselling if they choose to return to counselling. Given the one instance of a contradictory finding on the student counsellor relationship, this issue should be explored. As well, the variables

of trust, expectations (knowing what to say, what to expect), and perceptions of mental health and peer pressure and denial should also be explored. The findings indicate that the implications for practice are that the counselling service needs to reach out to students to inform and educate them about the availability of personal counselling and also the goals of the counselling service in terms of providing to students a skilled, helpful, understanding service that is worthy of their trust. Furthermore, there should be an assessment by counsellors of their counselling relationship skills and improvements in skills and techniques should be made where criticisms are valid.

Conclusions

One of the main conclusions of this research, and a surprising one at that, was that, on average, students indicated, albeit weakly (mean, 2.4), they would not go to personal counselling if they were in personal distress. In other words, personal distress was not one of the factors that would influence students to come for personal counselling (research question 1). One possible explanation for this surprising finding is that it is possible that this group did not possess enough positive self-regard to register that personal distress often brings people to ask for help and counselling, as Rogers would expect (Sharf, 1996). This means that these students might be lacking an essential element, without which it would be hard to imagine that they would want to come to counselling. If this were the case, the question then becomes, how does the counsellor go forward from here with these students? How does one engender positive self-regard in students who likely are not even aware they are missing this element in the first place? Or if they are aware that they lack positive self-regard, they may not recognize it as an essential element in becoming aware that they are experiencing personal distress. This

explanation seems to explain a phenomenon mentioned earlier in the introduction, where students in seemingly serious emotional trouble would come to counselling once and then not return, even when encouraged by the counsellor to do so because there would still be so much more emotional work to do.

It has been an assumption of mine that students would be aware of their own need of counselling, but I may have misjudged their level and ability to be self-aware. Nor did I see that I might, as a counsellor, have a role in making students aware of their self-regard, positive or negative. Perhaps what this research is showing is that there may be an essential role for counsellors to introduce to students some basic notions of positive self-regard so that they might be able to begin to face their personal distress and also begin to ask for help.

With regard to the findings on the relationship with counsellors, it is hard to imagine how students can give what seems like contradictory messages. The findings in research question 2 indicated that the counsellors were not an impediment to students either initially choosing to go for counselling or to return to counselling. Counsellors were perceived as accepting, reliable with confidential information, and, albeit to a lesser degree, also trustworthy. In research question 3, students said they would return because they had a positive experience the first time and because they were helped with problem solving, information, and advice, which implies a favourable rapport. They also clearly stated a second most frequent reason for returning was because they felt they had a positive relationship with the counsellor and they felt understood and comfortable. It was only in research question 4 where students seemed to completely reverse themselves and give responses where counsellors were perceived as the opposite of what was found in

research questions 2 and 3. The findings for research question 4 were that counsellors were seen as unhelpful, not understanding, lacking in skill, and providing a relationship lacking in support and chemistry.

One suggestion that has been offered for explaining this contradiction is that students with this negative view were not actually responding out of an experience of counselling, which was what was requested, but rather out of speculation. What the motivation for this might be is not clear. It may be that some students feel alienated in this large institution and see a survey as a way to anonymously criticize an aspect of its service which they can do without fear of consequence. That students might feel this is their only outlet for comment is regrettable. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that whether or not these students actually experienced counselling, their perception of it as presented in the findings is that counselling would not benefit them, and this itself is worth noting. At the same time, it should be made clear that the negative perceptions of the counselling relationship presented in research question 4 were the results of only one survey question out of six having to do with the counselling relationship. The findings for the other five survey questions on the relationship presented the counselling relationship with students in a favourable light.

With regard to research questions 2 and 4, it is hard to believe that peer pressure was not acknowledged as a factor in students deciding not to come for counselling, especially because the vast majority (77%; $n = 172$) of students were under 25 years of age. This suggests a possible reason why students do not come to counselling. This explanation can also be used to understand why students would fail to admit to feeling peer pressure to stay away from counselling. To admit that peer pressure was keeping

students away from counselling would be an admission of failure on the part of students and perhaps an admission that they might even feel intimidated. If the denial theory is correct, then these feelings are best not faced. This would be unfortunate. First, the vast majority of students (85.1%; $n = 189$) admit they do not use counselling on campus, and then, those that actually need the service but do not come because of peer pressure cannot even face up to admitting that their peers may have a role in keeping them away. Once again, Rogers's concept of positive self-regard (Sharf, 1996) is worth noting, for it would help these students in acknowledging a gap between what they want to do (get counselling) and what they actually end up doing (being persuaded by their peers to not get help).

As a possible explanation for so few students making use of the college counselling service even just once, it is worth mentioning that out of 224 respondents, only 41 or 18.3% of the students were female; the other 183 or 81.7% being male. These numbers are likely because most of the students surveyed were in transportation programs, which usually attract mostly male students. Since one could expect that female students would be willing to use counselling and therapy services more so than male students (Bernstein & Nash, 2002), this finding may help to explain why so few students in this survey said they made use of counselling at the college. It is possible that if the numbers of females were higher, as they are in other programs at different campuses (e.g., nursing, child studies, and community services), the findings would have been different, perhaps indicating greater use of counselling. This is a good reason to repeat this survey at other campuses with different gender and program compositions.

As well, if race were included in the study as a demographic criterion, which it was not because of ethics committee concerns, I might have been able to see if there was a correlation between race and my findings. It is possible that some races and cultures frown on making use of counselling services, and if this is the case with our students, it would also explain the limited use they made of counselling.

The main contribution of my study to the profession is that it is clear that at one CAAT campus with a high male population, most of whom were in transportation programs, the vast majority of students do not make much use of personal counselling services. While these circumstances have been suspected, it is useful to have it clearly demonstrated through a survey. In addition, I have presented research on the factors influencing students to either come or not come, and return or not return to personal counselling which was not available before. The assumption that personal distress would invariably bring students to counselling is unfounded; students disagreed, albeit weakly, with this notion. This is important because most counsellors would make the assumption that personal distress would be a factor that would influence students to come for personal counselling. Also noteworthy is a proposed connection between Rogers's theory of positive self-regard and student awareness, or lack of awareness, of their need for counselling.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire for Students

Title: Factors in deciding whether or not to come for personal counselling on campus

Introduction

The following statements are possible factors which may influence your decision to go or not to go for personal counselling on campus. For each statement, indicate your answer using the rating scale or selection of possible responses next to each question.

- Record your likely response by checking off only the response (*strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree* or *strongly agree*) that most accurately reflects your feeling.
- **DO NOT** put your name or any other identifying information on the answer sheets, other than what is asked. Your responses will be kept in strictest confidence. Your answers will be combined with those of other students and reported only in the form of group responses. No individual respondent will be identifiable in any reporting of the data.

Student Survey Questions

Please check off your most appropriate response below:

Part A. Question	Response Please check off your response
1. Someone in my family has previously participated in personal counselling and found it helpful or certainly not negative.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
2. I understand what would be expected of me in a counselling session.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
3. I would go for counselling if I were in personal distress of any kind.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
4. I would know what to say if I were in a counselling session.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
5. I believe that my mental health is my private responsibility, not to be discussed with a college counsellor.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
6. I would fix my own mental health problems on my own, not with the help of a counsellor.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
7. I would not go to counselling because I would find it difficult to trust a counsellor.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
8. I would not go to counselling if my friends discouraged me.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
9. Going to counselling would make it likely that I would be labelled as a "psycho" (someone who was psychologically inferior).	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
10. I would not go to counselling because I fear my friends would laugh at me or shun me as a result.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
11. I would not go to counselling because I would fear that I would not be accepted by the college counsellor for who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree
12. I would not go to counselling because I would fear that the counsellor would report me if I were honest in what I said to him/her about who I am and what I have done.	<input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree

<p>13. I would return to counselling if I found the first session helpful and if I felt there was still more to discuss.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree</p>
<p>14. I have gone to a college counsellor for help at least once.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>15. If you have gone to campus counselling for personal counselling more than once, what were some of the reasons you returned? Comments: Which one of the above was the strongest factor? _____ Please add any comments about why you returned. Use the back of this page if you need more room.</p>	<p>Check off all that apply. a) <input type="checkbox"/> Positive experience the first time b) <input type="checkbox"/> Know what to expect in counselling, e.g., had previous experience in high school c) <input type="checkbox"/> Saw no other alternative d) <input type="checkbox"/> Parents have spoken favourably about counselling e) <input type="checkbox"/> Felt I had a positive relationship with the counsellor f) <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain.</p>
<p>16. Please list any other reasons which would make you want to return to counselling if you felt this would be helpful.</p>	
<p>17. Even if I went to counselling once, I would not return because of my friends.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree</p>
<p>18. If I did not get exactly what I was looking for in the first session, I would not return for another.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree</p>
<p>19. I would not go back to counselling even if the first session was helpful because going to counselling takes extra time and I have lots of other things to do.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> StronglyDisagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> StronglyAgree</p>
<p>20. What are other reasons you would not return to counselling?</p>	

21. I would only go to counselling if the gender of the counsellor was the same as mine.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree
22. Have you ever gone for professional counselling on a personal issue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
23. If yes, where? 24. If no, go to question 27.	<input type="checkbox"/> At college. <input type="checkbox"/> Outside college? <input type="checkbox"/> Both?
25. How many times?	<input type="checkbox"/> Once <input type="checkbox"/> Twice <input type="checkbox"/> Three or more
26. If you have never gone to campus counselling, would you, at any time, consider going to counselling for help on a personal issue? Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Part B. Please check all that apply:	
1. Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
2. Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41+
3. Year at college	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd <input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd
4. Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> General Arts and Science <input type="checkbox"/> LBS <input type="checkbox"/> Applied Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering
5. Campus (for this course)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ashtonbee <input type="checkbox"/> Warden <input type="checkbox"/> Progress <input type="checkbox"/> CCC
6. Previous education prior to entering college	<input type="checkbox"/> High school <input type="checkbox"/> College <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian/Other University <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian/Other
7. Highest Level attained	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Degree
8. First Language	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____
Occupation of Parent	
9. Mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Labourer/Cashiers <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Representative/Clerk <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Operator <input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Skilled Trade or Occupation <input type="checkbox"/> Paraprofessional <input type="checkbox"/> Professional <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Other Explain: _____
10. Father	<input type="checkbox"/> Labourer/Cashiers <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Representative/Clerk <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Operator <input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Skilled Trade or Occupation <input type="checkbox"/> Paraprofessional <input type="checkbox"/> Professional <input type="checkbox"/> Management <input type="checkbox"/> Other Explain: _____

Appendix B
Letter of Information for Students
Brock University Department of Education

Title of Study: A descriptive study of the factors influencing students to seek or not to seek personal counselling on a college campus located in Toronto.

Researchers: Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen (M.Ed. Student Investigator) and Dr. Katharine Janzen (Faculty Supervisor)

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Education Degree from Brock University I am required to complete a research project that addresses important educational issues. I am inviting the students of several classes at three campuses to participate in this research study that will be conducted by me under the direction of my project supervisor, Dr. Katharine Janzen.

The purpose of this study is to explore what are the factors that influence students to go to or not go to personal counselling at a campus counselling centre. The findings will enable me and other counsellors to enhance the effectiveness and value of the personal counselling service.

You will be asked to complete a written questionnaire that will likely take approximately 20 minutes during one of your classes. Questions will consist of your perceptions of the factors influencing students to seek or not to seek personal counselling as well as personal counselling as well as demographic information

Participation in this *research study* is *entirely voluntary*. Participating or not participating in this study will *not* affect your grades in any way. Participants may abstain and are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason(s) without explanation, penalty or gain. Participants may also choose to not answer any questions you feel are intrusive.

All data collected will be kept confidential and securely locked in a file cabinet. Only the researcher and his project supervisor will have access to the data. None of the participants will be identifiable in any reporting of the findings.

A summary of the findings of this study will be available to participants. It will be posted in the Counselling Office of the College in September, 2003.

I wish to thank you in advance for participating in this research study. By participating, you are assisting in gaining an improved understanding of personal counselling.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File# 02-217) and the College's Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix C
Consent Form: Students in Selected College Classes
Brock University Department of Education

Title of Study: A descriptive study of the factors influencing students to seek or not to seek personal counselling on a college campus located in Toronto.

Researchers: Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen (M.Ed. Student Investigator) and Dr. Katharine Janzen (Faculty Supervisor)

Name of Student Participant: (please print) _____

I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore factors influencing college students to seek or not to seek personal counselling.

I agree to complete a questionnaire survey to be distributed in class. I understand that there is no obligation for me to answer any questions or participate in any aspect of this project that I may consider intrusive.

I understand the time commitment will be approximately 20 minutes.

I understand that participation in this *research study* is *entirely voluntary*. Participants may abstain and are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason(s) without explanation, penalty or gain. Participants may also choose to not answer any questions you feel are intrusive.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and secure and that no participant will be identifiable in any reporting of the data or findings. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.

I have read and understood the relevant information and agree that signing this form indicates free consent.

Participant's

Signature _____ **Date:** _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File# 02-217) and College's Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen at 416 469 1066, or Dr. Katharine Janzen at 416 491 5050, ext. 2080 or Ms. Debra Van Oosten, Brock University Ethics Research Officer 905 688 5550 ext. 3035 or Ms. Eva Aboagye, College's Research Officer at 416 289 5000 ext. 3765. In an emergency, contact Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen at 416 289 5000, ext 7246.

A summary of the findings of this study will be available to participants. It will be posted in the Counselling Office of the College in September, 2003. Please contact Spencer for a copy.

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D

Letter of Appreciation to Students

To be posted in the Counselling Office

Dear participant:

I wish to thank you for having participated in this research study. By participating in this study, you are assisting in gaining an improved understanding of personal counselling.

Posted below are the findings of the study:

If you have any questions, please contact Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen at 416 289 5000 ext. 2627 or Dr. Katharine Janzen at 416 491 5050 ext. 2080.

Thank you.

Appendix E
Brock University Research Ethics Board's Approval

To: katharine.janzen@senecac.on.ca, sovergaa@.ca
 cc: engemann@ed.BrockU.CA, mowen@spartan.ac.BrockU.CA

Subject: REB 02-217, Overgaard-Thomsen -Approved

Senate Research Ethics Board
302

Extensions 3943/3035, Room AS

DATE: March 28, 2003

FROM: Joe Engemann, Chair

Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Katharine Janzen, Education
 Spencer Overgaard-Thomsen

FILE: 02-217, Overgaard-Thomsen

TITLE: Factors influencing the decision of college of applied arts and technology students to come for personal counselling on a college campus

651692.jpg

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as clarified.

This project has been approved for the period of **March 28, 2003 to October 30, 2003** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request. *The study may now proceed.*

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html to complete the appropriate form ***REB-03 (2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.***

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form ***REB-02 (2001) Continuing Review/Final Report*** is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

Deborah Van Oosten
Research Ethics Officer
Brock University <http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/>
phone: (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035 fax: (905) 688-0748

Appendix G Tinsley's Letter of Consent

To: tbartzan@netscape.net, yayong@ilstu.edu, changec@umich.edu, bkim@education.ucsb.edu,
sovergaa@xxxxxxxxcollege.ca, pnttrigger@charter.net, nancy-foster@msn.com

cc:

Subject: EAC-B

Please forgive my delay in responding to your request for the EAC-

B. I retired from the University of Florida last May and have been

occupied in the interim in buying a house in Mukilteo (25 miles north of Seattle, Washington), packing, moving, unpacking ... you get the idea. To make matters worse, we are having some remodeling done to the house and a) all of my professional papers are still in storage, and b) I do not yet have an effective computer network established in my house. All of these delayed my response.

On the other hand, you know that the length of the excuse is directly related the the amount of guild experienced by the person offering the alibi.

In an event, I am attaching copies of the EAC-B and the research manual I distribute with it. Please feel free to use the instrument if it fits your research needs. Also, don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further help.

Good luck with your research.

Howard E. A. Tinsley, Ph.D., FALS
10505 66th Place West
Mukilteo, WA 98275-4563

(425) 493-6833

tinsley@siu.edu

This message was sent using SIU Webmail Server.

