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Representation of U.S. Minority Groups in the Marriage and Family
Therapy Literature Over an 18-Year Period:

A Content Analysis

Kensington Osmond

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Representation of U.S. Minority Groups in the Marriage and Family Therapy Literature Over an 18-Year Period: A Content Analysis

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Master of Science

Research relevant to the unique needs and experiences of racial/ethnic/cultural (REC) minority groups in social science literature is essential to the work of policymakers and clinical practitioners. However, the social sciences have traditionally failed to publish a sufficient number of articles that address these needs and experiences or even adequately report the racial and ethnic makeup of their samples. The purpose of this study is to provide an updated look at Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) literature and how often sample participants' ethnicity is reported, how frequently studies focus on ethnic issues or specific REC minority groups, which REC minority groups and topics receive the most attention in minority-focused studies, which REC minority groups and topics receive the most attention in funded studies, and how these trends have changed over time. Specifically, five journals (*American Journal of Family Therapy*, *Family Process*, *Journal of Family Therapy*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and *Contemporary Family Therapy*) were selected for inclusion in the analysis and were examined inclusively from 2000-2017. Results and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: minority representation, MFT literature, content analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Representation of U.S. Minority Groups in the Marriage and Family Therapy Literature	i
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
Representation of U.S. Minority Groups in the Marriage and Family Therapy Literature	1
Literature Review.....	3
REC Minority Representation Within the MFT Literature.....	3
The Current Study.....	7
Method	7
Sample.....	8
Data Collection	9
The Coding Process.	9
Data Analysis	10
Results.....	11
1. How Frequently do Studies Report the Ethnic Makeup of Their Participant Pools?	11
2. How Frequently are Studies Focused on Ethnicity or REC Minority Groups?	12
3. In Focused Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?	13
4. In Focused Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?	13
5. In Funded Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?..	14

6. In Funded Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?.....	16
7. How Have These Trends Changed Over Time?	16
Discussion.....	17
1. How Frequently do Studies Report the Ethnic Makeup of Their Participant Pools?	17
2. How Frequently are Studies Focused on Ethnicity or REC Minority Groups?.....	18
3. In Focused Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently? 19	
4. In Focused Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?	20
5. In Funded Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?..	21
6. In Funded Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?.....	22
7. How Have These Trends Changed Over Time?	23
Conclusion	23
References.....	25
Appendix.....	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Article Type by Journal	31
Table 2: Most Frequently Studied Topics by Focused Designation & REC Group.....	32
Table 3: Most Frequently Studied Topics Among Funded Articles by Focused Designation & REC Group.....	33

Representation of U.S. Minority Groups in the Marriage and Family Therapy Literature Over an 18-Year Period: A Content Analysis

The proportions of racial, ethnic, and cultural (REC) minorities within the United States population continues to grow. Recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates indicate that over half (50.2%) of all infants born in the United States now belong to REC minority groups (Cohn, 2016). As the population ages and REC minority births continue to be the most prevalent, the non-Hispanic White ethnic group will no longer make up the majority of the American population by 2045 (Vespa et al., 2018). Despite these demographic shifts, the experiences of REC minority groups have traditionally been under-examined in social science literature, with much of the discipline's knowledge based on non-Hispanic whites (Bean et al., 2002; Hartmann et al., 2013; Noltemeyer et al., 2013).

The lack of knowledge about REC minorities' experiences is problematic because the needs, challenges, and experiences of REC minority groups are often different from those of the white majority. Collectively, REC minority groups experience systemic and institutionalized oppression, which has been shown to lead to poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Pittman et al., 2017). Additionally, specific REC minority groups differ from each other in the poorer health outcomes that they experience. African Americans, for example, are 20% more likely to report having serious psychological distress than non-Hispanic whites (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018a). Latino youth have the highest lifetime prevalence of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use compared to youth from other ethnic groups in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018b). The overall death rate from suicide is 20 percent higher for American Indian/Alaska Native adults than non-Hispanic White adults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

The combination of a lack of REC minority knowledge within the social science literature and fact that REC minority experiences are unique to non-Hispanic white experiences poses serious concerns. One primary reason for this is that research informs policy and, in order for policies to be developed that appropriately meet the needs of REC minorities, research about what is effective for REC minority individuals, families, and communities must be available (Bean, et al., 2002; Dilworth-Anderson & McAdoo, 1988). When such research is not available, policymakers fall prey to the assumption that solutions effective for White individuals and communities will also be effective for all other individuals and communities of color. These assumptions can lead to the development of policies and practices that are ineffective or even harmful to the REC minority communities they are intended to help (Dilworth-Anderson & McAdoo, 1988).

Secondly, as the American population becomes increasingly more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture, it follows that mental health practitioners will encounter more REC minorities in the clinical populations they serve. If the clinical literature does not publish research that is relevant to REC minorities, practitioners, like policymakers, will operate under the faulty assumption that treatment modalities deemed effective in treating the White community will be similarly effective in treating REC minority communities (Bernal & Scharro-del-Rio, 2001). Thus, in order for mental health practitioners to provide empirically supported treatments to their clients of color, research must be conducted and published that establishes whether current treatment modalities are effective in the treatment of REC minorities (Bernal & Scharro-del-Rio, 2001).

When considering the dilemma that mental health practitioners face in trying to access research representative of REC group issues, the Marriage and Family Therapy literature stands

out as being especially relevant. According to the National Council on Family Relations (as cited is Bean et al., 2002), the research published in MFT journals is utilized by "family life educators ..., researchers ..., family practitioners ..., and family policy specialists" (para. 1), suggesting the unique impact of research published in these journals. Given the usefulness of this research to clinicians and policymakers, the current study aims to examine the extent to which the current body of MFT literature contains research that is relevant to REC minority groups.

Literature Review

REC Minority Representation Within the MFT Literature

Within MFT journals, only two content analyses have been published since 1996 that explore the representation of diverse backgrounds within the literature. One of these analyses assessed how often any aspect of diversity in social identity (e.g. race, sexual orientation, age) was discussed or examined from a social justice perspective in articles published from 2004-2011 in *Family Process*, *the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and *The American Journal of Family Therapy* (Seedall et al., 2014). The researchers found that only 28.1% of articles examined or addressed at least one issue of diversity, with 48.1% of these articles using a social justice framework and 17.6% using a systemic, intersectional framework (Seedall et al., 2014). The current study aims to expand on this analysis by focusing on the social identity of race/ethnicity and asking additional questions about how the experiences of REC minority groups are examined within the MFT literature.

The other content analysis of MFT journals examined questions including how many articles focused on racial and ethnic minority issues and whether the number of articles focused on such issues increased year to year (Bean & Crane, 1996). The researchers found that only 4.4% of articles focused on topics related to ethnicity or race in articles published in *The*

American Journal of Family Therapy, Contemporary Family Therapy, Families in Society, Family Process, Family Therapy, and The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy from 1984-1993. Within these articles, African Americans were studied the most frequently (1.0% of the total number of articles) and were followed by Asian Americans (0.7%), Hispanic Americans (0.5%), Jewish Americans (0.3%), and Native Americans (0.4%). The researchers also found an increase in the publication of articles focused on racial and ethnic minorities, with a rate of 3.4% in 1984 (the first year examined) and a rate of 7.4% in 1993 (the last year examined) (Bean & Crane, 1996). As this analysis examined only articles published from 1984-1993, an updated review of the state of REC representation in the MFT literature is needed, which the current study is designed to provide. The current study is also designed to expand upon the work done by Bean and Crane through the examination of additional research questions, such as what topics are examined the most frequently in studies that do focus on specific REC minority groups.

REC Minority Representation Within the Broader Social Science Literature

Because few content analyses examining the prevalence of literature relevant to REC minority groups have been conducted recently within the field of MFT, the current study is also informed by content analyses examining the literature of other social science disciplines. For example, one research question that has been examined in content analyses conducted across a variety of social science **disciplines** is how often empirical studies include information regarding participants' race/ethnicity. Obvious as it may seem to include this type of sample demographic information in a scholarly work, content analyses examining publications in the disciplines of counseling psychology, clinical psychology, child psychology, and psychiatry have found that many studies fail to report the ethnic makeup of their participants (Buboltz et al., 2010; Case & Smith, 2003; Delgado-Romero et al., 2005; Mak et al., 2007; Miller & Cross, 2006). Across all

these content analyses, racial background was provided in only 38.8-58.9% of published articles in the top academic journals in their respective disciplines. Given the large number of empirical studies that neglect to report this information in other social science disciplines, the current study will examine this same issue in MFT literature.

Another issue that has been examined in previous content analyses is how often studies focus on topics of race and ethnicity generally, and which REC groups are studied most frequently. These research questions have been asked in content analyses focusing on the fields of psychology, school psychology, and counseling psychology, with results showing that the frequency of attention given to race and ethnicity as general topics as well as specific REC minority groups varies depending on the discipline (Baker et al., 2013; Charmaraman et al., 2014; Hartmann et al., 2013; Noltemeyer et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2011). One analysis completed on psychology literature, for example, examined articles published in 30 psychology journals from 2003-2009 and found that only 4% of articles addressed issues related to race or ethnicity (Hartmann et al., 2013), while another analysis, completed on school counseling literature found that articles included a focus on race or ethnicity anywhere from 9.2-18.5% of the time depending on the specific sub-discipline of school counseling that was being examined (Noltemeyer et al., 2013). Due to the wide variation in frequency of focus on race and ethnicity as well as specific REC minority groups depending on discipline, this study will examine both of these research questions in order to properly assess the state of these issues within the MFT literature and provide recommendations for further research within the field.

Content analyses performed with social science journals have also asked whether certain topics receive more attention than others in the examination of various REC minority groups. One study that examined psychology literature found that, when studies focused on South Asian

Americans, there were trends in the topics most frequently examined, with 15.7% of studies focusing on psychological health, 14.7% on interpersonal dynamics, and 14.2% on acculturation (Inman et al., 2014). This type of analysis is important because it can help social science researchers know both the successes and limitations that their field has in its study of and knowledge about REC minorities (Arredondo et al., 2005). This study aims to contribute to that valuable knowledge for the field of MFT by examining which topics receive the most attention in articles that are focused on various REC minority populations.

An additional research question examined by other social science content analyses that informs this study is how the research's inclusion and examination of REC minority groups has changed over time. There is evidence that change has occurred in the area of counseling, with one content analysis focused on the *Journal of Counseling and Development* finding that articles published in 1969 focused on multicultural issues only 5.6% of the time as opposed to 9.8% of the time in 2006 (Blancher et al., 2010). In the hopes of providing the field of MFT with information about where its inclusion of REC minority participants and issues has and has not improved, this study will compare its results to the results of equivalent research questions in Bean et al.'s 1996 content analysis.

Content Analysis Methodology

Content analysis is a research method that uses coding processes to identify trends, patterns, and frequencies in a qualitative data set (Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005). When content analysis techniques are employed in the examination of scholarly journals, they can be used to identify such trends, patterns, and frequencies within academic publications, which can provide important information about areas where scholarly knowledge is robust and where it is lacking (Buboltz et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2010). Because this study aims to examine whether current

publications within the MFT literature are representative of and relevant to REC minority groups, content analysis is a fitting methodological choice.

The Current Study

Given the importance of scholarly literature that aids clinicians in working with REC minorities, the purpose of this study is to analyze to what extent the leading MFT journals publish articles focused on these groups across a lengthy enough timespan to gauge growth and increased sensitivity (i.e., an 18-year period, 2000-2017). Articles will be considered “focused” if they demonstrate an emphasis on issues related to race/ethnicity generally or specific REC minority groups in their title, abstract, or keywords/Subjects. It is hoped that the analysis of these articles will create accountability for how REC minority groups have been addressed in MFT literature thus far and clarity about the direction that research should move in the future. In this analysis, the following research questions will be answered:

1. How frequently do studies report the ethnic makeup of their participant pools?
2. How frequently are studies focused on ethnicity or REC minority groups?
3. In focused studies, which REC minority groups are examined the most frequently?
4. In focused studies, what topics are examined the most frequently?
5. In funded studies, which REC minority groups are examined the most frequently?
6. In funded studies, what topics are examined the most frequently?
7. How have these trends changed over time?

Method

The data used for this study will be drawn from an ongoing content analysis project that focuses on social science literature within the U.S. This larger project gathered data on many features of published articles, including key topics examined, methodology, recruitment

techniques, sample characteristics, and representation of REC minorities. This study analyzes data collected by the project on articles published in MFT journals. Specifically, this study examines the frequency with which articles report the ethnic makeup of their participant pools, the frequency with which studies focus on general ethnicity issues or on specific REC minority groups, which REC minority groups receive the most frequent attention in focused articles, what topics are examined the most frequently in focused studies, and how these trends have changed over time.

Sample

The sample included articles published from 2000-2017 in five prominent MFT journals: *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *Family Process*, *Journal of Family Therapy*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and *Contemporary Family Therapy*. These five journals were selected for analysis based on their fulfillment of three criteria: high impact rating as assessed by the 2018 Journal Citation Report (Clarivate Analytics, 2018), primary focus on U.S.-based research (to maintain the study's purpose of assessing the representation of ethnic minorities in U.S.-based MFT literature), and the journalistic focus on MFT as a whole as opposed to one of the field's sub-disciplines. High impact rating was chosen as a qualifying factor for journals included in the analysis in order to ensure that the articles being examined were those that were the most likely to be influential in the field of MFT and would therefore be the most important space for REC minority representation.

The sample of articles was further reduced through the inclusion of only empirical (qualitative and quantitative) and conceptual articles (defined in this study as literature reviews, systematic reviews, and theoretical papers) in the analysis, thus excluding articles such as book reviews and editor's notes. Articles were also excluded from analysis if they examined a purely

international sample/topic in order to maintain the focus of this study on REC minorities in the United States.

Data Collection

Every journal article was coded independently by two trained student coders. In order to become student coders, at least one prior undergraduate-level course in research methods was required. Upon meeting this requirement and being accepted into the project by an MFT faculty member, each student coder was required to undergo a standardized training process that consisted of coding demonstrations and practice coding assignments. Student coders who had completed 1000+ articles (termed advanced coders by the project) and MFT faculty oversaw the training process. Student coders demonstrated proficiency in these training requirements by coding 20 practice articles and meeting individually with advanced coders to receive feedback. Upon doing so, coders were given coding assignments and were required to attend weekly team training meetings and pass weekly quizzes to assess and improve coding skills.

The Coding Process

Student coders were given journal article assignments in the form of a journal name and publication year. Coders accessed journal article assignments via PsycINFO, and then coded every article published in the specified journal and year by answering a standardized set of questions through Qualtrics, an online survey and data management service. One Qualtrics survey was filled out per article. Each survey asked student coders to code for factors such as topic, funding sources, methodology, sample demographics, sample recruitment, and whether there was a focus on multiculturalism or a specific REC minority group.

After two student coders had filled out Qualtrics surveys for each article in a given journal and year, an advanced coder assessed the survey responses side-by-side for errors and

calculated inter-rater reliability (IRR) coefficients. When there were discrepancies between student coders' answers for a given survey item, the advanced coder investigated the discrepancy and selected the correct answer.

Data Analysis

After the data was cleaned and the IRR assessed, the first step in dataset analysis was to create a simplified list of topics. The purpose of this step was to easily examine whether certain topics are examined more or less frequently in different populations. The topics for each article were derived from the two to five "Subjects" that were listed on each article's PsycINFO Detailed Record page and had been entered into Qualtrics surveys by the student coders.

Consistent with the procedures used by Prior (2014), coded topics were ordered according to frequency, aiding in the identification of the field's primary topics (as represented by the articles published in these five professional journals). Topics were then organized into concept clusters, based on categories derived in previous content analyses (Smithee et al., in press), with attention to conceptual overlap, synonyms, and diagnostic groupings. For example, "racial and ethnic differences" and "multiculturalism" were both recoded as "diversity and culture topics," and "counseling" and "psychotherapy" were both recoded as "individual therapy and intervention." The categorization process was performed by a member of the MFT faculty and confirmed by research team members, resulting in 79 different categories.

The dataset was then analyzed in SPSS. Using crosstabs, the frequency with which articles reported sample race and ethnicity, the frequency with which articles focused on a specific REC minority group or ethnicity in general, and the frequency with which studies reported having received funding was assessed. Crosstabs were also used to examine focused and funded studies for two things: which REC minority groups were focused on most often and what

topics were examined the most frequently. The dataset, which included information on article topics, funding sources, methodology, sample demographics, and recruitment was cleaned and analyzed in order to answer the research questions. Specifically, the analysis revealed the frequency with which articles reported sample race and ethnicity, the frequency with which articles focused on issues of ethnicity or specific REC minority groups, which REC minority groups were examined the most often in focused and funded studies, which topics were examined the most often in focused and funded studies, and how these trends have changed over time.

Results

1. How Frequently Do Studies Report the Ethnic Makeup of Their Participant Pools?

A total of 2,857 articles were coded, with 451 from *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 521 from *Family Process*, 300 from *Journal of Family Therapy*, 597 from *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and 439 from *Contemporary Family Therapy*. A significant number were removed due to a focus on an international sample ($N = 549$), leaving 2,308 articles for content analysis. See Table 1 for additional details about each journal and the type of articles published during the 2000-2017 timespan (i.e., conceptual, quantitative, qualitative, non-human sample). As a note, the non-human category refers to studies that utilize, for example, a content analysis or meta-analysis format where data is drawn from articles, books or websites. As such, these studies were exempted from any analysis where the sample was described in terms of human characteristics such as race or ethnicity.

Of the 2,308 articles analyzed, 1,011 (43.8%) were empirical and had a human sample. Of these, 227 articles (22.5%) did not report on sample characteristics in terms of race or ethnicity. Surprisingly, 36 articles failed to present any demographic information about their

sample, whether related to participant race/ethnicity or even more typical demographics such as age, educational level, socioeconomic status, family or marital status, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation.

The frequency with which empirical articles with a human sample failed to report ethnic information about their samples varied by journal. Articles published in *Contemporary Family Therapy* failed to report participants' ethnic or racial information most often (68 articles, 29.2% of their empirical articles with a human sample), followed by *Journal of Family Therapy* (eight articles, 27.6%), *American Journal of Family Therapy* (56 articles, 26.5%), *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (57 articles, 18.8), and *Family Process* (38 articles, 16.2%).

2. How Frequently are Studies Focused on Ethnicity or REC Minority Groups?

Out of the 2,308 articles included in this content analysis, 235 (10.2%) were focused on race and ethnicity in general or on specific REC minority groups. Articles were considered "focused" if they demonstrated an emphasis either on issues related to race/ethnicity generally or on specific REC minority groups in their title, abstract, or PsycINFO subjects. Thirty-two (14.2%) of the focused articles included in the analysis were published in *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 95 (42.2%) in *Family Process*, 15 (6.7%) in *Journal of Family Therapy*, 57 (25.3%) in *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and 36 (16.0%) in *Contemporary Family Therapy*.

Relative to the number of articles included in the content analysis, *Family Process* had the highest percentage of its articles that were focused (22.6%). This was followed by *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (9.5%), *Contemporary Family Therapy* (8.2%), *American Journal of Family Therapy* (7.1%), and *Journal of Family Therapy* (5.0%). The lower count for the

Journal of Family Therapy is likely related the higher numbers of articles dealing with international samples and/or topics.

3. In Focused Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?

Among focused articles, the most frequently discussed REC minority groups fell into the “Other or Combined Ethnic Group” category, with 86 of the 235 (36.6%) focused articles’ sample of interest falling into this category. Focused articles coded as examining an “Other or Combined Ethnic Group” primarily had samples that were not captured by our survey (e.g., Arab Americans), described their samples broadly (e.g., “ethnic minorities”), or were conceptual articles that discussed issues of race and ethnicity in general (e.g., addressing racism in family therapy, improving therapist cultural competence). The following categories of REC minority groups made up the rest of the focused articles at the following rates: 29.8% Latino (70 articles), 26.0% African American (61 articles), 9.4% Asian American (22 articles), 1.7% and Native American (4 articles).

REC minority group representation varied by journal. The African American and Latino minority groups both received the most representation in *Family Process* (28 and 40 articles, respectively). The Asian American minority group received the most representation in *Contemporary Family Therapy* (10 articles). Native Americans received the most representation in *American Journal of Family Therapy* (two articles). Other and Combined minority groups were represented in all five analyzed journals.

4. In Focused Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?

Of the 235 articles that were focused on a REC minority group, several themes emerged for the topics that were examined the most frequently (see Table 2 for full details, including a breakdown of topics by REC minority group). Family relations was a primary topic of interest in

99 (42.1%) of these articles. Some of the most frequently examined sub-topics among articles that focused on family relations were adoption, foster families, and parent-child relationships. The second most prevalent topic of interest in focused studies was family therapy and parenting interventions, which was examined in 96 (40.9%) of the analyzed articles. Couple or marital relations was the third most commonly examined topic of interest in focused articles and was examined in 61 (26.0%) of focused articles.

Of the 2,073 articles that were not focused on a REC minority group and were most often focused on White samples, some similarities existed in which topics were examined the most frequently. The most commonly examined topic in non-focused articles was family therapy and parenting interventions, which was a central theme in 937 (45.2%) of the articles. The second most commonly examined topic among non-focused articles was couple or marital relations, appearing as a central theme in 713 (34.4%) of articles. Therapy techniques and models were the third most studied topic among non-focused articles and was examined in 617 (29.8%) of articles.

5. In Funded Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?

All articles included in the analysis were coded for whether they reported receiving funding by checking the list of acknowledgements. Funding was further identified based on type of funding source (i.e., federal, university, state, or combination). In non-focused studies, the majority (82.6%) of articles did not report receiving any funding. In articles that were coded as focused on a REC minority group, the majority (71.1%) also did not report having received any funding ($N = 167$ articles). Of the 68 focused articles that did acknowledge having received funding, the greatest number (35 articles, 51.5%) focused on the Latino minority group, followed by 20 articles (29.4%) focused on the African American minority group, two articles focused on

the Native American minority group (2.9%), and one article (1.5%) focused on the Asian American minority group. Ten of the articles focused on Other or Combined ethnic groups also reported receiving funding.

The primary source of funding for focused articles was federal, with 43 articles (63.2%) reporting having received exclusively federal funding. This was followed by 14 studies (20.6%) that reported receiving a combination of federal and other funding, six studies (8.8%) that reported receiving exclusively private funding, three (4.4%) that reported receiving exclusively state funding, one (1.5%) that reported receiving exclusively university funding, and one (1.5%) that reported receiving funding from a combination of non-federal sources.

In non-focused studies, the primary source of funding was also exclusively federal (138 articles, 38.2%). The following types of funding sources were also identified for non-focused studies: combination of federal and other funding (42 articles, 11.6%), exclusively private (51 articles, 14.1%), exclusively state (13 articles, 3.6%), exclusively university (60 articles, 16.6%), combination of non-federal sources (29 articles, 8.0%), and other source types (28 articles, 7.8%).

Data was also collected on individual funding agencies and analyzed in relation to how frequently they provided financial support to REC minority-focused articles. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) was the most frequently reported source of funding for focused articles (28 articles, 41.2% of focused articles that reported funding articles). Among articles that focused on African Americans, Latinos, and Other or Combined Ethnic Groups, NIMH was also the most frequently reported source of funding (35.0% of articles focused on African Americans, 45.7% of articles focused on Latinos, and 60.0% of articles focused on Other/Combined groups).

6. In Funded Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?

A total of 563 (24.4%) articles included in this analysis reported having received funding. Among these studies, the most commonly researched topic was family relations (71 articles, 12.6% of funded studies). This was followed by family therapy and parenting interventions (59 articles, 10.5%) and couple/marital relations (56 articles, 9.9%).

In studies that were both funded and focused on REC minorities, several themes emerged for which topics were examined the most often (see Table 3 for full details). Among the funded articles that were focused on African Americans, Latinos, and the Other/Combined group, the most commonly researched topic was family relations. For the single funded study that focused on Asian Americans, the study's topic was multi-/cross-cultural therapy, and the limited funded studies focused on Native Americans ($N = 2$), the studies' topics were family relations and drug usage.

7. How Have These Trends Changed Over Time?

A multinomial regression model was estimated using SPSS version 26 (IBM, 2018) to test for statistical change in the number of REC-focused publications across the timespan (2000-2017, 18 years). Specifically, the REC focus variable was modeled as the outcome, using the following REC groupings of articles: African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, Other, and Total focused REC groups. A continuous variable that captured the 18 years of the study was the sole predictor in the model. Articles coded as "not REC minority focused" were used as the base comparison or reference group in analyses in order to account for the possibility of changes in the overall number of published articles during this same time period. Using this group of articles as the reference group helps with interpretation of the findings, as a one unit increase in terms of publication year is linked with an increased likelihood

of publications with a specific REC focus compared to the number of articles without a REC focus. Publication numbers were found to have increased at statistically significant levels for total focused REC groups and for Latinos. Specifically, results were as follows: (a) with each increase in year of publication, there was a 3% increased likelihood of publication for papers that address all REC groups ($\beta = .03$, $df(1)$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = 1.03), as well as an 8% increased likelihood of publications focused on (b) Latinos ($\beta = .07$, $df(1)$, $p < .01$, odds ratio = 1.08). The odds ratio results in both cases demonstrate only slight increases in publication numbers for each unit increase in time (each year). Journal-level regression models were also estimated but comparisons were deemed inappropriate given the low numbers of articles for most REC groups in most journals.

Discussion

1. How Frequently do Studies Report the Ethnic Makeup of Their Participant Pools?

The inclusion of ethnic background data for sample participants in 77.5% of empirical articles is significantly higher than inclusion rates found in previous content analyses of journals from other social science disciplines. These prior analyses, which focused on counseling psychology, clinical psychology, child psychology, and psychiatry found that information on participants' racial or ethnic background was present in only 38.8-58.9% of published articles (Buboltz et al., 2010; Case & Smith, 2003; Delgado-Romero et al., 2005; Mak et al., 2007; Miller & Cross, 2006). Unfortunately, no prior content analyses on MFT journals coded for this research question, so it is difficult to say whether MFT journals have historically included ethnic information about participants at higher rates than other social sciences or whether improvements have been made.

Despite the relatively high percentage of MFT journal articles that reported information about the races and ethnicities of participants, there is room for improvement especially given the indication that empirical studies (with a human sample) can be published without a description of participants' ethnic or racial background. A failure to disclose this information reveals a blind spot on the part of researchers (and/or journal editors) about how race and ethnicity affect marital relationships, family therapy interventions, and many of the other topics commonly examined within the MFT literature. A failure to notice or be concerned that participants' racial or ethnic information is missing before utilizing the results of a study reveals similar blind spots on the parts of policymakers and clinicians. More than a quarter of the empirical articles with a human sample published in *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *Journal of Family Therapy*, and *American Journal of Family Therapy* from 2000-2017 failed to disclose any racial or ethnic information about their samples, suggesting that these journals especially may want to review the sample information reporting standards they have set for articles they publish.

2. How Frequently are Studies Focused on Ethnicity or REC Minority Groups?

Current estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) indicate that 39.6% of the U.S. population identifies as non-Hispanic White. Relative to the significant percentage of the U.S. population that is part of a REC minority group, the proportion of MFT research that this analysis found is dedicated to these populations (10.2%) is insufficient. This finding clearly suggests a need for more research within the field of MFT that represents the experiences of REC minorities. Our results suggest that all of the MFT journals in the analysis, especially the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *American Journal of Family Therapy*, and *Journal of Family Therapy*, should be mindful of the need for more REC

minority-focused content within MFT journals and consider this when accepting articles for publication. Journals may also wish to announce an intention to publish more articles representative of diverse experiences to encourage researchers to increase the inclusion of REC minorities in their projects.

While the percentage of articles focused on REC minority issues in this sample (10.2%) is insufficient compared to the prevalence of minorities in the U.S. population, there is evidence that improvements have been made over time. In Bean & Crane's (1996) content analysis of MFT journals, they found that only 4.4% of articles focused on topics related to ethnicity or race. This comparison is encouraging and suggests that more studies relevant to minority experiences are now being conducted within the field of MFT. Previous content analyses that have examined the prevalence of minority-focused articles in other social science fields have revealed a rate of 4.0% within the psychology literature and rates between 9.2-18.5% within the school counseling literature (Hartmann et al., 2013; Noltemeyer et al., 2013). This suggests that MFT has done a moderate job of representing minority experiences in comparison to other social science fields.

3. In Focused Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?

When compared to their prevalence in the U.S. population, all REC minority groups were underrepresented in the analysis, with Latinos having the largest disparity between population prevalence and the proportion of articles dedicated to their experience. Current estimates from the United States Census Bureau (2019) suggest that Latinos make up 18.3% of the U.S. population, yet they were a primary focus of attention in only 3.7% of articles. Comparisons for population prevalence and proportion of dedicated articles for other REC minority groups are as follows: African Americans (13.4% of U.S. population, 2.6% of articles), Asian Americans (5.9%, 1.0%), and Native Americans (1.5%, 0.2%). The frequency with which REC minorities

received attention within the dataset relative to each other may be partially explained by their relative prevalence within the U.S. population. However, given that the proportion of each of these groups within the U.S. population is significantly higher than the percentage of articles focused on them within this dataset, a serious need for increased research that focuses on all REC minority groups is evident. Other content analyses of the social science literature have revealed high variability in which REC minority groups are examined the most frequently (Baker et al., 2013; Charmaraman et al., 2014; Hartmann et al., 2013; Noltemeyer et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2011), thereby making it difficult to compare the results of this analysis.

4. In Focused Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?

The most commonly examined topics in both REC minority-focused articles and non-focused articles centered on couple and family relationships (e.g., family relations, family therapy and parenting interventions, and couple/marital relations; see Table 2 for more details). The overlap between the topics studied the most often in both focused and non-focused articles makes sense given the field of MFT's emphasis on couple and family relationships. The analysis also revealed that topics relevant to REC minority groups were examined more frequently in focused articles. For example, discrimination, multi- and cross-cultural therapy, and immigration and acculturation were all subjects of REC minority-focused articles significantly more often than non-focused articles. This finding makes sense given that these issues affect REC minorities at higher rates than the white population. Although more research is needed on these topics, it is encouraging to see them receive some attention in the MFT literature within the context of how they impact REC minority groups.

The analysis produced some evidence that important topics relative to each minority group are receiving attention in the literature. For example, 6.9% of the PsycINFO-provided

subjects of articles focused on Asian Americans and 6.3% of those focused on Latino(a)s were connected to immigration or acculturation. The analysis also produced some evidence of gaps in research. For example, suicide remains a significant issue within the Native American and Alaskan community (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019), yet no articles were published in the analyzed journals from 2000-2017 that addressed suicide or depression within this community.

5. In Funded Studies, Which REC Minority Groups are Examined the Most Frequently?

Of the non-focused studies included in the sample, 17.4% reported having received funding, while 28.9% of REC minority-focused studies reported having received funding. The relatively high rate of funding reported by studies focused on REC minority groups is encouraging. This finding suggests that funding sources not only recognize the need for more literature that reflects the experiences of REC minority groups but are using their resources to make this important work possible. NIMH, which was cited as a funding source in 41.2% of funded and focused articles, stands out as strong supporter of research focused on REC minorities.

Of the focused articles in our sample that reported having received funding, the Latino group was the focus the most often (35 articles, 51.5%). The large proportion of articles that reported funding and were focused on Latinos relative to other REC minority groups is likely due to the current and anticipated growth of the Latino group within the U.S. population.

Some differences existed in the types of funding that focused and non-focused articles received. Focused studies reported receiving more federal funding, and non-focused articles reported receiving a wider variety of funding (i.e. private, state, university). This finding may suggest that non-focused studies have a wider range of funding sources available to them,

whereas studies that hope to focus on a particular REC minority group must rely more heavily on federal funding.

Unfortunately, prior content analyses of other social science disciplines have not coded for article funding. Due to this, the present study unable to compare the trends revealed in this analysis with trends in other disciplines.

6. In Funded Studies, What Topics are Examined the Most Frequently?

The analysis revealed that the most frequently examined topic for all funded studies that focused on REC minority groups was family relations (see Tables 2 & 3). This finding suggests that family relations, which encompasses many issues important to REC minorities (i.e. grandparents, single mothers, adoption), is a primary focus both for those who study REC minority experiences and fund their research. This finding may also be due to the population of articles included in the sample (i.e., articles published in MFT journals).

The topics examined most frequently for various REC groups varied depending on whether articles were funded. For example, among the sample of articles that were not funded but focused on African Americans 5.4% of articles dealt with topics such as discrimination and multi-/cross-cultural therapy. In contrast, of the funded articles that focused on African Americans, there were zero articles published that dealt with discrimination or multi-/cross-cultural therapy, meaning that all studies focused on these topics in African Americans did not receive funding. This finding may suggest that researchers studying topics such as discrimination and multi-/cross-cultural therapy in African Americans often either do not apply for or are not granted funding.

7. How Have These Trends Changed Over Time?

There is slight but statistically significant evidence for an overall increase in the numbers of articles dealing with Latinos and with total REC groups (all groups combined). All other REC groups showed no appreciable increase in publication numbers across the 18-year time period, a finding that is extremely distressing given the continued increases in population numbers for African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and other specific REC groups.

Conclusion

There are several limitations to this analysis. While the included journals had the highest impact rating of MFT journals, they do not represent all of the work published within the field. Additionally, the review did not include any specialty journals that focus specifically on publishing REC minority-related work. MFT researchers who study REC minority experiences may be more likely to submit their work to such specialty journals. Finally, the analysis of which topics were examined most in studies that were focused on REC minorities and reported funding relied on PsycINFO subjects. It is possible that some articles were assigned subjects that did not perfectly capture their topical focus.

Encouragingly, the analysis found that sample participants' racial or ethnic background is now reported more frequently than in past years, although there is still room for improvement. The analysis also found that articles focused on REC groups are underrepresented compared to each group's prevalence in the U.S. population. In articles that are focused on REC minorities, Latinos receive the most attention and Native Americans the least. In terms of topical focus of articles, family relations is the most common topic of interest regardless of funding or REC minority-focused designation. More REC minority-focused articles report receiving funding than non-focused articles, with NIMH being the most cited source of funding. There is evidence of a

slight increase in the number of articles focused on the Latino and Other/Combined minority groups over time, but no such evidence for any other minority groups.

This analysis provides several implications for research. Firstly, we suggest that journals should require all empirical articles with a human sample to report participants' racial or ethnic background. Making this a standard across journals as well as disciplines is a simple way to elevate the quality of published research. Secondly, more research on all REC minority groups is needed as all are currently underrepresented in the literature. More research is especially needed that pertains to issues that uniquely impact certain groups, such as suicide in Native American communities. Thirdly, journals, research institutions, and funding agencies should make an effort to support the work of researchers who study REC minority issues and/or are REC minorities themselves.

This analysis also provides implications for policymakers and clinicians. Given the infrequency with which articles address the experiences and needs of REC minorities, policymakers, clinicians, and others who reference the MFT literature and serve minority populations have a responsibility to do a thorough investigation of the research they consume. They can do this in part by checking whether empirical studies use samples that are representative of those they serve before allowing research to influence policy or treatment decisions. When referencing conceptual articles, they should also verify the author's expertise on the topic of interest. The combined efforts of producers, supporters, and consumers of research can create greater understanding about the experiences of and more positive outcomes for REC minorities.

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Appendix

Table 1

Article Type by Journal

Article Type	AJFT ^a		FP ^a		JFT ^a		JMFT ^a		CFT ^a		Full Sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Conceptual/Theoretical	235	52.1	284	54.5	269	89.7	269	45.1	196	44.6	1,253	54.3
Quantitative	162	35.9	176	33.8	23	7.7	201	33.7	152	34.6	714	30.9
Qualitative	49	10.9	58	11.1	6	2.0	103	17.3	81	18.5	297	12.9
Non-Human Sample	5	1.1	3	0.6	2	0.7	24	4.0	10	2.3	44	1.9
Total	451	100	521	100	300	100	597	100	439	100	2,308	100

^a AJFT = American Journal of Family Therapy, FP = Family Process, JFT = Journal of Family Therapy, JMFT = Journal of

Marital and Family Therapy, CFT = Contemporary Family Therapy

Table 2*Most Frequently Studied Topics by Focused Designation & REC Group: n (%)*

Topic	Non-Focused	Focused	AA ^a	L ^a	AsA ^a	NA ^a	Other ^a
Family Therapy/Parenting Intervention	937 (11.0)	96 (11.0)	18 (8.1)	25 (9.3)	9 (12.5)	2 (15.4)	43 (13.1)
Couple/Marital Relations	713 (8.4)	61 (7.0)	23 (10.3)	12 (4.5)	8 (11.1)	3 (23.1)	14 (4.3)
Therapy Techniques/Models	617 (7.3)	28 (3.2)	4 (1.8)	7 (2.6)	8 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	9 (2.8)
Family Relations	576 (6.8)	99 (11.3)	23 (10.3)	32 (11.9)	9 (12.5)	3 (23.1)	30 (9.2)
Couple Therapy Intervention	486 (5.7)	18 (2.1)	4 (1.8)	2 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (3.7)
Parenting	249 (2.9)	44 (5.0)	12 (5.4)	20 (7.4)	3 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	10 (3.1)
Gender Roles	70 (0.8)	17 (1.9)	6 (2.7)	6 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (1.5)
Drug Usage	50 (0.6)	8 (0.9)	4 (1.8)	3 (1.1)	1 (1.4)	1 (7.7)	1 (0.3)
Caregiving, Children & Elderly	39 (0.5)	10 (1.1)	7 (3.1)	4 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Discrimination	19 (0.2)	18 (2.1)	6 (2.7)	4 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (2.4)
Multi-, Cross-Cultural Therapy	13 (0.2)	42 (4.8)	2 (0.9)	7 (2.6)	5 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	27 (8.3)
Immigration/Acculturation	3 (0.0)	42 (4.8)	4 (1.8)	17 (6.3)	5 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	16 (4.9)
Total (for all topics studied)	8,492 (100)	876 (100)	223 (100)	269 (100)	72 (100)	13 (100)	327 (100)

Note. Each article may have up to five topics.

^a AA = African American, L = Latino(a), AsA = Asian American, NA = Native American, Other = Other or Combined REC Minority

Table 3*Most Frequently Studied Topics Among Funded Articles by Focused Designation & REC Group: n (%)*

Topic	Non-Focused	Focused	AA ^a	L ^a	AsA ^a	NA ^a	Other ^a
Family Therapy/Parenting Intervention	54 (10.7)	5 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	4 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)
Family Relations	53 (10.5)	18 (16.2)	3 (9.4)	10 (15.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	5 (35.7)
Couple/Marital Relations	52 (10.3)	4 (3.6)	0 (0.0)	4 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Couple Therapy Intervention	25 (4.9)	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)
Parenting	20 (3.9)	3 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Therapy Techniques & Models	20 (3.9)	4 (3.6)	1 (3.1)	3 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Drug Usage	9 (1.8)	3 (2.7)	1 (3.1)	1 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	1 (7.1)
Caregiving, Children & Elderly	6 (1.2)	6 (5.4)	3 (9.4)	3 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Gender Roles	3 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Multi-, Cross- Cultural Therapy	1 (0.2)	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Discrimination	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Immigration/Acculturation	0 (0.0)	6 (5.4)	0 (0.0)	4 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)
Total (for all topics studied)	507 (100)	111 (100)	32 (100)	63 (100)	2 (100)	2 (100)	14 (100)

Note. Each article may have up to five topics.

^a AA = African American, L = Latino(a), AsA = Asian American, NA = Native American, Other = Other or Combined REC Minority