Influence of Culture on Appraisal of Acquired Hearing Impairment

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Research funded by the Tennessee Board of Regents’ Research on Diversity Grant. Preparation of this talk supported in part by NIDCD (RO1 DC011550-02).
Hearing Health Care (HHC) Utilization in Memphis

• HHC use at U of M’s Speech and Hearing clinic over 5 years:
  • 13% Black or African American (not Hispanic)
  • 86% White (not Hispanic)
  • < 1% Hispanic (any race)

• Memphis population:\textsuperscript{1}:
  • 63.1% Black or African American (not Hispanic)
  • 27.5% White (not Hispanic)
  • 6.5% Hispanic/Latino (any race)
These differences are not uncommon.

- Individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are underrepresented in the utilization of hearing health care (HHC) services\textsuperscript{2-5}. 
Difference vs Disparity

• Racial/ethnic disparities in health or in the receipt of health care are more than differences in health statistics or differences in use patterns between racial and ethnic groups.

• Differences in HHC use might be due to different distributions of risk factors and disease exposures and genetic differences in susceptibility to hearing impairment.

• Disparities represent differences in health that are the result of societal inequalities. They are considered unfair and undesirable.
Possible causes of racial/ethnic differences in HHC use:

• Differences in prevalence of hearing impairment

• Variations in sociocultural influences on HHC utilization
Biological Causes of Hearing Health Differences?

• Existing differences have been attributed to genetic differences in susceptibility to hearing impairment\textsuperscript{7-9}.
  • Differences in prevalence of hearing impairment across racial groups. \textsuperscript{10-11}
    • Due to differences in melanin in the cochlea? \textsuperscript{12-13}
Representation of hearing health and HHC in U.S. culture

From “Ringing Phone”, by D. Reynolds, 2007.
Déjà vu?

- Existing literature has identified several psychosocial/sociocultural components that are influential for individuals considering utilizing HHC services. (e.g., 14-16)
- However, existing studies have not adequately explored how these psychosocial components might be influenced by racial or ethnic background.
- This research sought to explore the psychosocial components that are relevant for culturally-diverse adults when considering seeking HHC.
Research Questions:

1) What are the sociocultural components that influence White, Black and Hispanic adults in Memphis, TN when seeking HHC services?

2) How might these sociocultural components be influenced by cultural background?

3) What is the role of race and ethnicity in the decision to obtain HHC services?
Setting: Memphis, TN
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“I’ve never felt awkward before, but now I live in Memphis I feel I have to walk on eggshells about race.”
~ Ivonne, Hispanic interviewer for this research

Participants

• 30 adults from Memphis were recruited from flyers, and from word of mouth referrals

• 16 women, 14 men
• 10 participants from each racial/ethnic group under study
  • Black or African American (not Hispanic)
  • White (not Hispanic)
  • Hispanic (any race)
• Age, education level, and socioeconomic status were comparable across groups.
Methodology

• Constructivist grounded theory guidelines were used throughout this research¹⁷.
Methods

• Methods:
  • One on One semi-structured interviews
  • Identity matching
  • Comparative methods for analyzing qualitative data to develop theory about a phenomenon
Interviews

• One-on-one semi-structured interviews guides were developed.
• Interviews were facilitated by interviewers of similar racial and ethnic background to the participant. These interviews served as the primary data source for this study.
• Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed.
Inductive Data Analysis

- Each segment of the data was defined and labeled.
- These coded data were compared and organized into descriptive categories based on similarities in their meanings.
- These categories were assembled, in turn, into higher order categories according to their common meanings.
Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

Nvivo 8 (www.qsrinternational.com) working interface. The bottom left pane is the original interview transcription and the bottom right panel shows initial codes as they are assigned, line-by-line, to data fragments.
Inductive Analysis

Participant Data ➔ Codes ➔ Categories ➔ Theme
Research Questions:

• 1) What are the sociocultural components that influence individuals when seeking HHC services?
• 2) How might these sociocultural components be influenced by cultural background?
• 3) What is the role of race and ethnicity in the decision to obtain HHC services?
Sociocultural components that influence HHC utilization:

- Health Beliefs and Attitudes
- Structural / environmental components
- Perceptions of hearing health and HHC

Decision about HHC utilization
Persons with hearing impairment must recognize and accept that their hearing impairment is problematic

As long as it’s not to a point to where I just can’t hear, like, then it’s not, I don’t want to say not important (laughs), but that’s kind of like the truth, you know? ~ Sandra

Perceptions of hearing health and HHC

Facilitators

- Increased severity of symptoms and consequences of HI
- Influential others

Barriers

- Subtle symptoms of acquired HI
- Unwillingness to acknowledge HI
- Reduced need for hearing in daily life
- Acceptance of HI as part of aging

Mostly it’s because [hearing] degrades so slowly. You know unless something dramatic happens and someone’s immediately deaf, I don’t think they really notice it. ~ Cathy.

They say, “Hey, I’m getting old. Shit happens when you get old, you know. ... So damn what?” ~ Mike
Persons with hearing impairment must be aware of available HHC

Facilitators
- Routine exposure to info about hearing health and HHC
- Exposure to formal education programs about hearing health and HHC
- Desire to be informed about HHC

Barriers
- Lack of culturally-relevant info about HHC
- Reliance on nonprofessional recommendations about HHC
- Lack of education

Perceptions of hearing health and HHC

The family might not pay attention to the situation. They might think that there is not a problem....that it might be a temporary situation. They might try to find a healing herb.... ~ Naishla

What can I do to better myself? To make things better for me?... If I lost my hearing I would want to know where I could go and get help and, and see what can I do to better myself so I can stay as normal as possible. ~ Carlos
Persons with hearing impairment must be confident in the effectiveness of available HHC services and treatments.

**Facilitators**
- Referral by a general health practitioner
- Positive expectations of HHC
- Positive experiences of HHC

**Barriers**
- Mistrust of hearing health professionals
- Negative expectations of HHC
- Negative experiences of HHC

Well an experience that I have seen on tv: that it seems to help. Because I done seen commercials on it and I have seen examples where people saying that it does them well. ~ Carlos

I don’t know their names. I don’t know if they are doctors or not. The goal of those institutes is to try to sell the hearing aids. ~ Roberto
Persons with hearing impairment must accept themselves as hearing-impaired in need of assistance.

Facilitators

- Acceptance of hearing impairment as relevant for “people like me”.
- Self-efficacy
- Negative consequences of hearing impairment outweigh stigmas

Barriers

- Not identifying with hearing impairment as relevant for “people like me”.
- Self-consciousness of wearing a hearing aid
- Fear of negative social consequences of being labeled as “Hearing Impaired”
- Stigma

Perceptions of hearing health and HHC

But I think that’s more—I think that, uh, being, uh, a baby boomer—you know, old—older know, it’s probably more understandable and acceptable than say if you’re a 20 year old running around, you know. ~ Bernie

Well, it is a feeling of inferiority…. feeling like you are disabled. [Hearing loss] makes me think a lot about my age. No other thing makes me think about my age. But hearing loss sometimes makes me feel like I am nothing. ~ Zulema
Sociocultural components that influence HHC utilization:

- Health Beliefs and Attitudes
- Structural / environmental components

Decision about HHC utilization
General health care beliefs and attitudes

Facilitators
- High Self Efficacy
- Desire to maximize quality of life

Barriers
- Fear or mistrust of Health Professionals
- Surviving vs Thriving
- Reliance on alternative/informal health care
- Suck It Up Attitude

A lot of people don’t have the money, you know, to go just to get a hearing test. They might need it more for, you know, groceries, rent, utilities, stuff like that. ~ Teri

I don’t know, it’s just like, the thing is, we [African Americans] done been through so much. We fight for everything we have, so we think that if something happens to us we just gotta keep going. Push through it and all, and it will get better by itself. ~ Dre

If I start having hearing problems then I’m going to go immediately because I know the longer you wait the worse it’s going to be and you now the harder it’s going to be and stuff like that. I mean I know if you start noticing a problem, if you, you know, if you hurry in then maybe you can get something done about it or checked ... - Brad
Sociocultural components that influence HHC utilization:

- Perceptions of hearing health and HHC
- Structural / environmental components

Decision about HHC utilization
Structural/Environmental components

Facilitators

- I go to the Christian Community Clinic. It’s not expensive there. The visit costs $30. The medicines...they have a pharmacy there too. They (the medicines) cost same as with insurance. ~ Maria

- Utilization of community health care resources
- Access to financial resources

Barriers

- Time Constraints
- Lack of documented residence
- Language barriers/lack of interpreters
- Mobility constraints
- Reduced access to financial resources

My doctor speaks Spanish. [But if] I had to go to a different doctor, a specialist, [I would encounter] communication problems. The language barrier. ~ Amada

How much does it cost me? How much? And if I see that it is too much money, or, I don’t know, an amount that (is too much) for me, I would say: “No. I would skip that.” ~ Francisca
Decision about HHC utilization

Sociocultural components that influence HHC utilization:

- Perceptions of hearing health and HHC
- Structural / environmental components
- Health Beliefs and Attitudes
Research Questions:

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Influence of cultural background on sociocultural components

- Many of the sociocultural components that were identified as influential for HHC utilization were described differently for participants of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Within groups inductive analyses were performed for participants of each racial/ethnic group.
- The results of the analyses were compared across the three groups.
White participants

Facilitators

- Desire to maximize quality of life
- Self Efficacy
- Desire to become informed about HHC

Barriers

- Prioritizing family’s needs above my own (women)
- Cost of HHC services and technologies
- Negative expectations of hearing aids
- Stigma
- Mobility/Time constraints (Women)
Black/African American participants

Facilitators

- Reliance on informal health care
- Lack of recognition that HI is a problem

Barriers

- Prioritizing basic needs over HH QoL
- Negative Image and expectations of hearing aids
- Lack of Knowledge about HHC
- Self Consciousness about wearing a hearing aid
- Fear of negative social consequences of being “Hearing impaired”
- Lack of culturally relevant information about HHC
- General mistrust of health professionals
Hispanic/Latino participants

Facilitators
- Acceptance of HI as part of aging
- Lack of education

Barriers
- Cost of HHC
- Legal Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Prioritizing basic needs over HH QoL
- Lack of recognition that hearing impairment is problematic
- Reliance on informal or alternative hearing health care

Stigma
- Lack of culturally relevant information about HHC
- Prioritizing others’ needs over own health (Women)
- Time Constraints (Women)
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The role of race and ethnicity in the decision to obtain HHC services.

Setting

Cultural beliefs, values

Individual beliefs, values

Individual resources

Cultural demands and resources

Reactions of others

Appraisal of hearing impairment

Coping efforts

Situational demands

Outcomes

Cultural effects

Social effects

Situational effects

Psychological effects

Physiological effects
Conclusions

• The results of this study suggest that hearing help seeking is linked to racial/ethnic background in multiple and complex ways.
• Widespread cultural beliefs, values, demands, and resources play direct and indirect roles in influencing the decision to obtain HHC.
• Cultural beliefs and values, and cultural demands and resources vary across races and ethnicities, and are influenced further by socioeconomic status, gender, and individual differences.
• When deciding upon a method of coping with the hearing impairment these factors are negotiated relative to the potential impact of the hearing impairment on an individual’s well-being.
Now What?

• Evidence of hearing health care disparities

• Implications for underserved racial/ethnic minority groups
  • HHC service delivery
  • HHC research

• Course of action
More Info?


More Info?