

THE EFFECTS OF COUNSELOR GENDER
IN DIRECTIVE AND NON-DIRECTIVE
COUNSELING

EDWARD F. DUCHNOWSKI

The Effects of Counselor Gender In Directive
and Non-Directive Counseling

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Edward F. Duchnowski

May, 1980

Abstract

This study stemmed off of the concept of students' expectations of counselors because of their gender. Tinsely & Harris (1976) stated that both male and female students have similar stereotyped expectations of counselors due to their sex. The students expect male counselors to be directive and female counselors to be non-directive. The purpose of this study was to determine if counselors' preferences are similar to students' expectations. The results of the study indicate that counselors are eclectic and do not fit into their stereotyped roles.

The Effects of Counselor Gender In Directive
and Non-Directive Counseling

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts


by
Edward F. Duchnowski
May, 1980

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Edward F. Ducknowski entitled "The Effects of Counselor Gender In Directive And Non-Directive Counseling." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.


Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. William Dannenmaier for initiating the study and for guiding me through this endeavor from the beginning. I would also like to thank Dr. Linda Rudolph for her assistance in writing the paper and evaluating the instruments that were used in this study. Last, I would like to thank my wife, Mary Ellen Duchnowski, who was the linguist for this paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM	1
II. METHOD.	7
The Sample.	7
Description of the Instruments.	7
The Procedure	7
III. RESULTS	9
IV. DISCUSSION.	14
REFERENCES.	20
APPENDIX.	23

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Eight independent groups comparing means and standard deviations	10
2.	Sum of raw scores for the eight independent groups and male and female directive and non-directive groups	11

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

In recent years, there has been an increase in research on the effects of the gender of the counselor and client on the outcome of counseling. There have been many studies examining differences in the approaches of counselors of different sexes and of different orientations. Sometimes these studies have been contradictory. One study, for example, stated that there is no difference in empathy in trained counselors (Bresigner, 1976) while another study reported that people of the same sex had more empathy for each other (Oleska & Balter, 1972). Another study displayed evidence that directive counselors are more credible and approachable (Atkinsin, Marvin, & Sandi, 1978), while in another study, the author concluded that it was the warmth of the counselor that played the most important role in the outcome of the counseling situation (Rockers, 1977). In still another study, it was reported that empathic responses were neither expected nor desired when people sought help for personal problems from a professional counselor (Venzor, Gillis, & Beal, 1976).

Most of the research stems from the focal point of client's expectations: what the client expects to find in a counseling relationship exists between these

expectations and the sex of the counselor. Research evidence indicates that men expect directive counseling (analytical, judgmental, and critical), while women expect permissive, non-judgmental listeners (Tinsley & Harris, 1976).

In the many studies on clients' expectations, the primary theme has been that male clients prefer male counselors and female clients prefer female counselors. D. H. Johnson (1978) did a study in which he examined students' expectations and preferences when selecting counselors. He found that the students' expectations of counselors' behavior are related to the sex of the counselor, the students having preconceptions concerning the behaviors of male and female counselors. He also found that the most popular choice was the same sex counselor. According to his study, male counselors were considered by clients to be more active and compatible, and the female counselors were expected to be more passive and understanding. His research referred to the work of Boulware and Homes (1970) who had reached similar conclusions. Still further along this line of research, another study concluded that clients talked for longer durations while discussing unfavorable qualities about themselves when they were with a counselor of the same sex (Casiani, 1978). It is obvious

from these studies that there is a definite sex role expectancy of counselors by clients and that this expectancy affects client behavior.

The feminist movement has pursued the issue of counselor gender. Feminist articles tend to recommend female counselors for women. They present evidence that female counselors are more effective than male counselors with female clients (Helms, 1978).

There has been research done on women's expectancies of a counselor and of the counseling situation itself. These studies all support the conclusion that female clients feel freer to talk more about themselves with female counselors than with male counselors. In general, these evaluations of the counseling situation were made by the female clients. In one study, all the female clients reported greater satisfaction with female counselors than with male counselors (Rice, 1977). Rice also stated that male counselors, on the whole, tended to neglect women's counseling needs. In her opinion, more emphasis in developing non-biased counseling skills is needed in counselor training. Another study reported that female clients communicated more and for a longer duration with counselors of the same sex (Highlen & Gillis, 1978). The clients reported that they did feel some negative feelings and anxiety while discussing what

they considered to be unpleasant qualities of themselves with female counselors, but that they felt these negative feelings to a greater extent in sessions with a male counselor.

Some studies, unlike those which aim simply at describing interactions between client and same sex counselors, attempt to find reasons for this preference. One study reported not only that female clients liked female counselors better than male counselors, but also that these clients preferred counselors of the same age and marital status (Dell & Schmidt, 1976). They found that the closer the two people matched up in lifestyles and attitudes the stronger the bond of the counseling situation. Female college students who were not married preferred a counselor who was not married because the unmarried state represented to them a sign of strength and independence which they admired.

In another study, Doster (1976) examined the backgrounds of counselors for factors in their childhood which could shape the personality of a future counselor. He found that women who identified with their fathers were more expressive and possibly more directive in counseling situations than women who identified with their mothers. Other studies have supported the idea that the sex of the counselor is a relevant variable in the counseling

process (e.g., Johnson, M., 1978, Johnson, D. H., 1978).

In spite of the evidence supporting the hypothesis that the counselor's sex is an important aspect of the counseling situation, many experimenters do not accept these conclusions. Their research disputes the relevance of counselor gender in the counseling process. One of these studies found that male and female counselor trainees shared preconceptions about relative opportunities for employment in traditional sex-related occupations (Milchack, 1978). Janda and Rimm (1977) in another study found that the sex of the counselor does play a role in a counseling situation, but a brief one. Once the counselor demonstrated expertise, the sex of the counselor did not affect the rating of the counselor's performance by the client. Hayes and Walleat (1978) stated that on the basis of their study it may be concluded that counselors, regardless of sex, tend to invest male and female clients with similar problems but with different sex orientated personality traits. Another study (Simons & Helms, 1976) reported that the sex of the counselor had no significant relevance for the client. All of these studies have one important finding in common; they all indicate that trained counselors are objective in their duties and, regardless of sex, react to clients' problems in similar

ways. They hold to the principle that once the client sees the expertise of the counselor, any anxieties over the counselors' sex will dissipate. These researchers believe that sex orientations in a counseling situation are minimal at best.

In general, there are many studies that indicate an interest in the relationship of sex in the counseling situation and its effects on the outcome of counseling. Many studies, like the ones cited, examine clients' preferences and expectations of counselors and of counseling situations. None of these studies examine counselor preference in this context: what are their expectation and orientations in the counseling situation, and how do these orientations affect the outcome of the counseling process? That is the purpose of this study: to examine the relationship, if any, between the counselor's gender and his or her preference for directive or non-directive counseling techniques.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

The Sample

A total of 48 subjects, 24 females and 24 males, were included in the sample. The subjects were graduate students in Counseling at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee, and working counselors in Montgomery County, Tennessee. These subjects ranged in age from 22 to 60.

Description of the Instruments

The instruments used in the experiment were designed by the experimenter and evaluated for their usefulness by other professionals in the field. A specific problem was designed of the type that could be expected to occur in a school situation. Dialogues were then written to represent how this problem might be explored by directive and non-directive counselors. Two scripts, therefore, were written: one directive and one non-directive. Each script was tape recorded by a male and female confederate playing the role of counselor. In all four resulting tapes the experimenter played the role of the client. These scripts are located in the appendix section of this paper.

The Procedure

Subjects' preferences were tested at their convenience and using a Latin Square procedure (Stanley &

Campbell, 1963), were randomly assigned to a number which indicated the order in which the tapes were to be presented. At the time of the presentation, the counselors were given a rating form comprised of four Likert rating scales with five possible responses: poor, below average, average, above average, and excellent (Anastasi, 1976). The counselors were asked to rate each tape according to their own personal ideas of what is effective in a counseling situation. Each time the counselors listened to a tape, they were asked to rate it before listening to the next tape. When all the counselors had listened to and rated all the tapes, the raw data was recorded and listed in a two by four factorial design for analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The results of the data are reported in Figure 1. The mean scores recorded indicated that the sex of the counselor had no effect on the counselors' preferences toward directive or non-directive counseling.

A one-way analysis of variance for eight independent groups resulted in no significant difference between the groups: $F = 1.8468$ ($P > .05$). Counselors' differences within the same group showed no significance either: $F = .9287$ ($P > .05$).

An interesting aspect of the raw data was the fact that the highest score given by the male subjects was for the counseling session in which the male counselor uses the directive approach. In the case of the female counselors, their highest scored session was the one featuring the female using a non-directive approach. The results of these raw scores are represented in a graph in Figure 2.

It is also interesting to note that the lowest scored session for the male counselors was the female counselor's non-directive session. The female counselors gave the male directive session their second highest score. These results may indicate that clients' expectations and counselors' orientations have a common

FIGURE I

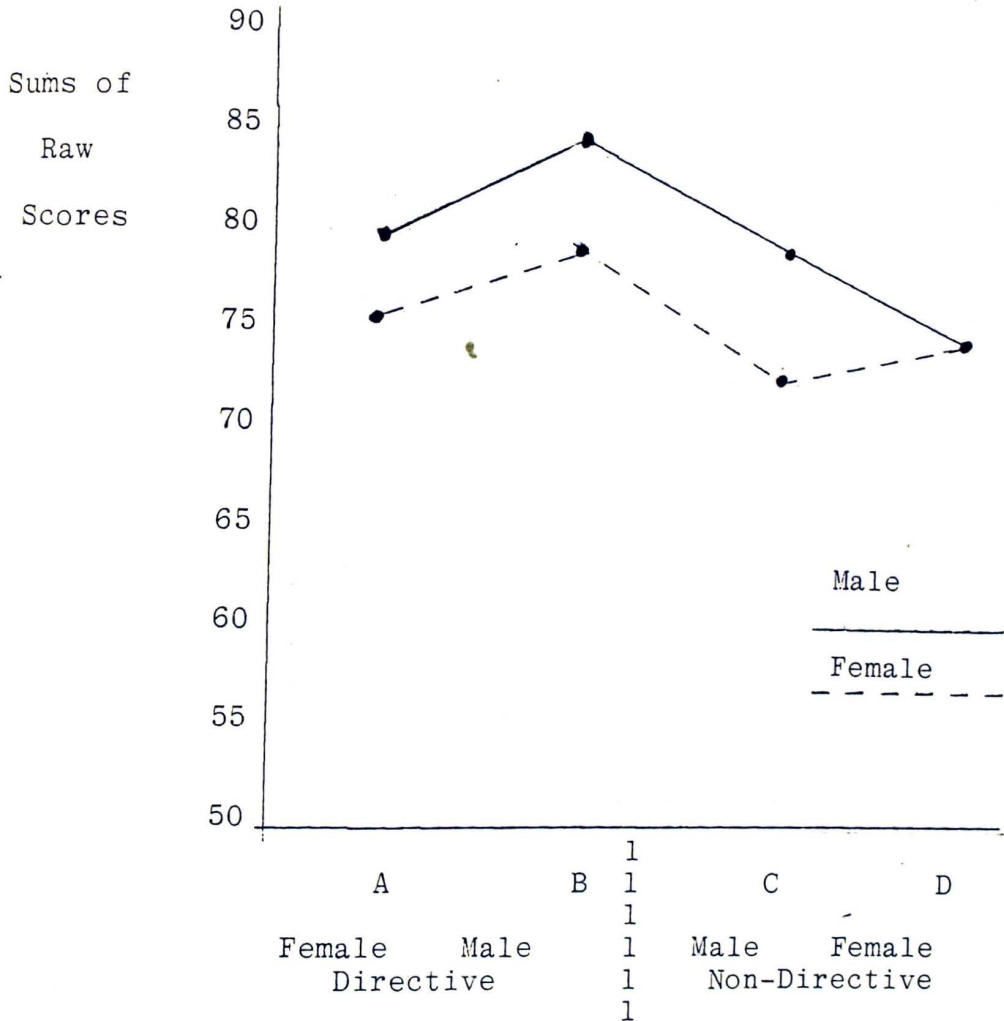
Eight Independent Groups Comparing
Means and Standard Deviations

Counselors

		Male	Female
D i r e c t i v e	A Female	X = 3.33 SD = .436	X = 3.13 SD = .69
	B Male	X = 3.54 SD = .754	X = 3.21 SD = .69
N o n - D i r e c t i v e	C Male	X = 3.33 SD = .73	X = 3.08 SD = .69
	D Female	X = 3.29 SD = .72	X = 3.29 SD = .72

FIGURE 2

Sum of Raw Scores for the Eight Independent Groups
and Male and Female Directive and Non-Directive Groups



basis. While the results of this study did not show a significant difference in counselors' preferences, they do demonstrate a trend in these directions. Further research is needed in the area of student and counselor expectations and the effects of these expectations in the counseling situation.

Another interesting research idea stemming from this data concerns a comparison of the preferences of experienced counselors with those of inexperienced counselors. By taking the five most experienced counselors from both male and female groups, the means of these sixteen groups can be compared. Analysis of the means indicates that the highest mean scores for the experienced male counselors were the two directive sessions, with mean scores of 3.8 for the female directive session and a 4.0 for the male directive session. For the inexperienced male counselors, the opposite occurred. Their two highest scores were the two non-directive sessions with mean scores being 3.63 for the male non-directive session and 3.47 for the female non-directive session. In the case of the inexperienced female counselors, their mean scores were the same for all (3.21) except for the female non-directive session which received a score of 3.31. The experienced female counselors' two highest means were the male directive and the female non-directive, each with a mean

of 3.2. Further research is needed in this area to determine if there is a difference between the orientation of experienced counselors and those of inexperienced counselors. At this time, the strength of the effects, if any exist, are not known.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of counselors' gender on their preference for directive and non-directive approaches to counseling situations. The results indicate that the sex of the counselor has no significant effect on the counselors' preference of one technique or the other. If the results of this study are truly valid, it can be assessed that counselors are eclectic in their acceptance of directive and non-directive approaches to counseling. It could be argued that their attitudes influence the ways in which counselors approach counseling situations. This is a crucial concept because it can determine the outcome of the session before it even begins. As stated earlier in this study, there are many studies that support the idea that students have certain expectations and preconceived ideas about the sex of the counselor and its effect on the counseling situation. If educators know that students have stereotyped expectations of a counselor based on his or her sex and we do not respond according to these expectations, then the retention rate of students returning to their counseling sessions will decline. If counselors are eclectic in their approaches to counseling situations,

then educators must use this knowledge of student expectations wisely in order to increase the retention rate of students returning to their next session. Our profession needs to look for alternatives to this serious limitation that exists in many of our schools and counseling centers. One alternative is to work at creating an instrument that can measure students' expectations of the counseling situation before the interview so that the counselors can plan their approaches to each client before the sessions begin. Once counselors have met the expectations of their clients, the probability of client's returning their ap- There is a definite need for research in this process of retention of clients in counseling by manipulating counselors' orientations to fit the clients' expectations.

Even though there was no significance shown in this study between counselors' preferences for directive and non-directive counseling approaches, there was still some indication that these orientations have some underlying value. The findings of this study, that the male counselors rated the male directive the highest and the female counselors rated the female non-directive their highest, might indicate that these orientations do exist and do play a role in the counseling process. Also, the suggestion discussed in this study that there may be

some difference between experienced and inexperienced counselors in this area would help to account for some of these orientations. These areas still need to be researched further to determine just how strong an effect they have in the counseling process.

In any study that shows that there is no significance, there are always questions that arise. Why was there no significance between the female and male counselors preference towards directive and non-directive counseling? Some of the possibilities might result from internal and external weaknesses in the experimental design. Some of the external weaknesses in the design of this study include failure to account for personality of counselors, training and background of counselors, and the number of years in the counseling profession. Every individual is unique and has different needs, desires, attitudes, emotional states, etc. Any of these different personality traits in the counselor could cause the counselor to respond differently depending upon the counselor's frame of mind at the time the counselor listened to and rated the different counseling sessions. Even a person's biological clock could have played a role in the counselors response to the counseling sessions depending upon the time of day. The training and background of the counselor could also

play a role in how the counselor would respond to the counseling session. Where and how the counselor was raised could have an effect on the counselor's responses. As stated earlier in this study, the female who identified with her father while growing up would be more assertive than a female who identified with her mother. This variable could have played a role in the results of this study. The colleges at which the counselors received their training could play an important role in the response to the different counseling sessions. Most graduate schools teach graduate students either a directive or a non-directive approach to counseling depending upon the school's orientation. The overwhelming majority of the subjects in this study were trained at the same school, which was primarily non-directive in orientation. It would be reasonable to assume that the responses of the counselors with this training definitely affected the results of this study. Exactly what was affected, or to what extent it was affected, is unknown.

Another possibility is that one might expect directive and non-directive counseling students hearing the same opening to develop the problem quite differently. In this study, the attempt to keep the counseling sessions similar tended to blur the distinction

between the two techniques. If the distinctions between the two approaches were made clearer it could have had a strong effect on the outcome of this study. However, it is not known at this time how much of an effect this interference played in this study.

In discussing the results of this study, that counselors have no sexually based preferences for directive or non-directive counseling, it could be pointed out that its findings are of practical value in light of what is known about students' expectations of counselors. Professionally, it is wise for counselors to try to meet students' expectations as long as the counselors' interpretation of goals prevails. If we looked at this factor by itself, that counselors of either gender have no preferences for directive or non-directive counseling, this means that each counselor should have the capacity to give each student the counseling he or she needs and expects without limitations. There are so many variables that take place within the counseling situation that need to be examined more closely. The opportunity to extend research into these areas seems almost unlimited. From student expectations of the counseling situation to counselor orientations and all the different techniques that can be used in the counseling process, many studies in this area are left undone at present. The area of

counselor gender and its effects on counseling is a
very controversial area and needs further research.

References

- Anastasia, A. Psychological testing. New York: Macmillian, 1976.
- Atkinsin, D. R., Marvin, M., & Sandi, M. Effects of counselors race and counseling approaches on Asian American perceptions of counselor credibility and approach, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25, 76-84.
- Boulware, D. W., & Homes, D. S. Preferences for therapist and related expectations. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 1970, 35, 269-277.
- Casiani, J. M. Influence of models race and sex on interviewee's self-disclosure, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(5), 435-440.
- Dell, D. M., & Schmidt, L. D. Behavioral cues to counselor expertness, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23(3), 197-201.
- Doster, J. A. Sex role learning and interview communications, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23(5), 482-485.
- Hayes, K. E., & Walleat, P. L. Effects of sex in judgment of a simulated counseling interview, Journal of Counseling psychology, 1978, 25(2), 1964.

- Helms, J. E. Counselor reaction to female clients: Generalizing from analogue research to a counseling session, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(3), 193-199.
- Highlen, P. S., & Gillis, S. F. Effects of situational factors, sex and attitudes on affective self-disclosure and anxiety, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(4), 270-276.
- Janda, L. H., & Rimm, B. C. Types of situations and sex of counselor in assertive training, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1977, 24(5), 444-447.
- Johnson, D. H., Students sex preference and sex role expectations for counselors, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(6), 557-562.
- Johnson, M. Influence of counselor gender and reactivity to client, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(4), 359-365.
- Milchack, J. A. Occupational sex roles stereotyped and social desirability among counselor trainees. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1978, 25(1), 172-175.
- Oleska, W., & Batter, L. Sex and empathy, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1972, 19, 559-565.
- Rice, J. K. Vocational problems focuses and client and counselor gender. Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 1977, 26, 69-75.

Rockers, D. The effects of open and closed inquiry modes used by counselors and physicians in an initial interview on interviewees perceptions and self-disclosures, (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1977, 37A, 7548-7459.

Stanley, J. C., & Campbell, D. T. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963.

Simons, J. A., & Helms, J. E. Influence of counselor's marital status, sex, and age on college and non college women counselor preferences, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23(4), 173-177.

Tinsley, H. E. A., & Harris, D. J. Client's expectations of counseling, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23(3), 173-177.

Venzor, E., Gillis, J. G., & Beal, D. G. Preference of counselor response style, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23(6), 538-542.

Appendix

Writer's Note: The following pages are copies of the scripts used in this study. The reason I am placing them into this paper is to give other students who are doing research in the area of counselor orientations a chance to review them or use them again in another study.

Male and Female
Counselor - Non-Directive

John: Good morning Mr. Spalding (Ms. King), can I talk to you for a few minutes?

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): Sure John, come in.

John: Mr. Spalding (Ms. King), this morning something happened in my methods class and I'm not sure what to do about it. You see last week I handed in a paper and she was giving them back today in class and I only got a C on it and I know I did better than that. I asked her about it while she was still handing them back and all she said was that my introductory sentence wasn't necessary in this assignment. I know she's wrong about this because my English teacher told me that you should always start a written assignment with an introductory sentence and he knows what he's talking about.

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): Un-huh.

John: Well I sat there and kept thinking about it over and over until I was good and mad, so I packed up my books and left.

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): Un-huh, so you were very angry and feeling that I wrote a good paper and she

only gave me a C on it and I was right and she was wrong about my introductory sentence.

John: Yeah that's the way I felt. The way I figured it what's the difference if I stayed or left she was going to fail me anyway. I feel like I'd really like to go talk to her but she probably won't talk to me now after walking out like I did.

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): Do you feel uneasy about going to see the teacher?

John: Yes in a way I do, but sooner or later I'll have to talk to her. Maybe if I go over and explain to her how upset I was, maybe she'll understand.

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): You think there's a possibility she will understand?

John: Probably, after all she is a teacher. Maybe if I apologize and ask her exactly what I did wrong on the paper so that I can get an A on the next one, do you think she'll tell me?

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): What do you think?

John: Sure, that's what she's paid for to teach, right, so I'll ask her. Besides I'm going to need this material later on in my studies so I better find the problem now. Well I guess class is just about over and I guess I'd better go and talk to

her and get it over with, I hope she's not mad
at me. Well I've got to go, I'll talk to you
later, thanks.

Mr. Spalding (Ms. King): How about stopping by this
afternoon and let me know what happened?

John: O.K., bye.

Male and Female
Counselor - Directive

John: Good morning Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin), can I talk to you for a minute?

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): Sure John, come on in, what seems to be the problem?

John: Well, you see this morning in methods class the teacher was handing back papers that we handed in last week and she was really unfair to me. The paper I wrote was a good one and she only gave me a C on it and I know it was better than that. Worse of all she said that my introductory sentence was wrong and I know for a fact it was right.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): Did you approach her about this in class?

John: Yes, as a matter of fact while she was still handing them back.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): What did she say?

John: She said there was no need for an opening statement in this assignment and I know that's wrong because my English teacher told me that you have to have an introductory statement in all written assignments and he knows what he's talking about.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): I see, what did she say after class?

John: I didn't see her after class because I was sitting there thinking about it over and over and the more I thought about it the more upset I got. Finally, I just got mad, packed up my books and left.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): So in other words, you got mad at the teacher and left while she was still teaching class, correct?

John: Right.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): Well John what do you think she'll say to you?

John: I'm not sure, -- I'm afraid to go and talk to her now. I really don't know what to do, however, I would like to talk to her.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): Un-huh, John what do you think is going to happen if you go and talk to her, compared to what is going to happen if you don't talk to her?

John: Well if I go and talk to her she'll probably be mad because I left class and then tell me what was wrong with the paper. If I don't go she'll fail me for sure. I guess I'd better go and talk to her and if I explain to her how upset I was do you think she'll understand?

Mr. Wilson (Ms Austin): Yes I do, and it wouldn't hurt to apologize for leaving class. Now what are you going to do?

John: I'm going to see her and apologize for leaving class and find out what was wrong with my paper.

Mr. Wilson (Ms. Austin): O.K., how about stopping by this afternoon and let me know what happened?

John: O.K. and thanks.