

Multicultural Counseling Training and Competency and Its Impact On
Multicultural Populations: A Critical Analysis and Review
of Relevant Literature

by

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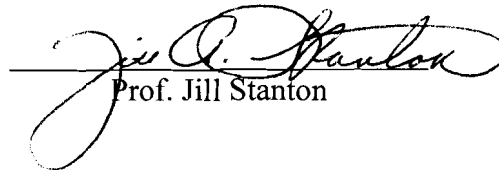
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ABSTRACT

As the population becomes more diverse in the United States, it is important for K-12 school counselors to become more multiculturally competent in working with ethnic minority students. With the rise of the multicultural movement in the 1950's, it has led to more articles addressing the needs of racial and ethnic minorities (Robinson & Morris, 2000). This paper will be reviewing literature pertaining to the need for multicultural counseling competency. The review of literature in the area of multicultural counseling competency is important because counselors need to be knowledgeable and

competent in the field of multiculturalism in order to work effectively with ethnic minority students.

Revising counseling training allows counselors to become more culturally competent in providing counseling services to diverse students/clients (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kim & Lyons, 2003). Experiential activities are examined and may assist counselor educators in becoming more effective counselors by enhancing multicultural counseling competencies of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills for future counselors.

In addition, multicultural counseling competencies and its effects on counseling students and the development of multicultural counseling competencies in undergraduate and graduate courses will also be examined. In recent years, in some training programs, measures have been taken in training counselors to be more multiculturally competent (Constantine, 2002a; Constantine & Ladany, 1996).

Lastly, there will be a summary of the literature related to critical analysis of multicultural counseling competencies and recommendations for current and future counselors to consider in becoming more multiculturally competent in counseling.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As the population becomes more diverse in the United States, we, as professionals providing services to students need to become more skilled in the realm of multicultural counseling. Traditionally, counseling has been an activity that is associated with a White homogenous Western culture that is often times considered right and superior to other cultures in the world. Therefore, much of the foundation for traditional counseling was based on attitudes and beliefs that were ethnocentric in defining what was normal and what was not normal in counseling (Fuller as cited in Vacc, DeVaney, & Wittmer, 1995). However, the 1950's gave rise to the multicultural movement and since then, has led to more articles addressing the needs of racial and ethnic minorities in education and human service areas (Robinson & Morris, 2000). It is important to be knowledgeable and competent in the field of multiculturalism because, no matter where we may work, we are going to be encountering different cultural groups.

As the population becomes more diverse overall, it also means that there will be an increasing number of children with diverse backgrounds who will be entering the school systems. It is important that school counselors become more knowledgeable and skilled in addressing the needs of and working with children from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The key to being more effective in being multiculturally sensitive is to continuously assess one's own multicultural competence. In order to do this, counselors have to learn how to effectively self-assess their knowledge and comfort level with diverse populations, and become more knowledgeable of issues related to racism and

discrimination. Moreover, another important aspect to consider is the capability to work with students, staff and families from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds (Holcomb-Mc Coy, 2004; Holcomb-Mc Coy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995).

It has been noted that cross-cultural contact can produce cooperation, but at the same time, it can produce conflict. This conflict can be attributed to the fact that many White Americans carry an assumption that everyone shares their worldview. Traditionally, counselors have not been well trained in the area of culture within the counseling process, which has produced outcomes of conflict in the past (Coleman, 1997; Robinson & Morris, 2000). There has been a growing concern that professionals do not have the knowledge or competence to work with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds, which can pose potential harmful risk to the client as well as possible unethical behavior on the part of the professional (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002).

Another important aspect to consider is the need to revise school counseling training so that school counselors become more culturally competent in providing counseling services to diverse students (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kim & Lyons, 2003). Experiential activities may assist counselor educators in becoming more effective in enhancing multicultural counseling competencies of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills for future counselors. In addition, it is important to give counseling trainees the opportunity to evaluate how effective the activities are in enhancing awareness of their own attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills as well as the development of a comfort level for working with diverse populations (Kim & Lyons, 2003).

Being culturally competent seems to be a critical component for counselors when working with diverse students/clients as reflected by their satisfaction ratings. In a study done by Constantine (2002a), results revealed that students' attitudes and perceptions for their counselors' overall competence, including general and multicultural competence, accounted for significant variances in their satisfaction with their counselors. These results suggest that counselors who are perceived to be effective in traditional counseling competencies are also viewed as being proficient in addressing multicultural issues (Constantine, 2002a). Therefore, a counselor's general counseling skills and knowledge of multicultural needs seem to play a key role in helping diverse clients to address their needs in a satisfactory manner.

Another factor that is addressed in numerous current studies is the relationship between racial identity development and multicultural counseling competency. Research indicates that it is difficult to determine whether racial identity development is related to having higher levels of multicultural counseling competency or whether it increases the level of their overall counseling competence or experience. However, being a counseling trainee from a diverse ethnic background, regardless of the program that they are in, may be related to having higher levels of self-perceived multicultural competence (Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nelson, 1995; Vinson & Neimeyer, 2000).

Individuals in several studies, who participated in counseling training groups and multicultural courses reported having developed significant increases in multicultural awareness and knowledge, but they were not aware of any significant changes in multicultural counseling skills (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002; Holcomb-Mc Coy &

Myers, 1999; Robinson & Bradley, 1997). Although there are increases in multicultural awareness and knowledge through participating in training groups, several studies have shown that multicultural counseling training still seems to be less than adequate.

However, many participants in these training sessions perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent (Holcomb-Mc Coy & Myers, 1999). In a qualitative study where students participated in a counseling training program, many felt that they lacked the adequate multicultural competencies and needed more extensive development in the area of multicultural competency. There seemed to be consensus among counseling professionals for the need to acquire more cultural self-awareness and self-knowledge, as well as having culturally sensitive clinical interventions. However, follow-up interviews indicated that after four months of specific multicultural training, these participants felt more confident than they did previously about their current level of development in multicultural competency (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Therefore, it is possible that these counselors applied their knowledge of cultural awareness to their current field of work.

More measures have been taken in recent years to emphasize the importance of providing culturally informed services, such as training in multicultural counseling competencies. This analysis was done to look at the research relative to counselor preparation in terms of further addressing and preparing current, as well as future counselors to better meet the needs of an increasingly culturally diverse population (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

As the United States becomes more ethnically diverse, it is important for school counselors to be multiculturally competent in working with students because the consequences of not receiving adequate training can be detrimental to counselor/student relationships and the overall well-being of the student. The purpose of this paper was to review research that is relevant to the topic of multicultural counseling training and competency and offer a critical analysis of relevant research. Recommendations for future research and practice will also be offered to counseling supervisors as well as to future and practicing counselors in expanding their knowledge of multicultural counseling competence.

Research Questions

There are three research questions that this analysis will address. They are as follows:

1. What does the research say about how counseling students feel about acquiring the adequate knowledge and skills of multicultural competence and how to apply it to their clients in counseling.
2. What does the research say about multicultural activities in counseling programs and whether or not they are adequate in providing counseling trainees with the knowledge and skills to work with students/clients of ethnically diverse backgrounds?
3. What does the research say about counseling programs and whether or not they are able to provide adequate opportunities for students to explore and develop cultural self-knowledge and self-awareness?

Definition of Terms

There are terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding. These are as follows:

Ethnic Minority – “a group that has different national or cultural traditions from the majority population” (Webster’s II new riverside dictionary, Revised edition, 1996, p. 236).

Multicultural Competence – Acquiring the essential skills in order to interact successfully with individuals of diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds (Holcomb-Mc Coy & Myers, 1999).

Multiculturalism – “of or including several cultures or ethnic groups” (Webster’s II new riverside dictionary, Revised edition, 1996, p. 452).

Limitations

Limitations of this literature review include the vast array of research that can be reviewed and the inherent bias on the part of the writer in determining which research is included in this particular review.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will examine, through extensive review of the literature in the United States, how counselors are affected by the increase of diverse ethnic and racial populations and how effective training services and courses are in making counselors more culturally competent. This will include definitions of multiculturalism and ethnicity and why it may be important for counselors to possess this knowledge and skill. In addition, studies of the benefits of multicultural counseling training courses will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a report of how some universities are applying multiculturalism to undergraduate as well as to graduate degree programs.

Racial/Ethnic Diversity in the United States and Multicultural Counseling

In the course of the 1950's, the increase in diverse populations gave rise to the multicultural movement and since then, the needs of racial and ethnic minorities have been increasingly addressed (Robinson & Morris, 2000). Due to the continuous increase of diverse populations in the United States, school counselors are faced with various different issues that they did not encounter previously. Before the multicultural movement in the 1950's, and even recently, counselors have not been well trained in the area of culture within the counseling process and often lack the knowledge and experience to work effectively with ethnically and racially diverse populations (Coleman, 1997; Sadowsky & Taffe, 1991). Demographic issues related to growth related to racial and ethnic groups in general, increased mobility, and declining birth rates for White

Americans have precipitated a growing concern that counselors need to be trained more efficiently and effectively in the field of multicultural counseling competency. There can be potential risk factors and harm that can be done to students/clients on the part of the professional who is not trained to work effectively with multicultural clients (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002).

According to Arredondo (1999), the multicultural counseling competencies that need to be addressed are comprised of three dimensions: “(a) beliefs and attitudes, (b) knowledge, (c) skills in three domains for development and practice. The skills are: (1) the counselor’s awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes, knowledge and skills for effective practice; (2) the counselor’s understanding of beliefs/attitudes and knowledge he or she holds about the worldview of the student/client; and (3) the counselor’s ability to provide ethical and culturally relevant counseling through appropriate intervention strategies and techniques” (p. 103). Multicultural counseling competencies are what counselors need to achieve in order to have a successful counseling relationship with ethnic minority students/clients. When a counselor has a knowledge and understanding of their own culture as well as other cultures, they are usually able to be more aware of and comfortable with multicultural situations. This also enables the counselor to work effectively in interpersonal situations both in their personal and professional lives.

It is important that school counselors are knowledgeable and skilled in addressing the needs of children with diverse ethnic backgrounds who enter the school systems. Being effective in multiculturalism is to have the capability to work effectively with students from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds (Holcomb-Mc Coy, 2004;

Holcomb-Mc Coy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995). Results from a study done by Fraga, Atkinson, and Wampold (2004) indicated that clients had strong preferences for counselors who had an awareness and knowledge of their own racial/cultural heritage. This suggests that clients were more willing to work with a counselor who had self-knowledge of their own cultural identity and thus would probably have more of an open mind and understanding to the client's culture as well.

In a study done by Holcomb-Mc Coy and Myers (1999), results showed no significant differences in self-perceived multicultural competence between graduate students. The study also indicated that ethnicity of the counselor trainee was related to higher levels of perceived multicultural competence. Moreover, the results suggest that professional counselors, as a whole may perceive themselves to be multiculturally competent. However, this is inconsistent with other results that the study found, which stated that actual multicultural competence seemed to be gained through post-degree field work rather than their graduate course work. Of the sampled professional counselors, ethnicity seemed to explain most of the variance in their demonstrated multicultural competence (Holcomb-Mc Coy & Myers, 1999).

Other studies have suggested that differential exposure to multicultural counseling awareness in terms of educational experiences and clinical experiences may have an impact on counselors' levels of multicultural competency (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Constantine & Ladany, 1996; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002; McCreary & Walker, 2001; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Robinson & Bradley, 1997). The results from a study done by Pope and colleagues

(1995) indicated that counseling students who have an increased contact with racially and ethnically diverse clients were more purposeful about increasing their multicultural knowledge and awareness competencies. It is important to be aware of and responsive to cultural areas in the counseling relationship so that it does not impede the growth of the counseling relationship (Coleman, 1998).

It is also important to note that when working with ethnically diverse students/clients whose cultures and values differ from ours, it often times creates internal conflict within the counselor in regards to professional and personal values. In working with diverse populations of students/clients, it is often essential that counselors not put their personal values or beliefs upon their client so that they are able to meet the needs of their client in the context of their clients' value system. Counselors occasionally may not realize that their personal values are having an impact on the decisions they make with clients because they can become blind-sighted by their own cultural beliefs (Holaday & Leach, 1994).

In addition, without having an understanding of various cultures and self as well as a lack of experience, cross-cultural counseling may make counselors feel uncomfortable and cause them to behave in biased ways in certain situations. This may occur because of minimal contact with diverse ethnic populations or the fact that they have not realized and understood underlying biases that they may have. Therefore, it is vital to the counseling relationship that counselors attempt to work through any personal conflicts that they may have relative to ethnic and racial differences. This may occur through personal exercises such as journaling about personal experiences related to one's

own culture and identification to realize and understand biases that they have and to evaluate whether or not they may impede the counseling relationship. However, it is important that the counselor does not totally disregard their personal values; rather, they should use it as a cultural frame of reference to support the client. In this way, both the client and the counselor are able to benefit from it (Holaday & Leach, 1994). In addition, Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett (2001) agree that there is a strong relationship between personal awareness of possible bias and successful multicultural counseling skills.

When working with students from another culture or ethnicity, counselors need to be aware of the student's hesitation to seek out professional help. It is important for counselors to establish rapport with their student/client and be sensitive to their needs without being judgmental. It is also important during the initial meeting that the counselor explains the expectations of counseling to the client and that they understand in order for the counseling relationship to be successful. When working with ethnically diverse student/clients, counselors need to remember that they need to consider additional aspects of their culture and values and be responsive to cultural areas within the counseling relationship (Coleman, 1998; House & Pinyuchon, 1998).

Being multiculturally competent does not necessarily mean that a counselor should be knowledgeable about every ethnic minority and their culture in the United States. What it means rather, is that the counselor should be knowledgeable and aware of various ethnic minority populations who are in the surrounding area or ethnic populations that they would be likely to work with. It is also necessary to be able to understand

various norms and expectations of those ethnic groups and how they may differ from the counselor's own viewpoint of how people in society should think and act. Furthermore, it is important to have recognition of this so that when a counselor is working with an ethnic minority student/client, they are able to understand some of the issues in the context of why they may arise (Liu & Clay, 2002).

Moreover, there have been findings that agree with suggestions by Liu and Clay (2002), that there is a relationship between racial identity attitudes and high levels of self-perceived multicultural counseling competence (Constantine, 2002b). Their findings indicated that White counselors who had taken classes in multiculturalism were likely to be more competent in working with culturally diverse populations than counseling students who had not completed any multicultural counseling courses. This suggests that counseling trainees who are exposed to a multicultural environment or have knowledge about multicultural issues have a better understanding of other cultures as well as their own, are able to acknowledge and appreciate cultural similarities and differences, and are able to identify their feelings and reactions to various other cultures different from their own (Constantine, 2002b). Therefore, it is vital that counseling programs provide counseling students with the opportunity to have exposure to multicultural arenas through training and experiential coursework. In addition, counselors who have had a great deal of multicultural experiences were able to experience greater counseling effectiveness with ethnic minority clients because they were more aware of and were more comfortable in working with issues surrounding multicultural situations and potential scenarios (Evans & Foster, 2000).

In a study done by Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett (2001), they found that many counselor educators who left their training sessions often did not have the knowledge and skill to work effectively with their multicultural clients. Therefore, once they got out into the counseling workforce, they were unable to relate well to their clients because of their lack of understanding and skill in working with multicultural clients. This suggests that counseling programs need to offer more multicultural courses to expose students to multicultural issues. In addition, counseling programs need to give students the opportunity to be exposed to ethnically diverse populations so that they have knowledge of and understand some of the issues concerning multicultural populations. The only way that counselors will be able to feel comfortable working with multicultural populations is if they have had exposure to them both through coursework and training.

As the population expands, we will be seeing more ethnically diverse students within the school system. In order to meet the needs of the students, a counselor needs to be comfortable with the issues surrounding the student both in the mainstream American and the student's native culture. Along with mental health issues, there are also some other issues that counselors may encounter with students. An example is that English may not be their primary language and the parents may only have a minimal understanding of the goals of the educational system. Furthermore, not knowing the language can bring fear and frustration into the fold of other issues (Constantine & Gushue, 2003). By being able to see things from a multicultural perspective, counselors are better able to identify and incorporate cultural factors into the student/client's presenting problem. Therefore, they may be better able to identify an appropriate treatment plan for the student and be

able to work effectively with them (Constantine & Gushue, 2003; Fraga, Atkinson, & Wampold, 2004). However, it is also important to note that although a student/client may be of another ethnicity, their attitudes and beliefs may reflect that of the majority culture, due to assimilation. Therefore, it is important that counselors not jump to conclusions and make assumptions and conclusions based primarily on the student/client's ethnic background; there may be other contributing factors that the counselor needs to evaluate.

Multicultural Competency and its Effects on Clients

In recent years, there are measures that have been taken in training counselors to become more multiculturally competent. In studies done by Constantine (2002a) and Constantine and Ladany (1996), most counseling trainees reported that they did not feel that their programs did an adequate job in meeting the multicultural counseling competencies. In most instances, counseling programs offered at least one multicultural counseling course, which focused on enabling the counseling student to become a more effective and competent counselor. However, in the study done by Constantine and Ladany (1996), they found that students felt the need for programs to have face to face discussion groups where students could actively discuss multicultural issues as well as diversity centers where students were able to learn more about multicultural issues. It was recommended that these discussion groups be made up of both students and faculty to facilitate group discussion. The study also found that students felt that there was a need for the integration of multicultural issues into all academic coursework. In addition, there was a disparity between perceptions of students and faculty members in relation to the

multicultural courses offered and the effectiveness of those classes (Constantine & Ladany, 1996).

In another study done by Constantine (2002a), results revealed that students' attitudes and perceptions for their counselor's general competence, as well as multicultural competence accounted for more significant variances in their satisfaction with their counselors. One hundred and twelve college students who sought and terminated mental health treatment at their campus counseling center participated in the study. The results indicated that the counselors' multicultural counseling competence seemed likely to be a critical aspect of racial and ethnic minority clients' counseling satisfaction ratings. These results also suggest that counselors who were perceived as being effective in terms of traditional counseling competencies were also viewed as being proficient in addressing multicultural issues. Racial and ethnic minority college students' attitudes toward counseling accounted for a significant variance in counseling satisfaction (Constantine, 2002a). This may reflect a broad consensus that a counselors' general counseling skills as well as proficiency in multiculturalism may play an important role in helping students/clients of diverse ethnic backgrounds to satisfactorily address their mental health needs. On the other hand, findings from Steward, Wright, Jackson, and Han (1998) suggested that multicultural counseling competence had no significant influence in how White counselors were rated in counseling competency.

More studies than not seem to suggest that ethnic minority students feel more comfortable with a counselor who was able to be aware of various cultural issues and understand them without making prejudgments about them. As a result, it is important for

practicing counselors to evaluate their awareness in relation to racial/ethnic membership. However, it is important not to ethnically/racially match counselors and students merely based on demographic variables because multicultural understanding may be more important and relevant to the counseling relationship (Mahalik, Worthington, & Crump, 1999).

In being able to address the needs and concerns of culturally diverse students, counselors may also be better able to understand themselves in a cultural aspect. Moreover, by being able to produce the knowledge and skills necessary to work with diverse cultures, counselors seem to be more likely to be trusted and sought out. Several studies indicated that it was unlikely that clients would rate their counselors in a satisfactory manner if they felt that they were not understood in a cultural context (Evans & Foster, 2000; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000).

Developing Multicultural Counseling Competencies in Undergraduate and Graduate Courses

As the population in the United States becomes more diverse, there is a pressing need for counselors to be competent in multicultural counseling. Additional courses are sometimes offered to improve multicultural counseling training; however, the amount of training that undergraduates and graduates obtain in their coursework appears to be minimal. The result of training on undergraduate and graduate students in multicultural counseling competencies reflects upon how they obtain the experience and knowledge and whether or not it is offered in coursework or field work (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002; McCreary & Walker, 2001; Pope-Davis & Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995).

McCreary and Walker (2001) provide insight into the value of providing a multicultural pre-practicum course. What they found through adding a multicultural pre-practicum course for counseling psychology graduate students at Virginia Commonwealth University was that the students were able to open up and have dialogue about many of the issues concerning racial and ethnic minorities. The course was offered during their first semester of their program and provided lectures and theories on multicultural counseling with various races, gender, and age, self-awareness, and beliefs on diversity. The course also looked at similarities and differences among different ethnic groups. The counseling students were then able to develop self-awareness as well as increase their skills, knowledge, awareness in multicultural counseling (McCreary & Walker, 2001).

Pope-Davis and colleagues (1995), in their study of multicultural competence among counselors, suggest that regardless of what counseling program the student is in, the student who was from a culturally diverse background indicated higher levels of self-perceived multicultural competence. Ethnicity was the only significant demographic predictor in their study; the counseling program that the student was in made no difference. However, Constantine (2001) found that higher levels of multicultural counseling training were related to higher self-perceived multicultural counseling competence regardless of ethnicity. Therefore, if counseling students were exposed to multicultural counseling training courses, then they were more knowledgeable about multicultural issues and thus felt more comfortable when working with ethnically diverse individuals.

This may give rise to the issue of what specifically is taught in the multicultural training classes and how the learning opportunities are obtained. One individual may have an intensive experiential opportunity while another individual may only receive academic concepts. In order to further address and prepare current, as well as future counselors to better meet the needs of diverse client populations, additional research is needed; these opportunities need to be consistently evaluated and compared (Estrada, Durlak, & Juarez, 2002). By investigating several multicultural training experiences, the ones which are most effective will be able to help in the development of multicultural competencies.

In being able to expose counseling students to “cultural empathy, knowledge of normative characteristics of cultural groups, cultural self-awareness, knowledge of within-group differences, multicultural concepts and issues, and respecting cultural differences”, Robinson and Bradley (1997, p. 4) found that students were likely to feel more comfortable and competent in working with multicultural clients. When students are exposed to multicultural issues, they are also then able to evaluate their own beliefs and biases about other ethnic groups.

Revising Counseling Training: Using Experiential Activities

In being more culturally competent in providing counseling services to diverse clients, experiential activities may be used to assist counselors in being more effective (Achenbach & Arthur, 2002; Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Tromski & Doston, 2003). In general, counselor training often has a lack of strategies that are designed to instill and enhance the multicultural counseling competencies for counselor

trainees. Although there have been some advances in developing training models for multicultural counseling, how it is used to effectively teach multicultural counseling competencies to students is still an issue. Arthur and Achenbach (2002) addressed the shortcoming by offering a game-focused instructional strategy for achieving competency. They developed an experiential learning activity to increase the students' multicultural counseling competencies as well as raise self-awareness. The purpose was to challenge the students' personal frameworks about cultural diversity and develop cultural empathy (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). Kerl (2002) also agrees that it is important for counselors who are in training to work through their own issues regarding race, ethnicity, and gender. If these issues are not worked through, then it is a possibility that they will be projected onto the client, making the counseling relationship less effective.

Narrative approaches in experiential learning involve ways in which counseling students are able to evaluate and understand their experiences and values concerning race, ethnicity, and gender. Not only do narrative approaches enable us to understand more about others and the reality of race and diversity, but also about ourselves (Kerl, 2002). Using narrative approaches allow for the instructor to discuss power within the structure of race and ethnicity and thus help the students to vicariously place themselves within that power structure. In addition, using narrative approaches allows for the students to be able to combine the information and knowledge that they have received from the readings that were required and use it towards real-life situations that they may encounter daily in their professional lives. Therefore, this enables the students to be able to evaluate their values and beliefs and how it relates to others who are ethnically diverse.

By understanding the differences and similarities among multicultural populations and self, counselors will be able to work more effectively and efficiently with ethnically diverse clients.

A narrative approach that counseling instructors can use is to have the counseling students write a reflective paper about racism or prejudice. This exercise is important because it allows for the counselors in training to understand how power works either to our advantage or disadvantage according to race and ethnicity. In addition, this exercise may be especially important for White students to partake in because they are able to evaluate and understand how they may have directly or indirectly benefited from institutional, individual, or cultural racism (Kerl, 2002). Often times, issues surrounding race can be a barrier to the counseling relationship if they are not dealt with when working with an ethnically diverse client because the counselor may harbor negative feelings toward the client due to beliefs that they may hold or have little to no understanding of the position of privilege in American society.

Experiential learning is a way of bridging theory into practice within the multicultural counseling realm and can promote self awareness (Achenbach & Arthur, 2002). In a study done by Achenbach and Arthur (2002), they found that cultural schema worked as a forceful construct which was separated by three domains: cultural self, cultural other, and cultural condition. Although experiential learning was an effective way in helping students to be responsive to cultural areas in the counseling relationship that translated theory into practice, there are other things to consider. For example, if students were unable to see a connection of how to use this in professional practice, it

would be unlikely that they would incorporate these practices in their personal and professional roles (Achenbach & Arthur, 2002; Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kim & Lyons, 2003).

In using experiential activities, counseling trainees are able to have a multicultural experience within the realms of race, ethnicity, and gender. It can enable counseling trainees to confront and overcome racial and ethnic biases. By being able to offer firsthand experiences to counseling trainees, they seem to become more engaged and therefore achieve the educational objectives (Achenbach & Arthur, 2002; Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kim & Lyons, 2003). When students participate in experiential activities, they experience both cultural similarities and differences. Experiential learning also goes beyond cognitive learning and challenges them to think about cultural contexts that may influence their behavior or attitudes about certain racial or ethnic groups. This, in turn, can enable them to reflect upon their own behavior, attitudes, or beliefs both in their personal and professional role.

Tromski and Doston (2003), in their research, present interactive drama as a way to create additional ways to learn about and understand multicultural and diversity issues. The purpose of the interactive drama is to hopefully make counselors have more self-awareness as well as be more aware of others which, in turn, can create empathy, which is crucial to multicultural competence. Interactive drama takes the students away from the textbooks and lectures and leads them to real-life interactive situations concerning race and ethnicity. Moreover, they are able to participate in these interactive dramas and are challenged to raise questions and express their reactions or concerns to the characters that

are present. Interactive drama is a powerful medium that is designed to reach all populations and allow for the counseling students to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills and can promote social change. Interactive drama builds on the existing knowledge and skills of counseling students and can further their understanding of their own biases and individuals who are different from them (Tromski & Doston, 2003).

Experiential learning can be a very effective way for counseling students to assess and understand their cultural attitudes, beliefs, and biases. However, when selecting experiential learning exercises, it is important to keep in mind the purpose and connection to various multicultural counseling competencies. In addition, it is important to consider the counseling student's role during the experiential learning exercises, because just playing the role of the counselor or client does not necessarily mean that it will challenge them in new ways. However, assuming the role of the counselor or client may lead to externalizing behavior. These roles are used to challenge the feelings and thoughts that the students may have and lead to discussion about any underlying cultural assumptions that they may have while participating in the experiential learning activities (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002).

Although experiential learning activities are often useful in addressing underlying beliefs, attitudes, and biases about certain cultural and ethnic groups, they need to be used in conjunction with counseling coursework materials in order to be most effective.

CHAPTER THREE

Summary, Analysis, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the literature reviewed relative to the growth in diversity among ethnic minority populations, multicultural competency in regards to training among K-12 school counselors, and the need for multiculturally competent counselors in addressing issues related to ethnic minority students. This chapter will also review how some researchers have applied multicultural courses to academic courses as well as experiential courses as a way to increase multicultural awareness and thus create effective and competent counselors in the realm of multicultural counseling. In addition, an analysis of the research on multicultural counseling competencies will be presented and the chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research.

Summary

With the growth in numbers of diverse ethnic populations in the United States, it is imperative that counselors become more multiculturally competent in working with ethnic minority clients. Many studies have found that although it is important that counseling programs have courses related to multiculturalism and infuse experiential courses into academic coursework, some counseling students have suggested that many training programs have lacked the adequate multicultural competencies and that there needs to be more extensive development in the area of multicultural competency (Constantine, 2002b; Constantine & Ladany, 1996; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Robinson & Bradley, 1997).

Although some research findings have shown that many counseling programs offer at least one multicultural course, it appears to be necessary that counseling programs offer more multicultural counseling training. Many studies have also shown that the more multicultural counseling training a student receives, the more multiculturally competent they may feel in working with ethnically diverse populations. In having more multicultural training, counselors have more knowledge about multicultural issues and thus usually develop a better understanding of how to deal with those issues pertaining to the student/client. They also seem to feel more comfortable in being able to relate to the student/client. When counselors become more multiculturally competent, they are more likely to achieve a successful counseling relationship with their student/client.

Furthermore, when a counselor has a knowledge and understanding of their own culture as well as other cultures, they appear to be better able to become more aware of underlying feelings that they may have towards ethnic minority groups. When counselors are multiculturally competent, they are usually able to make multicultural students/clients feel more comfortable. As a result, many studies revealed that multicultural clients preferred counselors who had an awareness and knowledge of their personal racial/ethnic heritage. This allowed for counselors to have a more open mind when working with multicultural clients.

In creating multiculturally competent counselors, counseling programs may need to re-evaluate their counseling courses to include multicultural training as well as academic coursework. The most effective way of doing this appears to be combining

academic coursework with experiential learning activities. Counselor training has historically lacked strategies that are designed to instill and enhance multicultural counseling competencies for counselor trainees. Experiential learning can be used to increase students' multicultural competencies as well as raise their self-awareness. In learning about multicultural issues and working in ethnically diverse environments, counselors are frequently able to work through their own issues regarding race, ethnicity, and gender.

Narrative approaches are one way in which counselors are able to evaluate and understand their experiences and values and beliefs concerning race, ethnicity, and gender. Narrative approaches allow for counselors to understand more about others and the reality of race, diversity and themselves. It also allows for counselors to be able to combine the information that they learn in class and apply it to real-life situations during multicultural counseling training. The most effective way of applying narrative approaches is to combine it with in-class readings.

In using experiential activities, most counseling trainees are then able to develop multicultural awareness about race, ethnicity, and gender and are also able to evaluate their own attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, biases. Experiential activities can also include interactive drama. These allow for counseling students to partake in real-life situations pertaining to working with various multicultural clients. These activities allow for self-reflection as well as self-awareness and awareness of others, which in turn can create empathy and is important to the counseling relationship. In addition, by being able to participate in these activities, counseling students are able to express their concerns and

reactions and ask questions pertaining to the characters that were present. This builds on existing knowledge and skills that the counseling trainee has and in turn can create social change.

According to the literature, most counseling programs offered at least one multicultural counseling course for students, which seemed to produce more effective counselors. However, most students also felt that there needed to be more opportunity for students to be exposed to multicultural issues outside of the classroom. For example, some students felt the need to have physical space in which they could meet along with a faculty member to have group discussions about multicultural issues. Students also felt the need for counseling programs to have opportunities in which students would be able to actively discuss multicultural issues. Moreover, students felt that there needed to be more integration of multicultural issues into all academic coursework.

By being more knowledgeable about multicultural issues and feeling comfortable in working with ethnically diverse populations, counselors can usually feel more competent when working with ethnic minority clients. Literature suggests that there is a correlation between the counselor's multicultural counseling competence and satisfaction ratings of racial and ethnic minority clients' counseling satisfaction ratings. When counselors had the knowledge and the skills that were necessary to work with diverse ethnic groups, they were more likely to be sought out and trusted. This is an indication that when counselors are able to address the concerns of culturally diverse students/clients, they are also better able to understand themselves in a cultural context and become more understanding and empathetic to multicultural issues.

Critical Analysis

Whenever reviewing research that is relevant to multicultural counseling competency, it is important to keep in mind that competency is often times not only affected by multicultural coursework and training, but can also be, and usually is, influenced by personal attitudes and beliefs, values, and biases. The topic of multicultural counseling competency is often connected to personal values and beliefs and attitudes and therefore, when counselors and clients are evaluating the counselors based on their multicultural counseling competencies, the results could possibly be skewed. This can be due in part to what they thought were expected answers, and some counselors may have perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent when they were in fact not. It is hard to distinguish whether or not a counselor is multiculturally competent. To date, there is not a well established way to determine that except for student/client feedback. It is possible that although multicultural issues are addressed in coursework and also in training, in order to have counselors evaluate their knowledge and skills in working with multicultural clients, they may still be mostly influenced by learned attitudes and beliefs, and values about other ethnic minority groups. It is also possible that counselors communicate their values and attitudes related to multicultural counseling competency when reporting their research.

A majority of the research that was reviewed in chapter two dealt with self-report data concerning multicultural counseling competencies from counselors and clients. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration that the self-report data process could have an influence on the results of the data. The participants of any study could have

reported in the way that they thought they were expected to answer; this is always a limitation.

Much of the research regarding training and the use of experiential learning activities to promote awareness and growth of counselors in the area of multicultural counseling competency reported most effectiveness when combining academic coursework such as readings with experiential activities that allowed students to be active participants. This allowed for counseling students to be able to ask questions and raise concerns. It also appeared to be effective because counseling students were able to use their knowledge and skills and apply it to real-life situations and issues. It is important to note that although some studies have proven experiential activities to be effective, there is still more research needed in this area. In the research that was reviewed, many counseling students reported having higher self-perceived multicultural counseling competency and were more likely to use it in professional practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the main conclusions that can be made from the review of literature done is that using experiential activities in conjunction with multicultural coursework is most effective when promoting multicultural competence and awareness. In addition, counseling programs need to implement other opportunities (i.e., dialogue groups with diverse members) to support and advance the knowledge of multicultural issues. In being more multiculturally competent, ethnic minority students/clients are also more likely to feel comfortable in the counseling relationship and therefore give higher satisfaction ratings towards their counselor.

The following are recommendations for counseling programs that would like to promote and advance multicultural education in regards to multicultural counseling competencies to their students as well as for future research:

1. Until counseling programs are able to offer more multicultural courses and training, counseling relationships will be hindered because counselors will be less competent in addressing and understanding multicultural issues. Some research has indicated that there were strong preferences for counselors who had an awareness and knowledge of personal racial/cultural heritage because they were probably more likely to have an open mind and be understanding to the client's culture as well.

2. It is recommended that there is some kind of evaluation of the multicultural courses offered and the effectiveness of each on multicultural competency. It is important to note that respondents need to be encouraged to answer honestly and not according to what they feel is expected. By being able to evaluate counseling trainees' responses, counseling programs are better able to improve on multicultural courses and how they need to infuse it into the curriculum so students are able to feel competent in working with multicultural issues.

3. It is recommended that counselors be provided adequate experiential training in the field so that they feel comfortable in working with multicultural students/clients. Some research has shown that counseling students who had increased contact with racially and ethnically diverse clients were more influential in increasing their multicultural knowledge and awareness competencies.

4. It is important that counselors be aware of and knowledgeable about the population of students they will likely be working with in their immediate community. Although it is important and useful to have knowledge of all ethnic minority populations, it is more significant to know about the smaller ethnic minority populations that the counselor will be working with. This allows the counselor to have more in-depth knowledge about their specific issues and have a contextual understanding of how to deal with them. It is also easier to understand various norms and expectations of those ethnic groups and how they may differ from the counselor's viewpoint of how people in society should think and act.

5. If possible, it would appear to be highly valuable to evaluate the perceptions of both the counselor and student/client after the termination of counseling. This is to evaluate whether or not each felt that the counselor had knowledge of and was competent in working with a multicultural student/client. It should be expressed that they be totally honest about their evaluations in order to gain a thorough understanding of the need for further professional development in the area of multicultural competency.

6. It is also recommended that counseling students evaluate their multicultural knowledge and competence before they take a multicultural course and then at the end of the course to evaluate the effectiveness of that course. In addition, by evaluating their multicultural competence at the beginning of their counseling program and at the end of it, evaluations can be used to see if the multicultural courses were effective and what needs to be improved. Some students who left their training sessions did not feel they had the knowledge and skill to work effectively with their multicultural clients. Therefore, if

students are able to gain knowledge, skills, and an understanding of multicultural issues during counseling coursework and training, then they will be more likely to be more effective in working with multicultural clients.

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