

A Critical Review of Literature: Understanding School  
Counselors' and School Psychologists'  
Multicultural Competence

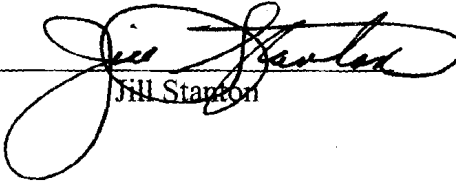
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**ABSTRACT**

The United States and students in the education system are becoming increasingly diverse, while school counselors and school psychologists continue to be a more homogeneous group, primarily Caucasian. To work effectively and provide necessary services, school counselors and school psychologists need to develop multicultural competencies. The purpose of this paper is to review the literature, exploring the multicultural competency of school counselors and school psychologists. Areas to be explored are the history of multicultural competence, development of multicultural competence, role of school counselors and school psychologists, and a critique of the assessments used to measure multicultural competence. While in both fields there has been progress towards training school counselors and school psychologists to have multicultural competence, more training and experiences appears to be needed if they are to be effective in providing services to a widely diverse student population. In the Critical

Analysis chapter, recommendations for school counselors and school psychologists are offered.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The United States is becoming increasingly diverse and because of this diversity school counselors and school psychologists are being called upon to be competent to work with various groups effectively. According to the 2000 United States Census, there are 281.4 million people in the United States. Broken down into racial categories, there are 35.3 million Latinos, 36.4 million Black or African Americans, 11.9 million Asians, 4.1 million American Indians or Alaskan Natives, 874 thousand Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, and 6.8 million people representing two or more races (United States Census Bureau, 2001). Various ethnic groups have been growing consistently since the 1990 census. For example, the Latino population has had a 57.9% increase in population growth (United States Census Bureau, 2001). Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics explained that the number of students who speak a language other than English at home has doubled from 1979 to 2004 (United States Department of Education, 2006).

In 1979, only 3.8 million students in the educational system spoke a language other than English, while in 2004, 9.9 million students spoke a language other than English (United States Department of Education, 2006). Regarding the student population, the 2000 Decennial Census found 30.8% of the student population was Latino, 26.8% was Black or African American, 5.0% was Asian, 5.1% was multi-racial, and 11.7 % was some other single race (United States Department of Education, 2005). The growth in population of students from various cultural groups provides clear information about the amount of cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States. As the population of students in various cultural groups increases, school counselors and school

psychologists are called upon to be prepared and knowledgeable in working with students from various diverse backgrounds (e.g. racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender, social class, those with disabilities, etc.) (Oakland, 2005; Ridley & Kleiner, 2003; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). School counselors and school psychologists need to be ready to work with diverse populations in areas of individual and group counseling, post-secondary options, consultation with parents and other school staff, assessments, and interventions (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). School counselors and school psychologists need to have multicultural competence in the areas of personal beliefs and attitudes, knowledge of other cultural worldviews, and skills to apply culturally sensitive practices and interventions (Holcomb-McCoy, 1999; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

One reason school counselor and school psychologists specifically need to develop multicultural competence is due to the demographic make-up of the members in each of the fields. According to a 2004-2005 membership survey, 92.6% of the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) members are Caucasian (Curtis, Lopez, Batsche, & Smith, 2006). With the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), no such demographic information is recorded in the membership data base (personal communication, 2007). The demographic information from NASP and the lack of information from ASCA appears to indicate that while the students in the educational school system are increasingly diverse, the professionals providing the services are more consistently Caucasian. Due to this disparity in ethnic and cultural differences, school counselors and school psychologists need to be able to provide culturally competent services.



Even though the multicultural competency initiative has been around since the 1970's, there is still a need to develop and refine the development of ones multicultural competence (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003) explained that despite the fact that there has been research in the field, progress has been slow in making systematic changes and implementations to treatment outcomes. As a whole, various cultural populations are inappropriately being served in regards to mental health, with some populations being over diagnosed for certain disorders and being under diagnosed in other disorders (The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003). Most providers are not prepared to work with ethnically and culturally diverse groups and, in return, some group members may develop mistrust of mental health providers, view illness and mental health differently from traditional American views, have different views on communication and help seeking behaviors, and experience discrimination and racism (Gibbs & Huang, 1998; The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003).

In schools, students of color are still over represented in areas of special education (Loe & Miranda, 2005). For example, the National Research Council's Committee of Minority Representation in Special Education (2002) found African American students to have a 135% greater chance than Caucasians of being identified as mentally retarded (MR) and a 59% chance of being identified as Emotionally Disturbed (ED). Native Americans/Alaskan Natives also had a 24% greater chance than Caucasians of being identified as having a learning disability (LD) and a 12% greater chance than Caucasians of being identified as ED (National Research Council, 2002).

Concerning counseling diverse populations, Constantine (2002) found in his

study, *Predictors of Satisfaction With Counseling: Racial and Ethnic Minority Clients Attitudes Toward Counseling and Ratings of Their Counselors' General and Multicultural Counseling Competence*, the counselor's level of multicultural competence can help develop the counseling relationship with clients of color. While working with counselors who are more multiculturally competent, the clients of color viewed the counseling sessions more favorably and left the counseling experience feeling more satisfied (Constantine, 2002). Steward, Wright, Jackson, and Han (1998) also found white counselors who had multicultural training were able to discern between culturally sensitive and culturally insensitive counseling sessions.

In the field of school psychology some progress seems to appear, but more training and research needs to be done. For example, Miranda and Gutter (2002) found from 1990-1999, only 10.6% of the articles presented in the four major school psychology publications had multicultural content. More recently, Brown, Shriberg, and Wang (2007) found from 2000-2003, 16.9% of the articles published had multicultural content, indicating more articles are being dedicated to multicultural content. School psychologists are also a more culturally homogenous group, with only 5.5% of school psychologists being people of color (Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker 1999). In regards to assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students, most school psychologists are not prepared to provide adequate assessment of students of color nor English Language Learners (ELL) and are often lacking in areas of how to conduct bilingual assessment as well as having a clear understanding of the acquisition process of a second language (Ochoa, Rivera, & Ford, 1997). More recently, Loe and Miranda (2005), in their study *An Examination of Ethnic Incongruence in School-Based Psychological*

*Services and Diversity-Training Experiences Among School-Psychologist*, found that school psychologists experienced high ethnic incongruence (ethnic differences between two individuals) in providing assessment, counseling, and consultation services to their clients. Loe and Miranda (2005) suggest that while students come from a wide variety of ethnic and minority groups, school psychologists are still ethnically homogeneous.

Even though progress has been made in helping school counselors and school psychologists develop their multicultural competence, research seems to indicate that more training and a stronger understanding of diverse groups needs to take place. One area of support for multicultural competence is in the professional organizations of school counselors and school psychologists. The American School Counseling Association states in its ethical guidelines, a school counselor is to “expand and develop awareness of his or her own attitudes and beliefs affecting cultural values and biases and strives to attain cultural competence... and acquires educational, consultation, and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills, and effectiveness in working with diverse populations” (2004b, p. 4). The Professional Conduct Manual for School Psychologists explains that school psychologists are to have the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills to work with individuals and groups with a diverse range of strengths and needs from a variety of racial, cultural, ethnic, experiential, and linguistic backgrounds (National Association of School Psychologists, 2000). In addition to the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) principles, a web page resource on cultural competence and how it relates to the field of school psychology is also available. These professional standards show the support of developing one’s multicultural competence as being embedded into the profession; yet, it seems obvious that more training and

experience are needed to help prepare school counselors and psychologists for the reality of the diverse populations of students they are going to encounter.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Due to the large number of diverse students in the educational system and the generally homogeneous make-up of school counselors and school psychologists in the field, school counselors and school psychologists need to develop and obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to work with each population effectively and competently. Thus, school counselors and school psychologists need to develop multicultural competence.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the literature pertaining to the multicultural competence of school counselors and school psychologists in the summer of 2007.

#### *Rationale for the Study*

This study is a necessity as it will assist school counselors and school psychologists in understanding the history of multicultural competence, developing multicultural competent strategies, and defining the various roles school counselors and school psychologists have in working with diverse populations. In addition, a review of literature on multicultural competence will help school counselors and school psychologists become aware of the various techniques, rules, and values needed to work with a diverse student body.

#### *Research Objectives*

The goal of the research is to understand and explore the literature pertaining to the

multicultural competence of school counselors and school psychologists. The four objectives of this study are:

1. To gain a historical perspective of the development of multicultural competence.
2. To understand the education and training related to multicultural competence.
3. To understand the roles of school counselors and school psychologists in providing services to a diverse population.
4. To understand the instruments used to assess multicultural competence.

#### *Definition of Terms*

To understand the area of multicultural competence, certain terms need clarification. The terms are:

*Culture* - "The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another." (The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, n.d., ¶ 12)

*Cultural capital*- "Forms of knowledge; skill; education; any advantages a person has which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations. Parents provide children with cultural capital, the attitudes and knowledge that makes the educational system a comfortable familiar place in which they can succeed easily." (Wikipedia, 2007, ¶ 2).

*English Language Learners (ELL)* - English Language Learners (ELLs) are students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English. (Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, 2006).

*English as a Second Language (ESL)*- English as a second language (ESL) is an educational approach in which English language learners are instructed in the use of the English language. Their instruction is based on a special curriculum that typically involves little or no use of the native language, focuses on language (as opposed to content) and is usually taught during specific school periods (Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, 2006).

*Ethnicity* - "Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language ethnicity" (The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, n.d., ¶ 5)

*Multicultural competence* - To understand and develop the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills that are needed to work with culturally diverse populations (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

*Race*- "A social construct with no scientific basis that categorizes people according to obvious physical differences such as skin color" (Koppelman & Goodhart, 2005. p. 378).

*Worldview*- The way a person sees his or her relationship to other people, the world, institutions, and nature (Sue & Sue, 2003).

#### *Assumptions and Limitations*

The assumptions and limitations of this study provide the boundaries of what the research will include. The assumption of the study is that the researcher will develop an understanding of multicultural competence pertaining to school counselors and school psychologists and will be able to utilize this information toward a follow-up study of gathering data and comparing the multicultural competence of each group. The limitation

of the study centers on the vast amount of research in the area of multicultural issues and the personal bias of the researcher that can limit which literature is included or excluded. In addition, another limitation of the study centers around examining the assessment instruments used to evaluate multicultural competence in understanding the research used to develop the instruments. While one can try to understand all of the components that make up the instruments, the bias of the researcher determines how the assessments are evaluated.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will include a discussion of the literature pertaining to multicultural competence of school counselors and school psychologists. The topics to be discussed are the history of multicultural competence, the training and development of multicultural competence, the role of the school counselors and school psychologists in working with diverse populations, and an exploration of the instruments used to assess multicultural competence.

### *History of Multicultural Competence*

The interest in multicultural competence evolved around the 1970's. In the field of counseling, the Vail Conference, held in 1973, started the push for practitioners to become more aware of diversity issues and understand that to provide services to diverse clients, practitioners need to be culturally competent, otherwise they could be providing unethical treatment (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). In 1977, Sue and Sue, the current authors of many multicultural articles, wrote an article entitled *Barriers to Effective Cross-Cultural Counseling* (cited in Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). This article discussed the importance of counselors needing to be competent in working with other groups and how communication barriers may arise if the counselor does not understand the client's cultural messages (cited in Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). In the field of school psychology, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) also began to address some diversity issues in the schools (Rogers, 2005). In 1978, NASP stated in its Standards for Training Programs in School Psychology, that graduate training programs needed to incorporate diversity curriculum (Rogers, 2005). These events created a stepping stone for the members in the fields of counseling and psychology to become interested and



involved in research, application, and training of diversity issues for school counselors and school psychologists.

In 1982, Sue and other colleagues wrote a paper addressing the competencies needed to work with diverse populations (cited in Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). The article by Sue, and other colleagues described the competencies of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. These competencies are still ever-present in the field today and serve as the foundation for developing multicultural competence. While the field of counseling progressed with developing its own guidelines for multicultural competencies, the field of school psychology continued to add ethical standards for its practitioners. From 1984-1985, NASP added to its Principles for Professional Ethics that psychologists need to have respect for diverse people (mentally, culturally, politically, etc), need to be able to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds, and need to use nondiscriminatory practices (Rogers, 2005). From the mid 1980's to the beginning of the 1990's, a few articles began to appear on topics of multicultural training, particularly assessing ones competence (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). However, the real push in the field began around the early to mid 1990's when Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) made a call to the profession. The goal of the article was to explore the need for multicultural training in graduate programs, to propose standards and competencies to be a part of the profession, and to advocate for a call to the profession as a whole (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Even though in 1982 Sue and Sue addressed the competencies, they did not feel the profession, as a whole, was moving forward (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). After the publication of this article, more articles began to appear to address theories, assessments, and strategies centering on multicultural issues and the field of counseling.

As the field of counseling began to explode with literature surrounding multicultural issues, the field of school psychology continued at a more laborious pace with making changes to its standards, ethics, and practices. For example, in 1992 NASP revised its ethical principles to include lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (Rogers, 2005). In addition, training in areas of bilingual assessment and interventions became an integral part of the school psychologist's profession (Rogers, 2005).

Currently, in both fields, there is a solid push and dedication to help train and develop school counselors' and school psychologists' multicultural competence. There are many different theories, assessment tools and strategies to become more aware, and some graduate-training programs dedicated to preparing students to work with the diverse school population. However, there is still a need to continue on the path of developing one's awareness of his or her beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work and provide effective services.

#### *Development of Multicultural Competence*

How does one become culturally competent? The main foundation of understanding and developing multicultural competence comes from Sue, Arredondo and McDavis' article in 1992: to develop skills, knowledge, and awareness. Additionally, within those broad areas there are more specific competencies. For example, in a survey of school psychologists, Lopez and Rogers (2001) identified 89 competencies school psychologists should have to work effectively with diverse student populations such as having awareness, skills, and knowledge of cultural and language factors with assessment, consultation, and counseling. Most research seems to focus on the following categories of Awareness, Worldview and Identity Development, Knowledge, and Skills.

### *Awareness*

The first broad category is to develop awareness of one's own personal beliefs, values, and assumptions (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). In other areas of counseling, counselors are called to "know thyself" and this is not any different for the area of multicultural competence (Sue & Sue, 2003). Developing awareness consists of becoming aware of one's own cultural background and heritage, understanding one's own values and attitudes, understanding differences between one's self and others, being knowledgeable about racism, discrimination, and stereotypes, and being aware of varying communication styles and the impact of the dominant culture upon the counselor's worldview (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Developing awareness has become an important component in developing multicultural competence (Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003). In *Multicultural Counseling: Research on Perceptions of School Counselors*, the authors, Robinson and Bradley, found rural school counselors held lower self awareness scores on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) than in areas of knowledge and skills (2005). Robinson and Bradley (2005) suggested the findings were due to the fact that many graduate training programs focus on knowledge and skills and techniques to use with other cultures, but do not emphasize personal awareness. However, one wonders if it is the programs school counselors attend or it is that the school counselors working in homogeneous communities are forced or given opportunities to examine their own awareness.

### *Worldview and Identity Development*

Two ways to aid in the development of personal awareness are to understand one's worldview as well as one's racial identity. Worldview is the way a person sees his or her relationship to other people, the world, institutions, and nature (Sue & Sue, 2003). In 1999, Mahalik, Worthington, and Crump suggested there was a "therapist culture" based on the assumption that the United States has its own particular values, indicating therapists with "American worldviews" may hold different worldviews from other ethnic and racial groups. For example, Carter (1991), in an empirical review of value-orientations, found white middle class Americans typically had future time orientations, while Latinos and Native Americans had present time orientations, and Blacks or African Americans had past time orientations. Hall, as cited in Bennett 2003, discusses that people from different cultures view the world differently, and can be unaware of other ways to view the world. For example in relation to interpersonal communication, Hall classifies cultures (United States, Germany, and Scandinavia) as low-context where "meaning is gleaned from the verbal message itself" where with high-context cultures (East Asian, Arab, Southern European, Native American, Mexican, and rural parts of the United States) "meaning is understood in terms of the situation or setting in which communication takes place (Bennett, 2003, p. 48). Communication as well as behaviors between the groups with different worldviews and being low-context and high context, can lead to cultural misunderstandings (Bennett, 2003).

Another way to develop one's awareness is by understanding one's identity. Miranda (2002) believes culture develops one's identity. Where we grow up, our heritage, and our experiences all shape and impact our identity development. It is a life long

process integrating all of our experiences (Tatum, 1997). Vinson and Niemeyer (2000) implemented a study to understand the relationship between white racial identity development and multicultural competence. They found more developed racial identities were generally related to higher levels of multicultural competence (Vinson & Niemeyer, 2000). More recently, in 2005, Middleton, Stadler, Simpson, Guo, Brown, Crow, Schuck, Alemu, and Lazarte investigated the relationship between mental health practitioners' (clinical psychologists, counseling psychologists, and counselors) white racial identity development and self-reported multicultural competence. Like Vinson and Niemeyer (2000), Middleton et al. (2005) found mental health professionals who held higher levels of identity development self-reported higher multicultural competencies. As personal awareness is the basis of developing ones multicultural competence, developing knowledge of working with various groups and other identities is the next step.

### *Knowledge*

Like awareness, knowledge is another critical component to develop multicultural competence. The goal for the knowledge area is for school counselors and school psychologists to have a solid understanding of diverse groups in relation to their history and heritage, group characteristics, and social and educational barriers affecting each group as a whole (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996). Sue and Sue (2003) also suggest that by gaining knowledge about other groups, the professional is a more effective helper. For example, Markus Bidell (2005) explained that for counselors to work effectively with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients (LGB), those counselors needed to know and understand the LGB sociocultural history, biases in the mental health care system, and intra-group diversity.

To develop school counselors' and school psychologists' knowledge of different groups, a number of experiences have been proposed. More traditional approaches focus on reading books, attending workshops and conferences, and taking multicultural classes. Other non-traditional ways focus on experiential components. Alexander, Kruczek, and Ponterotto (2005) explained how having school counseling students in training in an international immersion practicum experience within another culture helped them apply what they learned in the classroom to work with diverse groups. Additionally, the international immersion experiences helped the school counseling students learn about the unique needs of the individuals within the various global cultures (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005). In 2007, Dejud found that school psychology students attending a five-week cultural immersion experience in Mexico increased their language abilities and knowledge of the Mexican school system and culture from participation in the experience. Along with international immersion experiences, immersion experiences in the United States can be just as beneficial such as having experiences in large urban areas. For example, Loe and Miranda (2005), suggest school psychologists should be exposed to diverse groups of students on their practicums and internships. Similar with immersion experiences, Kim and Lyons (2003) suggested using experiential activities in the classroom to increase knowledge. The use of experiential games in the classroom provided students an opportunity to show what they learned about different groups and at the same time provided a safe environment to explore stereotypes and personal views (Kim & Lyons, 2003).

### *Skills*

The third component to developing multicultural competence is skills where school counselors and school psychologists apply their knowledge and awareness to develop interventions and treatments to work with diverse clients. Regarding the application of skills in working with clients, Liu and Clay (2002) suggested mental health professionals should go through a series of steps such as evaluating relevant cultural aspects for the client, determining how and when to incorporate cultural and social issues, and examining potential treatments. School counselors and school psychologists are also called to use their skills in working with parents, staff, and other school personnel. When presenting workshops or providing consultation services, school counselors and school psychologists need to evaluate the group of people they will be working with and determine what multicultural issues might impact their approach (Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002). When beginning to work with families in schools, school psychologists should evaluate the impact of the family system and culture on the student to develop delivery systems accordingly (Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002). Coleman and Baskin (2003) suggested counselors who have developed skills in working with diverse populations were aware of how to adjust their approach to meet the student's needs, the school culture, and the community as a whole. Therefore, the goal of developing ones skills is to understand and use practices that will help create a trusting relationship, instead of hindering it due to cultural misunderstandings on the part of the school counselor or school psychologist.

The path to developing multicultural competence is a life long process (Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002). There is no set guarantee that through acquiring personal awareness, knowledge, and skills that one will be an expert in working with students of diverse

backgrounds; however from the path, the hope is that one will become more effective in service delivery.

### *Roles of School Counselors and School Psychologists*

The roles of the school counselor and school psychologist are to aid students in the classroom academically, but also with their personal, emotional, and social development. Many of the roles school counselors and school psychologist perform overlap; however, each position has a specialty. The areas of expertise of school counselors and school psychologists impact how they will interact with diverse populations and what strategies and skills to use.

#### *Role of School Counselors*

According to the American School Counseling Association, school counselors are to aid all students with their academic, personal/social, career, and developmental needs (2004a). Services include individual and group counseling, career counseling and guidance, classroom guidance, consultation with teachers and parents, intervention, crisis prevention and response, developing teacher workshops, working with community programs, developing transition plans and post-secondary options, and, most of all, being advocates and leaders in the school (American School Counseling Association, 2004a).

In working with diverse populations, school counselors need to have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to provide effective treatments. Holcomb-McCoy (2004) created a checklist of competencies and suggested there are nine areas school counselors need to be aware of when working with diverse populations. These areas include competence in multicultural counseling where counselors are called to provide appropriate counseling services and treatments, consultation, understanding racism and



student resistance, assessment, family counseling, social advocacy, school-family community partnerships, and interpersonal interaction (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). In individual counseling, counselors need to be cognizant of cultural values, but at the same time need to be aware that traditional counseling theories have been developed to use with more American western populations and not diverse populations (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995). Therefore, counselors are called on to be cautious when applying those theories and interventions to diverse student populations and students in general who vary in values, traditions, and cultural assimilation. To help with this dilemma Coleman and Wampold (2003) suggested using culturally specific treatments where the treatments respect the client's background and also take into account the client's worldview. Along with this idea is an error of caution; many culturally specific treatments are very individualized and may not generalize to other individuals (Coleman & Wampold, 2003). The goal must then be to find a balance of treatments, which meet the student's individual needs.

Like individual counseling, school counselors also need to be aware of the impact culture and values have on career choice and post-secondary planning. Career choice and post-secondary planning for students is often highly dependent upon family values, traditions, and culture. Career choice is not necessarily independent of culture, and therefore culture needs to be taken into account when working with students. When working with students from diverse backgrounds on career related issues, counselors need to be aware of the degree culture and values impact career choices and goals (Hargrove, Creagh, & Kelly, 2003).

When working with students from diverse backgrounds, it is important to acknowledge the barriers students might experience due to their background (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006). For example, when working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students, counselors need to be cognizant of how the students' sexual identity may cause potential barriers for their career aspirations such as with discrimination and self-disclosure (Miller & Brown, 2005). Another important aspect in working with diverse populations is taking into account family systems. In Latino, Asian, and Native American cultures and many other groups, family is very important and can impact career choices. For example, many Latino families believe group goals come before the individual. With Asian families, decision-making can be more of a collective process and not an individual one. Additionally, many Asian American families encourage their children to choose more prestigious occupations. In Native American families, problem solving is done within the family and not with outside help, suggesting that students may be less willing to use school counselors as a resource (Miller & Brown, 2005).

When working with students with disabilities (a culture of its own) on careers, school counselors need to be more actively engaged in the process. In general education, after a student has chosen a goal and career, the counselor's role may be more diminished; however, when working with students with disabilities, school counselors may need to give more support and attention (Miller & Brown, 2005). Some students with disabilities can have a lower self-efficacy (beliefs about one's abilities) and self-esteem when it comes to careers and work. One way school counselors can help students who have disabilities is to aid them with the process of acquiring a job or to have a plan

set in place before they leave high school. It is also important to include students with disabilities in volunteer and career shadowing experiences (Miller & Brown, 2005).

### *Role of School Psychologists*

Like school counselors, school psychologists are also called to be advocates and leaders for the students they serve. According to NASP, school psychologists work with students with disabilities and students who have special talents and teachers to provide consultation, evaluation, intervention, prevention research, and planning (2003). A large portion of a school psychologist's job is assessing students for special education services. However, many school psychologists are spending more time with intervention-oriented assessment, rather than traditional assessments (Reschly, 2000). In working with students of diverse populations, Lopez and Rogers (2001) found 89 competencies school psychologists should have. The competencies are broken down into broad categories in areas of assessment, consultation, counseling, culture, language (in relation to English Language Learners/ ELL), laws and regulations, professional characteristics, report writing, research, theoretical paradigms, working with interpreters, working with organizations, and working with parents (Lopez & Rogers, 2001). Within these competencies, school psychologists need to have awareness, skills and knowledge to provide services to a diverse student body.

Currently, the main role of a school psychologist is to assess students for special education. With the large number of culturally and linguistically diverse students, school psychologists need to be able to provide nondiscriminatory assessment. Not only is it best practice for school psychologists to use nondiscriminatory assessment, it is also mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that evaluations and

assessments are not to discriminate based on racial or cultural backgrounds and are to be given in the student's native language (2004). Nondiscriminatory assessment should be practiced using many different types of information, rather than one single test (Ortiz, 2002; Scribner, 2002). Ortiz (2002) contended there is no assessment that is completely unbiased, but the goal should be the reduction of biased assessment and to provide assessment in the least discriminatory way.

When providing nondiscriminatory assessment services, school psychologists first need to understand biased assessment. Bias in assessment comes in different forms: the cultural content within a test, the linguistic demands in a test, and the lack of representation in norm samples of individuals from diverse backgrounds (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Cultural bias is where the larger or dominant culture's values, beliefs, and ideas are embedded in the test and are given to individuals who do not have the same background. School psychologists need to be aware that intelligence tests are not culture free and mostly reflect the culture where the test was developed. However, psychometrically speaking, no such bias has been found in the assessments such as with factor structure, test construction, and validity (Ortiz, 2002). Rather Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz (2005) suggest tests have cultural loading because of the embedded cultural content and the fact that the student may not have knowledge of the culture. Along with cultural loading, tests are also linguistically demanding and are biased against the students who have not yet mastered the language (i.e. ELL) (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Finally, tests can be biased because of their norms, where tests are only normed on a small number of diverse individuals (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). With these areas of potential bias for discriminatory assessment, school psychologists need to be very aware

of ways to lessen possible discrimination and choose assessments that are the least biased toward the student.

In their role of assessing students for special education, school psychologists can lessen discriminatory assessment by using a variety of services, interventions, and perspectives. Ortiz (2002) suggested a ten-step framework for providing services. For example, school psychologists should assess and evaluate the learning ecology by understanding the student as a unique individual within a variety of environments (culture, school, etc). School psychologists should also evaluate the student's opportunity for learning, language proficiency, and language development history. They should be knowledgeable in the variety of assessments available ranging from nonverbal, to bilingual and traditional assessments (Ortiz, 2002). When choosing assessments, school psychologists should be aware of the norms, the psychometric properties, and the cultural loading of the tests. For example, intelligence tests, which have high linguistic demands, should not be used with English Language Learners (ELL), as such tests are inherently biased (Figueroa, 1990). School psychologists need to be able to view all information in a comprehensive way to understand the student's development.

When assessing students, school psychologists also need to be aware of acculturation in how the student acquires cultural knowledge (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005; Scribner, 2002). Understanding a student's level of acculturation will serve as a guide for psychologists when deciding how to assess the student and plan for interventions. In developing interventions, school psychologists also need to take into account how the interventions were developed and the norms used. Ingraham and Oka (2006) explained when working with evidence-based interventions (EBI), school

psychologists need to be aware that many of the interventions are developed in and around the Western culture and may not be transferable to other diverse groups.

Specifically when working with English Language Learners (ELL), school psychologists need to be aware of the development of language proficiency and apply appropriate interventions and assessments. In *Best Assessment and Intervention Practices with Second Language Learners*, Scribner described various competencies school psychologists needed to have when working with ELL students. For example, school psychologists needed to understand how a student acquires a second language and also help teachers set up their instruction to accommodate the students (Scribner, 2002). Other competencies included advocating for a supportive school wide climate, staff development training and education, and encouraging collaborative teaching and learning practices. Finally, Scribner advocated for early and longer-term interventions when working with ELL students to provide them support in a variety of ways to make their adjustment to the culture and language (2002).

#### *Common roles of School Counselors and School Psychologists*

While school counselors and school psychologists each have separate roles to perform, some of their responsibilities overlap. One main area of overlap is providing consultation services. With consultation services, school counselors and school psychologists will be interacting with diverse consultees and clients. Various theories and techniques have been incorporated into providing culturally competent consultation services. For example, Sheridan (2000) suggested how multicultural aspects can be threaded into conjoint behavioral consultation, and Ingraham (2000) defined a conceptual

framework of multicultural school consultation. These frameworks offer insights in how to provide multicultural consultation services.

Throughout the different stages of consultation, multicultural services can be applied. Ingraham (2000) suggested that before the consultation process even starts, the consultant needs to understand their own culture and other cultures. In the problem identification and goal development stages, consultants need to be aware that the consultees may have a different viewpoint of the problem because of their culture (Sheridan, 2000). Therefore, it was suggested when discussing the problem and setting goals, the consultee's beliefs and strategies should be incorporated as much as possible (Sheridan, 2000). Throughout the consultation process, school counselors and school psychologists need to be aware of power differentials and try to create trusting and safe environments (Ingraham, 2003). Trusting safe environments can be created by acknowledging cultural issues and at the same time helping reduce resistance of the client (Ingraham, 2000; Sheridan, 2000). Along with the more general guidelines to providing multicultural consultation, suggestions have been given in how to work with specific groups. Shin and Holcomb-McCoy (2005) suggested when working with some Asian parents and families, counselors needed to have a solid understanding of the core family values, parenting practices, intergenerational acculturation gap, and language barriers. In consultation, Shin and Holcomb-McCoy's suggestions could be applied to all groups also.

One important aspect of multicultural consultation is working with interpreters. School counselors and school psychologists need to be aware of how to interact properly with interpreters and understand the impact working with interpreters can have on their

consultation process (Sheridan, 2000). Before the consultation process, there are some practices to consider when working with interpreters. First of all, the consultant should meet with the interpreter beforehand and give an overview of the session and discuss issues of confidentiality (Lopez, 2002; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). During the sessions, the interpreter should sit next to the consultant and the consultant should speak to the consultees, not the interpreter (Lopez, 2002; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). It was also recommended that the consultant give brief statements to give the interpreter time to translate the sentence (Lopez, 2002; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). After the session is over, debriefing sessions should occur with the interpreter and consultant to discuss the session (Lopez, 2002; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Overall, the consultant should be reminded that when working with interpreters, sessions take longer and the consultant should account for the additional time in planning (Lopez, 2002; Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

School counselors and school psychologists provide numerous services to students, parents, and school staff. By developing multicultural competence, school counselors and school psychologists can successfully navigate their numerous roles and provide successful services to a diverse student population.

#### *Assessment of Multicultural Competence*

To understand school counselors' and school psychologists' level of multicultural competence, various assessments have been developed. Most assessments developed have been based on Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis' (1992) model of multicultural competence in areas of awareness, knowledge, and skills (cited in Kitaoka, 2005). The most common type of assessment used for understanding ones multicultural competence



is a self-report Likert scale survey. Currently there is also a push to develop different assessments such as the use of portfolios, interviews, and observations (Ponterotto & Potere, 2003).

One of the most common instruments is the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey (MAKASS) which was developed by D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck in 1991 (Ponterotto & Potere, 2003). This instrument is a 60-item, four-point Likert self-report scale (strongly disagree/ very limited to strongly agree/ very aware/very good) composed of one area measuring knowledge/skills and another area measuring awareness (Ponterotto, & Potere, 2003). The MAKASS was developed to be used for instructional objectives and training programs (Kocarek, Talbot, Batka, & Anderson, 2001).

The Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) was developed by Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise in 1994 (cited in Kitaoka, 2005). The instrument was developed to view multicultural counseling competencies from a variety of factors rather than Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis' three-part model (Kitaoka, 2005). The MCI is a self-report four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from very inaccurate to very accurate and measures four factors of awareness, knowledge, skills, and relationship (Kitaoka, 2005). For the MCI, the relationship component refers to the counselor's interaction with diverse clients such as developing trust and rapport (Kitaoka, 2005).

A third instrument is the Multicultural School Psychology Counseling Competency Scale (MSPCCS), and was developed by Rogers and Ponterotto in 1997 (cited in Kitaoka, 2005). The scale was developed to assess graduate trainee's level of multicultural competencies and was used to inform research and training programs (Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997). The MSPCCS is different from the first two instruments as

it is an observer-report instead of a self-report, and it uses language specific to the field of school psychology; however, it was based on Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis' model (cited in Kitaoka, 2005).

Specifically for school counselors, Holcomb-McCoy and Meyers developed the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey (MCCTS) in 1999 (cited in Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). The instrument was created to measure a school counselor's perceived level of multicultural competence (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). The MCCTS is a self-report four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from extremely competent to not competent (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). The MCCTS measures five categories of knowledge, awareness, multicultural terminology, knowledge of racial identity development theories, and skills (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005).

Along with the assessments, portfolios have also been used as an alternative to measure a school counselor's and school psychologist's level of multicultural competence. Coleman and Hau (2003) suggested that the use of portfolios helped trainees and their professionals experience a self-reflective process incorporating a variety of ways to demonstrate their development. The portfolios provided an in-depth analysis of the trainees and professional path to developing competence (Coleman & Hau, 2003).

While assessment instruments provide helpful information in understanding school counselors and school psychologist's multicultural competence, they also have some limitations. Kitaoka (2005) suggested practitioners need to be aware that the assessments may be measuring different things based upon the models they were developed for or from. For example, the instrument could be based upon Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis' three-factor model, but in fact could be measuring a multidimensional

concept or other different ideas (Kitaoka, 2005). Other areas of concern are the test takers' frame of reference and the definition of culture. Kitaoka (2005) explained most multicultural competency assessments do not define what frame of reference the test taker should apply when filling out the instrument. Findings could be different if the test taker responds to the test when only thinking about working with a specific culture rather than many different diverse clients (Kitaoka, 2005). Additionally, many of the instruments only refer to racial and ethnic differences and do not encompass all the vast diverse groups (sexual orientation, gender, social class, disability etc.) (Kitaoka, 2005).

### Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the literature reviewed on the history of multicultural competence, the development of multicultural competence for school counselors and school psychologists, the roles of school counselors and school psychologists in working with diverse students, and the assessments used to measure multicultural competence. This chapter will also include a critical analysis of the findings from the literature review related to multicultural competence. Finally, recommendations will be presented for areas of further research.

#### *Summary*

Schools are no longer places that represent one culture but rather environments that include a vast amount of diversity among the student body. Due to the increasing diversity of the United States and influx of English Language Learners (ELL) students, school counselors and school psychologists need to be prepared and informed to provide competent services. In all areas of mental health services there is information suggesting more needs to be done to train and help develop service provider's multicultural competence. Without a school counselor or school psychologist being knowledgeable in areas of multicultural competence, the clients suffer. For example, diverse backgrounds are still more likely to be diagnosed with a disability and receive special education services. Additionally, Constantine (2002) found clients responded to counselors better who have more multicultural competence. Not only can incompetence and cultural misunderstanding cause clients to suffer, it can also be seen as unethical. Korman, stated, "The provision of professional services to persons of culturally diverse backgrounds by persons not competent in understanding and providing professional services to such

groups shall be considered unethical” (cited in Ivey & Collins, 2003, p. 294). Therefore, the goal is to learn and understand how school counselors and school psychologists can develop their multicultural competence to provide the necessary services especially when the school psychology profession is so homogeneous.

The history of multicultural competence began in the 1970’s and is still developing today. The most influential work in the field was a framework to view multicultural competency areas created by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis in 1992. Their research provided a basis to understand multicultural competence and is usually referenced in most other research related to multicultural competence today. The three main competency areas of awareness, knowledge, and skills are where school counselors and school psychologists can develop their multicultural competence.

A lot of the literature explains how important it is to have knowledge of other cultures and groups and skills to plan and implement appropriate interventions. However, the most overlooked and important area for development is awareness. Through awareness, the school counselor and school psychologist are called to understand and investigate their own views, bias, and identity. By having a solid understanding of their own identity, school counselors and school psychologists are more able to comprehend their student’s or client’s identity and worldview. By knowing “thyself” and as well as having at least some knowledge of the culture, most school counselors and school psychologists can provide competent services for a diverse student body.

From awareness, school counselors and school psychologists need to develop knowledge about other groups and develop appropriate services. Understanding a student’s group history and social barriers helps inform school counselors’ and school

psychologists' practice. Taking classes, participating in workshops and immersion experiences can increase knowledge. Additionally, when planning interventions and treatment options, school counselors and school psychologists should be cognizant of the environment and social systems of the student/client's family. With awareness, knowledge and skills, school counselors and school psychologists can be more confident in the service they are providing to a diverse student body.

When providing culturally responsive services, school counselors need to be aware of the theories they use for treatments, the impact of family on career planning, and considerations for working with students in special education on careers and transitions. School counselors can create services to fulfill the needs of the students if they implement strategies that are culturally appropriate for the diverse student population. For school psychologists, the main goals are to work with special education and ELL students and apply nonbiased assessments and treatment interventions. School psychologists need to be aware of how their selection of assessment instruments can impact the results and that all tests have some cultural loading. Both professionals provide consultation services and should be knowledgeable in working with translators in creating safe and trusting environments for all clients and especially those who are ELL. Overall, school counselors and school psychologists need to understand their own views, bias, and the culture of their students and clients so they can be advocates for them by providing the best services as possible.

To assess multicultural competence, there have been many instruments developed. Most of the instruments are self-report Likert scales. When using these instruments to understand one's multicultural competence, school counselors and school

psychologists should understand the purpose of the instrument and for whom it is intended. Additionally, caution should be taken when interpreting the test in relation to understanding what frame of reference the test taker is taking the test from and the groups of people the test is referring to in the test questions.

### *Critical Analysis*

Even though there are many ways to develop one's multicultural competence through developing awareness, knowledge, and skills, developing competence is not a fast process. Ortiz and Flanagan (2002) and Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992) reminded us that generating multicultural competence is life long. For school counselors and school psychologists to be qualified to work with diverse populations, they need to be committed to putting in the time and effort to develop the competencies. Specifically, school counselors and school psychologists need to be open to examine and critique their own personal views and assumptions. Thus, with a strong dedication and willingness for self-exploration, school counselors and school psychologists can be on the right path to being able to provide effective service delivery for a diverse student population. However, the question arises as to who will be responsible for assuring this development; the individual, the school districts, or graduate training programs?

While there has been a lot of research surrounding the development of multicultural competence, the instruments used to measure competence are still lacking. First of all, the instruments are a self-report measure. With self-report measures, the data results should always be viewed with caution. One cannot know if the respondent's results on the instrument were truly representative of the test taker's views. Researchers do not know if the test takers are answering in a way they believe they are expected or

how they truly feel. With the instruments, there also seems to be a lack of cohesiveness concerning how multicultural competence should be conceptualized. In line with Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis some test developers believe there are three main constructs, while others view multicultural competence as a multidimensional concept.

### *Conclusion and Recommendations*

Through the review of literature, the need for developing multicultural competence seems to be overwhelmingly necessary. Even though many techniques and theories have been implemented to try and address the issue, more needs to be done. When school counselors and school psychologists have multicultural competence, they are usually better providers and are able to navigate and fit the needs of the diverse students they counsel and assess. Further research needs to be implemented to help school counselors and school psychologists develop into competent service providers in the multicultural realm.

Thus, the following recommendations are offered for areas of further research and investigation.

1. It is recommended in academia, training programs, and other areas of professional development that developing ones awareness become a critical component. Until school counselors and school psychologists fully understand their own views and biases, they will not be able to provide multiculturally competent services.
2. Further research needs to be done in creating an assessment that can be used to assess school counselors' and school psychologists' multicultural competence. While the current self-reports are useful, it is difficult to judge if the respondents answered truthfully or answered to be socially acceptable.



3. It is recommended that school psychologists have specific training for working with ELL students. When choosing assessments, school psychologists need to attempt to provide nondiscriminatory assessments to be aware of bias (cultural, linguistically, and norms).

4. School counselors and school psychologists both provide consultation services. It is recommended when working with linguistically diverse consultees, school counselors and school psychologists have knowledge in how to work with interpreters, family groups, and communities.

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