Multicultural Counseling Competency Development with a Guatemala Travel Study

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This quantitative study focused on the self-rating of multicultural counseling competencies by counselor education graduate students in a pre-post design. Twelve students participated in a ten day travel study course to Antigua, Guatemala in May, 2008. Prior to travel, students self-rated their levels of multicultural competency using the Multicultural Counseling Competencies Self Assessment (MCCSA) developed by Arredondo et al. (1996). Following travel, students reassessed their levels of competency using the same measurement tool. All students' self-ratings of multicultural counseling competence increased. The authors discuss implications of this study and provide recommendations for future research.

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Kottler (2004) refers to multiculturalism as the most powerful movement in the counseling profession in the past decade. Cultural bias among counselors became a focus of the counseling profession 25 years ago with the onset of the multicultural counseling movement (Wendel, 1997). Sue and Sue (1999) found a lack of training courses that addressed the

needs of non-white clients and this research ignited counselor educators' focus on how to provide exceptional multicultural training. It is in the best interest of counselors to work toward understanding clients who come from non-dominant cultures. To this end, counselor educators include comprehensive diversity training in masters' and doctoral level counseling programs. Diversity includes race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability or disability and other characteristics whereby people may choose to self-define (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Current counselor education literature addresses how training programs implement multicultural competency development primarily through traditional classroom methods. However, cultural immersion is a particularly effective way of assisting students in developing multicultural competence (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Yet, this modality remains largely unexplored in the counseling literature. The purpose of this article is twofold: To describe the effectiveness of a ten day immersion trip to Guatemala in increasing the multicultural competence of graduate students in counseling and to provide an example of utilization of effective competency measurement strategies to assist trainers in creating and implementing strong multicultural training programs.

Multicultural Competence among Counselors

Arredondo and others (1996) defined multicultural in the context of counseling preparation and application as referring to five major cultural groups in the United States and its territories: African/Black, Asian, Caucasian/European, Hispanic/Latino and Native American or indigenous groups who have historically resided in the continental United States and its territories. The practice of counseling is based on the therapeutic relationship fostered between client and counselor. Therefore, it is crucial that multicultural issues and concerns be addressed in each courses and texts throughout counseling training programs. Since Sue and colleagues (1982) developed the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCCs), the majority of counseling and psychology programs have infused this model into their curriculum (Constantine & Ladany, 2001). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is an independent agency that accredits graduate level counselor preparation programs (CACREP, 2009). The 2009 CACREP standards require accredited

counselor education programs to include multicultural education in every course of eight core subject areas. This emphasis throughout the curriculum demonstrates the counseling profession's commitment to comprehensive diversity training. Commitment to the practice of becoming a multiculturally competent counselor is an active process that never reaches an end point (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) and lifelong dedication to this process often begins at the graduate education level.

Dimensions of Becoming a Culturally Competent Counselor

Sue and Sue (1990) defined three dimensions of becoming a culturally competent counselor. First, culturally skilled counselors are actively becoming aware of their own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, and personal limitations. Multiculturally competent counselors understand their own worldviews and how they are a product of their cultural conditioning (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Second, culturally skilled counselors are active and intentional in their attempts to understand the worldview of their culturally different clients without judgment or bias. Culturally sensitive and competent counselors understand that a culture is not to be "blamed" for a person's problems, "nor does the presenting problem have to be based on culture or race for a person of color" (Arredondo et al., 1996, p. 49).

Third, culturally skilled counselors are in the process of actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive intervention strategies and skills in working with culturally different clients. Counselors recognize that traditional counseling theories and methods may not be beneficial when working with clients from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Counseling approaches need to be consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). It is not sufficient that counselors take just one course about multiculturalism; it is imperative that counselors in training advocate for their own education, competency training, and practice. To this end, students and professionals in the counseling profession are charged with familiarizing themselves with the MCCs.

Training Approaches

Yutrzenka (1995) found preliminary evidence that multicultural competencies may be correlated with effective treatment outcomes. Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, and Montoya (2006) found in their meta-analysis that multicultural education is associated with the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to multicultural counseling competencies and effective practitioner competence. Most researchers promote a comprehensive approach to emphasizing multicultural counseling objectives in all coursework and believe this approach will result in students' appreciation for the importance of attending to diversity in their clients (Zimmerman & Haddock, 2001). Others promote training multicultural competency through immersion courses (e.g. Marshall & Wieling, 2001). The literature on multicultural competency suggests that effective counselor education programs employ a variety of teaching methods, both practical and clinical (Vereen, Hill, & McNeal, 2008). Researchers are beginning to study the effect of both approaches of cultural immersion experiences and comprehensive diversity training on multicultural counseling competency development.

Students' daily experiences with culturally different persons greatly impact the degree of cultural competency gained (Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). Contact with culturally different persons provides opportunities for students to develop meaningful survival skills in diversified global communities (Pedersen, 2002). Interacting with and engaging in an immersion experience as a student or professional provides a platform for social-emotional re-learning required to break through racist conditioning (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Using the Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Scale (MAKSS) developed by D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991), Neville and others (1996) found students' multicultural counseling competencies increased after a diversity course and a year later when they conducted a follow-up measurement of competencies.

Most competency studies involve self-rating though researchers are beginning to conduct research utilizing observer rating. Constantine and Gushue (2003) found a relationship between multicultural training and external ratings of multicultural competence. It is currently unclear if observer ratings have outcomes of similar value to self-report research design (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991).

Competency Assessment

Arredondo and colleagues (1996) operationalized the MCC utilizing the Dimensions of Personal Identity (DPI) developed by Arredondo and Glauner (1992). The DPI provides a useful framework for recognizing the complexity of all persons while offering clarity for specific criteria for each MCC.

The DPI focuses on three dimensions. The A dimension is a listing of characteristics describing an individual. Age, gender, culture, ethnicity, race, language, accent, social class status, outward appearance, height, weight, and disability are aspects of the A dimension. It is within this dimension that most stereotypes, judgments and assumptions are fostered (Arredondo et al., 1996). The A dimension characteristics challenge counselors to work in a multicultural context and to move beyond physical attributes to see individuals holistically.

The B dimension characteristics include educational experience, geographic location, religion or spirituality, military experience, relationship status, or work experience. Counselors must have the awareness that each dimension does not exist separately but that each influences one another. It is especially important that counselors do not blame clients' problems on their culture (Arredondo et al., 1996).

The C dimension indicates the intersection of sociopolitical, global, and environmental events that affect clients' personal culture and life experiences (Arredondo et al., 1996). This dimension places individuals within a context and closely interacts with attributes of the A dimension. It is important counselors inquire and gain awareness about clients' historical and political realities. Failure to do so disadvantages clients because counselors may attribute clients' current situation only to personal problems.

The B dimension describes the outcome of the A and C dimensions. Perceiving people in a holistic sense and recognizing the intricacy of all persons are the result of the PDI framework that is key in understanding multicultural competency development (Arredondo et al., 1996).

The Multicultural Counseling Competencies Self Assessment (MCCSA) was developed by Arredondo and others (1996) using the DPI framework to create 119 specific explanatory statements (criteria) which are self-rated on a scale from 1-4 (1=not at all, 2=fairly well, 3=well, 4=very well). Paired with an immersion experience, this assessment can be used in a pre-post design.

Multicultural Immersion Experiences

Immersion experiences provide opportunities for counseling students to develop multicultural competency and to internalize cultural awareness (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Immersion experiences are typically defined as daily contact over an extended period of time (length of time varies, but typical lengths are a week, month, or semester). Research indicates that individuals who experience daily contact with culturally different people develop a higher level of multicultural competency than those who do not (Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). DeRicco and Sciarra (2005) emphasize the quality of the experience as well as the frequency and duration of immersion as essential ingredients to encourage self-exploration of covert racism. DeRicco and Sciarra (2005) emphasized, based on the research of Allport (1954), the following conditions as essential for a valuable immersion experience: frequency and duration of contact that encourages the development of meaningful relationships between members of culturally different groups; contact between individuals of equal status; and contact involving the mutual attainment of a desired outcome for all participants.

Pope-Davis, Breaux, and Liu (1997) developed the Multicultural Immersion Experience (MIE) that includes these conditions and specific assignments that relate to these conditions (to be outlined below). Alexander, Kruczek, and Ponterotto (2005) emphasized the importance of the MIE by stating, "Contact with other cultures other than their own provides individuals with opportunities to rehearse adaptive functioning skills that help them survive the diversified global village. This exposure is particularly crucial for counselor education programs." As multicultural awareness is a hallmark of counselor education in the 21st century, the importance of MIE to facilitate the development of counselors in training cannot be overstressed.

Three phases represent the MIE model developed by Pope-Davis, Breaux and Liu (1997). The initial step of the first phase involves choosing a cultural group students deem culturally different from themselves. Students research the history, religion, and social issues of that group in order to begin the immersion process on a cognitive level. Subsequent interactions with members of that cultural group are enhanced on an experiential learning level by the students' knowledge of critical values, historical events

and experiences of that group. The MIE integrates an opportunity for students' self-exploration of their own cultural background and the political and social relationships between their culture and the cultural group of choice. Finally, in this phase students assess their overall multicultural competency. Part of this self-assessment requires a written autobiography to explore the student's background and how it influences the student's life (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997).

Phase two is characterized by the use of daily or weekly journals prior to, during and following the immersion experience. During the immersion period, students attend community events, learn the language of and spend time individually with members of that culture. Students are encouraged to reflect and honestly address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of participating in an immersion experience. Feelings of anxiety or discomfort and questions to be discussed in class are recorded in the journal (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997).

During the final phase, the students will have prepared a presentation about their immersion experience that facilitates discussion among classmates. At this point any assessment tools (such as the MCCSA) used before the immersion experience can be used again to explore changes in the student's awareness of the student's own cultural identity as well as that of others.

Method

Guatemala was selected as a travel destination for several reasons. First, rapidly shifting demographics in the U.S. demand counselors increase awareness of Latino cultures, norms, and traditions. Due to the short history of this current demographic explosion, there is a shortage of bilingual and culturally competent social service professionals (Doyle, Nackerud, & Kilpatrick, 1999). Guatemala is a low-cost area for travel, an important consideration for economically challenged graduate students. Antigua hosts over 60 Spanish language schools, so is an ideal location for Spanish language immersion. Guatemala has a counselor education program, with a department chair that is active in U.S. professional counseling associations. Additionally, Guatemala is a small country, easy to navigate and explore.

The cultural immersion course was established in the counseling program at a Midwestern university with a predominantly European

American/Caucasian student body. The university's counselor education program is accredited by CACREP (2009) and housed within the College of Education. Typically, the counseling students' access to culturally different persons is limited to small pockets of Hmong, Latino, Somalia, and Native American communities and most counseling students report very little contact with diverse populations.

Twelve counselor education graduate students and three undergraduate students in human service fields enrolled in a travel study course about Guatemala which was offered during the spring semester of 2008. Students and two instructors met weekly to discuss readings about the culture and history of Guatemala for four weeks prior to travel. Group processing and team-building activities were also implemented during this time. During travel, students spent ten days in Guatemala engaged in individual Spanish classes, service projects, cultural and anthropological tours and a summit with counselor education professionals from Universidad del Valle de Guatemala. Post-trip course activities included writing projects and follow up meetings with the instructors.

Participants

Because the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of immersion on graduate students in counseling, only the 12 graduate-level students engaged in the study. The 12 self-selected European American/Caucasian participants were master's students in counselor education who attended the travel study program in Guatemala. The participants included one male student and 11 female students. All participants had completed at least two full-time semesters including a diversity course (entitled Human Relations) and had experienced at least two clinical training courses (Foundations of Counseling and Microskills). Five students were concurrently enrolled in a practicum or internship course.

Multicultural Immersion Experience

The Guatemala travel study course was designed using the MIE developed by Pope-Davis, Breaux, and Liu (1997) as a model. In the first phase, all students identified as culturally different from Guatemalan and

Mayan peoples in terms of race, culture, socio-economic status, language, and life experiences. During this phase, students assessed their overall multicultural competency using the MCCSA. Students also explored their own cultural background life through individual journaling and group discussion in pre-travel class meetings.

In the second phase, students turned in weekly journal entries prior to travel, daily journal entries during travel and one journal entry post-travel. Through writing, students processed feelings and reactions to learning about the relationship between the United States and Guatemala (past and current), the impact of poverty on the lives of citizens in this third-world country, the cultural divide between people who identified as Guatemalan and those who identified as Mayan. The lack of access to basic resources such as water, medical care and education were also processed. During the 10 day immersion experience, students engaged in six main components of the travel study course: (a) large and small group discussion and written reflection; (b) counseling considerations in Guatemala; (c) orientation to service organizations; (d) service work; (e) Spanish language instruction; (f) and tours and excursions. In the final phase students discussed cognitive and emotional reactions to being in the cultural immersion experience via a final class meeting, small group meetings with the instructors and e-mails shared with class members. The final student assignment required post-travel communication with human services staff in Guatemala in creating an advocacy project. Students planned educational events in Minnesota and Wisconsin to inform locals and solicit resources for residents of Antigua and surrounding areas. Students also wrote letters to community newspapers advocating for Guatemalan and Mayan United States residents. Upon completion of the travel study course, those students who were research participants completed the post-travel MCCSA.

Instrument

The MCC's are organized by using a matrix of characteristics and dimensions of those characteristics. Characteristics are the following categories of MCC: a) counselor awareness of own assumptions, values and biases; b) understanding the worldview of the culturally different client; c) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Each of these characteristics is described as

having the following three dimensions: a) beliefs and attitudes; b) knowledge; c) skills. The three by three matrix of characteristics and dimensions create nine competency areas. Each of the competency areas has either two, three or four specific counseling competencies, totaling 31 multicultural counseling competencies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The MCCSA was developed by Arredondo and colleagues (1996) by creating explanatory statements for each of the 31 MCC which total 119 statements on which an individual can self-rate.

Results

Data were analyzed with SPSS using descriptive and inferential statistics. Because there were twelve participants, the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was used to determine if significant differences existed between the pre tests prior to the cultural immersion experience and the post tests following the experience. Differences between pre and post test scores at less than the .01 level of significance were found for all nine dimensions of the MCCSA.

Characteristic 1: Counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 55.00, SD = 9.16) and post test scores (M = 67.08, SD = 7.90) in Attitudes and Beliefs (Z= -3.06, p = .002). These results suggest specific improvement was found in a participant's active engagement in an ongoing process of challenging their own attitudes and beliefs that do not support respecting and valuing of differences. Additionally, improvement was indicated in the ability to more effectively identify pre-service and in-service experiences, which contribute to expertise and can identify current specific needs for professional development. Finally, all participants increased their ability to recognize their level of discomfort with differences that exist between themselves and future clients in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 31.25, SD = 6.68) and post test scores (M = 41.17, SD = 7.35) in Knowledge (Z = -3.06, p = .002). Participants showed significant improvement in their knowledge of their own racial and cultural heritage and how it affects their definitions about normality/abnormality and the counseling process. All participants

also gained an increase in knowledge about how oppression affects them personally and in their work. Increased self-awareness about discrimination was evident for all participants indicating the increased likelihood that these future counselors will acknowledge their own racist attitudes and, as a result, understand how these attitudes may directly or indirectly affect the counseling process.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = -22.67, SD = 6.54) and post test scores (M = -31.25, SD= 5.22) in Skills (Z = -2.94, p = .03). These findings suggest skills gained by all participants included being able to research and locate training experiences to enhance an understanding of working with culturally different populations, and increasing an understanding about themselves as racial beings seeking to develop a nonracist identity.

Characteristic 2: Counselor awareness of client's worldview.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 20.42, SD = 4.25) and post test scores (M = 26.83, SD = 4.61) in Attitudes and Beliefs (Z = -3.07, p = .002). All participants increased awareness of their negative and positive emotional reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups. Also gained was an awareness of stereotypes and preconceived notions and willingness to contrast their own beliefs with those of others while remaining nonjudgmental.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 31.33, SD = 10.47) and post test scores (M = 44.33, SD = 10.97) in Knowledge (Z = -3.06, p = .002). All participants gained knowledge about the understanding of how culture may affect personality formation, career choices, development of mental disorders, and appropriate counseling approaches. Participants also increased their knowledge about sociopolitical influences that affect the quality of life for clients of a different culture.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 13.42, SD = 5.96) and post test scores (M = 20.92, SD = 5.85) in Skills (Z = -2.85, p = .004). All participants gained skills in researching mental health/disorders of ethnic and racial groups and planning future interactions with minority groups. These participants also gained the skill of cultural immersion in a non-academic setting.

Characteristic 3: Culturally appropriate intervention strategies.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 10.33, SD = 3.17) and post test scores (M = 16.33, SD = 3.70) in Attitudes and Beliefs (Z = -3.07, p = .002). All participants increased their respect for others' religious beliefs about physical and mental health and for indigenous practices. Additionally, they gained appreciation for bilingualism and the potential need for a translator during the counseling process.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 32.92, SD = 11.87) and post test scores (M = 47.17, SD = 11.38) in Knowledge (Z = -3.06, p = .002). These participants increased understanding of the possible clash with cultural values of minority groups that traditional counseling practices may cause and institutional barriers that prevent minorities from accessing and using mental health services. They also gained knowledge of the potential bias in assessment instruments and interpretations of such instrument findings in a way that recognizes the cultural characteristics of clients. Finally, participants gained understanding of minority family structures, values and beliefs.

There was a significant difference in pre test scores (M = 47.83, SD = 12.06) and post test scores (M = 63, SD = 10.55) in Skills (Z = -3.06, p = .002). Participants showed significant improvement on skills including ability to engage in helpful communication responses (verbal and nonverbal), and assess the effectiveness of their helping style. Additionally, students gained skills in consultation with traditional healers within a cultural group. Finally, these participants gained the ability to take responsibility for interacting in the language requested by clients or make appropriate referrals.

Discussion

Pedersen (2002) focused on the importance of balance among awareness, knowledge and skills in multicultural training in counselor education programs. Programs that overemphasize any one of these multicultural counseling competency elements without regard to the other two create a training experience that can frustrate, confuse or affect trainees causing a lack of confidence in working with culturally different clients. The primary aim of this study was to measure whether counseling graduate students enrolled in the Guatemala travel study course would develop

multicultural competency in these three multicultural counseling competency elements as a result of the travel study and immersion experience. Students did significantly increase their multicultural knowledge, skills and awareness after a ten day travel study course to Guatemala. The results suggest that cultural immersion over a ten day period can be effective in increasing students' multicultural counseling competencies. Students' experience of reading assignments, large and small group discussion, experiential activities, journaling and advocacy efforts contributed to their ability to incorporate the cultural material into their thinking and practice. The results of this study support Drapela's (1975) findings which suggest that immersing counseling students in foreign countries could expedite the development of multicultural competency, and the work of Tromski and Doston (2003) who assert that information gained from experience impacts attitude formation and behavior to a greater extent than information processed cognitively.

Data analysis indicated significant competency development in all nine MCC competency areas as a result of the immersion experience. As all participants had previously completed Human Relations, Foundations of Counseling, and Microskills, it appears that coursework focused solely on cognitive training methods was less effective than immersion in prompting the development of multicultural competency for these students based on pre-travel self-assessment. It is possible, however, that it is the combination of cognitive training methods and experiential immersion which caused such an increase in competency development. Perhaps it is the experiential component that "cements" the cognitive learning.

These findings also support the work of Burnett, Hamel, and Long (2004) who discuss the impact of interacting with members of a different culture on a counselor's competency development. Overall increases in development by this group of participants were impacted by immersion with Guatemala and Mayan culture. Since these students were constantly interacting with residents of the Antigua, Guatemala area and local villages, the researchers attribute the increase in competency development in part as a direct result of the cultural interactions which forced them to struggle with language and general rapport building efforts with culturally different others.

Arthur and Achenback (2002) find that interacting with different cultural groups forces students to challenge ethnocentric ideas and helps

students gain a better understanding of how their own culture influences their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs. Many times prior to and during the course of the Guatemala travel study, students remarked about their changing perceptions of their own culture. In particular, when these European American/Caucasian students learned about the United States government and CIA involvement in the 36 year civil war in Guatemala, their struggle to negotiate membership in a culture involved in the oppression of this third world country was palpable. Much discussion ensued regarding these students' (common) government and its effect on their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs.

Implications

It is critical that counselor educators begin to think outside the classroom. Though daunting to implement (due to the significant financial and time costs for both faculty members and students) a travel study immersion course creates significant student gain with regard to multicultural competency.

The MIE is an excellent tool for use in multicultural training in that it requires the design of an immersion experience in communities unfamiliar to counselors-in-training. The authors replaced the suggested semester-long immersion with an intensive ten day immersion to Guatemala. Although not necessarily comparable, this research found that such an immersion had a significant impact on students' MCC development. The authors believe that travel outside the US is not necessary to achieve the MIE objectives, as long as the model is implemented and the immersion experience is qualitatively effective, whether by requiring a semester long experience or a more intense short immersion experience such as the Guatemala travel study course.

Research dedicated to multicultural competency is imperative in order for counselor educators to bring the results of their labor to the counseling profession. When competency development can be measured, educators create more effective ways of delivering multicultural curriculum that includes significant immersion experiences that focus on attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and skills. Several measurement instruments (including the MIE) exist to enable researchers to determine the effectiveness of cultural immersion experiences including the Multicultural Counseling Inventory developed by Sadowsky and others (1994), the Multicultural

Counseling Awareness Scale by Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger and Austin (2002), and the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey developed by D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991).

Limitations

The low number of participants limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample would increase the strength of the study. Additionally, since this was a quantitative study the authors were confined to analyzing the raw data collected by the MCCSA for this discussion. Qualitative research would have provided specific data illuminating immersion variables responsible for encouraging the development of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and skills. There was ample amount of qualitative data including student journal entries and follow-up interviews with instructors. Conducting research employing both qualitative and quantitative research designs would enhance future research.

Convenience samples can be problematic. In the case of the Guatemala travel study, self-selected students who chose to travel to Guatemala for cultural immersion might have been biased when responding to assessment questions. Recommendations for future research include replication of this study with a larger sample of randomly selected students in a quantitative and qualitative design. Finally, the Dimensions of Personal Identity instrument is relatively new and future studies are needed to determine the reliability and validity of this assessment.

Conclusion

Although few outcome studies exist which explored multicultural competency within diversity courses, future research might build upon the findings of the current study. Counselor educators need to determine if students develop multicultural competency as a result of cultural immersion. Future studies can measure not only self-rated competency development but also observer rated multicultural competency in a counseling session.

Requiring students to interact with a culture different from them is one of the best ways to understand one's own cultural identity and the culture of others and develop competencies in multicultural counseling. At this point,

programs are training students who are predominantly European American/Caucasian individuals. However, this particular individual profile is no longer the representational face of America. It is the most important work of counselor educators to ensure students are trained to adapt to the changing trends of this nation and develop the competencies necessary to work effectively with clients from diverse cultures.

Counselors must be sensitive to the ways in which certain populations have experienced oppression from the majority and how that aspect affects the therapeutic relationship between a white counselor and a client who is not white. "Counseling from a multicultural perspective indicates developing knowledge of how American history has been experienced differently by persons of color, by those who were of lower socioeconomic status, by people with less education and access to power, and by women" (Arredondo et al., 1996, p. 46).

The MCCSA and the MIE used in conjunction represent an important step in the direction of successfully training counseling students to develop multicultural counseling competencies. For many, an immersion experience could be a source of discomfort, fear, ambivalence, and varying degrees of resistance (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005). However, these feelings and reactions are often the necessary ingredients for a true change in awareness about oneself in relation to other individuals in the area of counseling and in the greater society.

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