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GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CURRICULUM-BASED EFFICACY
OF THE ACQUISITION OF MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING SKILLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Demond Ethridge Bledsoe

August 2014

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Demond Ethridge Bledsoe

August 2014

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Department of Counseling, Psychology and Special Education

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
 For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Executive Counselor Education and Supervision Program

Presented by:

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June 6, 2014

GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CURRICULUM-BASED EFFICACY
 OF THE ACQUISITION OF MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CURRICULUM-BASED EFFICACY
OF THE ACQUISITION OF MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING SKILLS

By

Demond Ethridge Bledsoe

August 2014

Dissertation supervised by Lisa Lopez Levers, Ph.D.

The United States is undergoing a period in which the demographics of the population are shifting drastically. The profession of counseling is tasked with providing services to diverse groups of clients, many of whom may have experienced racism, prejudice, and oppression as a result of their cultural or ethnic identity. Literature suggests that cultural and ethnic minority clients have poorer outcomes than their majority counterparts, and a significant factor in gaining positive treatment outcomes is the multicultural skill development in the clinician; however, little research focusing on effective delivery methods for multicultural skill development in counselor trainees has been conducted.

The purpose of this investigation was to ascertain which components of a multicultural counseling course have been found effective for increasing multicultural

skills in counselor education trainees. Additionally, this study explored the participants' perceptions of other aspects of CACREP accredited counseling programs that affected their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. This study sought also to explore aspects of multicultural counselor training and CACREP accredited programs that were perceived by the participants to hinder the development of multicultural counseling skills.

This qualitative investigation explored the experiences of nine students currently enrolled in CACREP accredited counselor education preparatory programs related to multicultural counselor education. Data for this investigation were collected through key informant interviews and a focus group. The results were categorized into seven thematic areas that focused on the lack of multicultural counseling skill, disregard for the Student Learning Outcomes, issues around diversity, course format, the importance of the instructor, effective instructional strategies, and a hyper-focus on biological cultural variables. The author suggests ways to teach multicultural counseling skills, in a more effective manner, through changes in pedagogical strategies and policy development.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my grandparents, Johnnie Mae and Ethridge Hooks, and my father, Charles Bledsoe, and to the futures of my children, Isabella, Chase, and Riley.

“Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true.” – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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The journey to complete this dissertation was filled with surprises, both good and bad. The single consistent factor throughout the duration of this process was the support of friends and family. There are far too many people to thank individually, but know that each word of encouragement and each kind gesture gave me a spark to continue on and overcome challenges. Thank you.

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Nine in, eight out. Thanks to all in the Iota cohort. Special thanks to Drs. Elizabeth Ventura, Eric Owens, Deb Hyatt-Burkhart, Ali Dubois, and Johnnie Walker, each of you played an important role in my success. Your support helped me through some of the most difficult times in my life. You are “the elite.” It was nice having you around to let me know when my inside thoughts came out. I hope the end of this journey is only the beginning of another and I look forward to moving from classmate to colleague.

Family support through this process made the difference between success and failure. Lenore Adler, you are by far the best mother-in-law I could have hoped for. You

gave me a quiet place to work on my writing nights and weekends. Your quiet encouragement did not go unnoticed, and I truly appreciate all you have done to help.

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Thanks to the three little smiling faces I see every night. Isabella, Chase, and Riley, I owe each of you a hug, a kiss, and some ice cream. I look forward to spending more time playing in the back yard, reading stories, and even going to dance recitals. The best part of writing at home was when you came into my office to say goodnight. Dream big, aim high, and go for it. Go all out. Never be afraid to fail. Never be afraid to fall, I will be there to catch you. Remember, Bledsoes do not give up. Ever!

Bailey, we did it. You did it. I definitely owe you a hug, a kiss and probably some ice cream, too. I do not have the words to express how important you are to me. I simply could not have done this without you. Your unwavering support gave me the confidence to keep going through the difficult times. Each day I am reminded of how fortunate I am to have you in my life and these five chapters were just the beginning. You are not only responsible for my success, but my happiness too.

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CHAPTER I

Over the past 30 years, the counseling profession—and, more specifically, counselor education preparatory programs—have increasingly been interested in the importance of culture in counseling. This development departs from the traditional assumption that recognizes those in counseling as a homogenous demographic, represented by White, middle-to-upper-class, heterosexual males (Cheung & Leung, 2008; Hays & Erford, 2010). The projections for the demographic shift within the United States over the next 40 years (United States Census, 2004) support the need for counselors who are prepared to work with a culturally diverse population (Hays & Erford, 2010). The growth in population of cultural and ethnic minorities will most likely relate to an increase in the number and frequency of culturally diverse individuals being seen by clinicians. The ability to provide effective service will be contingent upon future counselors' ability to acquire and develop the skills necessary to work with an increasing number of clients represented by various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. A substantial part of the burden of responsibility to ensure that counselors are trained to deal with the changing landscape of clients will rest with preparatory programs.

Background of the Problem

The counselor education field has undergone significant changes throughout its history. Beginning with a focus on testing, the counseling profession has sought to serve an ever-evolving clientele and adapt to the needs of the community. Counselor education programs have adopted curricular requirements aimed at ensuring the development of multicultural counseling skills in students matriculating from their programs.

Demographic Changes

According to the United States Census Bureau (USCB), the population in the United States has undergone a dramatic shift in terms of both the number of people living in the country and the percentage of the population that is represented by cultural and ethnic minorities and other underserved groups (USCB, 2002). The 2002 Census Bureau statistics showed that between 1950 and 2000, the population in the United States grew from nearly 150.7 million individuals to over 281 million and that the largest decade of growth occurred in the 1990s. These statistics coincide with the creation of the multicultural counseling competencies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), which will be discussed later in this chapter, as well as the policies related to including racial and ethnic minorities in research by the National Institutes of Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2001). Currently, the population of the United States is estimated to be greater than 315 million (USCB, 2013), and it is expected to grow by nearly 42% to an estimated 439 million by 2050 (USCB, 2010).

As of 2010, the percentage of cultural and ethnic minorities in the United States was projected to be 36.3% (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDC], 2012). By 2050, the percentage of the population represented by people of Hispanic descent alone is expected to be 30.2% (Congressional Research Service, 2011), and other cultural and ethnic minority groups are expected to represent larger portions of the population, although the changes in other groups are not expected to be as great. The prevalence of mental health issues in minority and underserved populations is a troubling issue for counselors and the helping professions as they look forward to increasing numbers of clients who represent these groups.

Multicultural Counselor Training

The projected changes for the demographics of the population of the United States indicate a substantial change in the cultural makeup of the country. This shift represents an increasing need for counselors to work with populations of clients who may be culturally dissimilar. While the counseling profession has, over the past 30 years, paid more attention to the needs of minority and underserved populations than previously (Castillo, Brossart, Reyes, Wonoley, & Phoummarath, 2007), the evolution of the discipline of counseling must continue to meet the needs of the counselor trainees, practicing clinicians, and clients. The remaining gap can be attributed partially to the lack of importance placed on developing counseling skills for a multicultural context in graduate level counseling programs.

Without concerted efforts by policymakers, educational institutions, and senior researchers, the shortage of providers and researchers equipped to address the needs of minority populations will contribute to the disproportionate burden of mental illness on racial and ethnic minorities. Programs that encourage students who are committed to serving racial and ethnic minority communities to enter the field of mental health will help to reduce the mismatch between needs and capacity. Furthermore, it is important that professional training programs include curricula that address the impact of culture, race, and ethnicity on mental health, mental illness, and mental health services.

(USDHHS, 2001)

As more people have begun to use the services of professional counselors, minorities have begun to constitute a significant portion of those seeking counseling services. Research has focused on disenfranchised groups, specifically those groups that historically have lacked power and been subject to diminished privilege (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). For those in the

aforementioned groups, issues of prejudice and discrimination may be pervasive in their lives and present at work, home, and in the community (Hays & Erford, 2010). The effect on their social supports, economic and political status, and mental and physical health can lead to maladaptive behaviors, such as violence, substance abuse, and suicide (Hays & Erford, 2010). Unfortunately, those same pervasive patterns of discrimination and prejudice may be replicated in therapy, leading clients to experience feelings of failure or of rejection from the therapist (Vasquez, 2010), who may frequently look like or be a member of the groups who have been creating the oppressive situations and who was likely trained by the groups regarded as oppressors. Cultural and ethnic minorities often have a sense of mistrust toward the counseling profession (USDHHS, 2001), and this lack of trust is one of the factors related to the disproportionately low rates of cultural and ethnic minorities in treatment.

Clients receiving counseling from a multicultural perspective demonstrate less defensiveness and increased trust in sessions (Hays & Erford, 2010). Constantine (2002) found that while generic counseling skills have played a role in counseling effectiveness, the clients' ratings of the counselors' multicultural competence was related to the overall reported satisfaction with the services received. The therapeutic alliance, which is defined as the quality of the interactions between the therapist and the client with regard to teamwork and rapport, is critically affected by the therapists' multicultural competency and is, therefore, considered to be a significant factor in successful treatment (Pope-Davis et al., 2002; Vasquez, 2010).

In response to the changing demographics of those using counseling services, the counseling profession has responded by encouraging the development of strategies to meet a growing need. The multicultural counseling competencies (MCCs), finalized by Sue et al. (1992), outlined specific competencies necessary for counselor trainees to develop into culturally

competent counselors (Sammons & Speight, 2008; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). The development of the MCC was based on the perceived deficit in competency related to cultural issues in professional counseling programs as well as in practicing clinicians (Sue et al., 1992). The MCCs reinforce the tenet that all humans are multicultural beings and that each interpersonal interaction is a cultural endeavor (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992/2004). Today, it is recognized that in order to practice ethically and effectively, clinicians must demonstrate multicultural competency by attending to the clients' cultural needs (Vasquez, 2010).

Specific competencies were developed by Sue et al. (1994) and subsequently organized under a 3 x 3 matrix of counselor characteristics and cross-cultural counseling skills (Arredondo et al., 1996). Arredondo et al.'s creation of a matrix of specific activities and learning tasks associated with developing MCCs represented a major step in identifying skill-oriented approaches to use with cultural and ethnic minorities. These skills were designed to encompass the A, B, and C Dimensions of Personal Identity that Arredondo et al. used to highlight a holistic approach in which individuals are viewed as multiculturally complex. This complexity is what allows each individual to have a unique experience and to develop a unique identity. According to Arredondo et al. these counselor characteristics include (a) beliefs and attitudes, (b) knowledge, and (c) skills.

Developed by Arredondo et al. (1996), the cross-cultural counselor skills are as follows:

1. Counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases
2. Counselor awareness of client's worldview
3. Culturally appropriate intervention strategies.

For each combination of counselor characteristics and cross-cultural counselor skills, Arredondo et al. (1996) have developed and assigned seven specific competencies to address the

multicultural counseling domain. The seven specific competencies related to culturally appropriate intervention strategies are as follows:

1. Culturally skilled counselors are able to engage in a variety of verbal and nonverbal helping responses and are able to send and receive both types of responses accurately and appropriately. They recognize that helping styles and approaches may be culture bound and, thus, are not tied down to only one method or approach to helping. When they sense that their helping style is limited and potentially inappropriate, they can anticipate and modify it.
2. Culturally skilled counselors are able to exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of their clients. They can help clients determine whether a “problem” stems from racism or bias in others (the concept of healthy paranoia) so that clients do not inappropriately personalize problems.
3. Culturally skilled counselors are not averse to seeking consultation with traditional healers or religious and spiritual leaders and practitioners in the treatment of culturally different clients when appropriate.
4. Culturally skilled counselors take responsibility for interacting in the language requested by the client or, if such is not feasible, making appropriate referrals. A serious problem arises when the linguistic skills of the counselor do not match the language of the client. This being the case, counselors should (a) seek a translator with cultural knowledge and appropriate professional background or (b) refer to a knowledgeable and competent bilingual counselor.
5. Culturally skilled counselors have training and expertise in the use of traditional assessment and testing instruments. They not only understand the technical aspects of

the instruments but are also aware of the cultural limitations. This allows them to use test instruments for the welfare of culturally different clients.

6. Culturally skilled counselors should notice and work to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory contexts in conducting evaluations and providing interventions, and should develop sensitivity to issues of oppression, sexism, heterosexism, elitism, and racism.
7. Culturally skilled counselors take responsibility for educating their clients in the processes of psychological intervention, such as goals, expectations, legal rights, and the counselor's orientation.

Though the need was present and the development of skill-based interventions was part of the MCCs, counseling programs continued to develop multicultural counseling courses that have focused largely on awareness and knowledge while ignoring the development of multicultural counseling skills in its trainees. The resulting skill gap created a specific need to increase the efficacy of skill development across counseling curricula.

More recently, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has developed and revised standards to “ensure that students develop a professional counselor identity and master the knowledge and skills to practice effectively” (2009, p. 2). In its standards, CACREP identifies social and cultural diversity as one of the eight core curricular areas for approved programs under Section II, which addresses the professional identity of counselors. CACREP standards indicate that courses should provide students with “individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies” (p. 11) and support “counselors’ roles in developing cultural self-awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy and

conflict resolution, and other culturally supported behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind or body” (p. 11). To that end, some specific learning outcomes have been developed to measure the efficacy of the course instruction. According to their “Guiding Statement on Learning Outcomes,” “CACREP’s focus is to verify that the program has the tools to determine that every student has either learned or not learned the necessary knowledge and skills to be an effective counselor” (CACREP, 2010, p. xx). After completing the multicultural counseling course, a therapist in training should be able to demonstrate the following skill-based competencies, otherwise known as student learning outcomes (SLOs):

1. Applies multicultural competencies to clinical mental health counseling involving case conceptualization, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders.
2. Demonstrates appropriate use of culturally responsive individual, couple, family, group, and systems modalities for initiating, maintaining, and terminating counseling.
3. Maintains information regarding community resources to make appropriate referrals.
4. Advocates for policies, programs, and services that are equitable and responsive to the unique needs of clients.
5. Demonstrates the ability to modify counseling systems, theories, techniques, and interventions to make them culturally appropriate for diverse populations. (CACREP, 2010, p. 2)

Statement of the Problem

While counselor training programs have long since adopted curricula to address the suggested MCCs (Arredondo, et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992) and, more recently, the standards established by CACREP (2009), there is a clear lack of consistency in the manner in which

courses have been developed and instructional methods employed (Priester et al., 2008; Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, & Montoya, 2006). Students' perceptions of the changes in their attitudes and beliefs, as well as knowledge about diverse populations supports the efficacy of the current teaching strategies and course design (Smith et al., 2006); however, there appears to be a paucity of curricula-related evidence emphasizing the acquisition or development of multicultural counseling skills in counselor trainees (Fouad, 2006; Priester et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2006) and attainment of the SLOs. Heppner and O'Brien (1994) found that upon completion of multicultural coursework, students continued to struggle with integrating the knowledge and awareness gained into the development of the practical skills necessary to work with diverse populations. Priester et al. (2008) found, after analyzing 64 syllabi from multicultural counseling courses, that 48% had a low level of emphasis on skill development, and 28% did not allude to the development of multicultural counseling skills at all. The lack of multicultural skill development in counselor trainees creates a deficit in the ability for the counseling profession to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Since the inclusion of the SLOs into the CACREP standards, little research has supported counselor education programs' efficacy or the identification of specific traits, activities, or assignments that increase students' ability to achieve the established SLOs.

To a large extent, the current literature mirrors the status quo of skill development in graduate level counseling programs. Research that specifically addresses multicultural skill development is scarce. While the literature does substantiate the efficacy of training programs related to increasing knowledge and awareness, findings often reflect participants' relative lack of multicultural counseling skills and a desire to develop more effective culturally appropriate interventions. Research also has slighted qualitative appraisal of the development of

multicultural skill development. In fact, Malott (2010) found only one qualitative study, conducted by Heppner and O'Brien (1994), related to the development of multicultural counseling competencies in counselor training programs.

The failure of the counseling profession to attend adequately to skill-based multicultural counselor education or research seems to parallel the marginalization experienced by many cultural and ethnic minorities today. The lack of attention to multicultural counseling skills has the potential to replicate the structures that foster racism and oppression, and serves to maintain the status quo of cultural dominance by the majority groups. The legitimacy of the counseling profession is contingent upon ethical principles, including that of nonmaleficence, which means to do no harm. Therefore, it is problematic when counselor education seemingly disregards a skill-based approach to multicultural counseling or research, thus creating the potential for an increased and unacceptable risk of harm to an increasing population of cultural and ethnic minorities seeking services.

Importance of the Study

The perceptions of graduate students as they relate to specific aspects of counselor preparatory programs that influence the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills, as defined by Sue et al. (1994) and operationalized by Arredondo et al. (1996) or established by CACREP, would have significant credibility in investigating and furthering the efficacy of multicultural counselor education. Graduate students' perceptions of current program design in terms of how well it teaches the ability to acquire multicultural counseling skills can clarify the need to be more deliberate in course design and can offer recommendations for refining teaching strategies for developing multicultural counselor skill in trainees. Increasing a preparatory program's delivery of content and providing more effective opportunities for counselors in training to

acquire all of the MCCs will allow the program to matriculate counselors with the ability to work successfully with a greater population of clients. The results of this inquiry may identify course designs, classroom or experiential activities, teaching strategies, and instructor qualities that have been perceived as helpful or integral for skill acquisition.

The perspective of counselor trainees is different than what can be gleaned from external views about what is effective for students. The qualitative design of this study allowed for trainees to recall specific events, activities, or attributes that were deemed to be most effective in teaching needed skills. Future students will benefit from revised course designs and possibly revised standards for the delivery course materials in a way that will maximize the acquisition of the MCCs and will enhance students' ability to use culturally appropriate intervention strategies.

The resulting changes will help clients to feel open enough to discuss multicultural issues with the clinicians. The literature posits that the more culturally competent the counselor, the more effective he or she will be in developing the therapeutic rapport necessary for delivering interventions in a culturally appropriate manner, thus leading to culturally appropriate treatment (Pope-Davis et al., 2002). An increase in culturally appropriate counseling may, in turn, lead to improved client appraisals of the clinicians' multicultural competence, which may lead to a decrease in the early termination of services, particularly by minority clients, and increased ratings for the counselors and for their satisfaction with counseling services (Constantine, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine graduate students' perceptions of the factors in a counseling program that attribute to the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. An abundance of research has relied on self-report measures to assess multicultural beliefs and attitudes, as well as the multicultural knowledge of counseling professionals and trainees alike.

Conversely, the research associated with the development of counseling skills is rarely reflected in the literature (Priester et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2006). The lack of research specifically related to skill development, as evidenced by the student learning outcomes in counselor trainees who matriculate in graduate counseling programs, creates a void in the body of knowledge related to the multicultural efficacy of counselors as defined by the MCCs (Sue et al., 1992).

This research was guided by a combination of the SLOs created by CACREP (2009) and the skills addressed in Arredondo et al.'s (1996) article on implementing the MCCs. These guiding principles framed the study, specifically focusing on skill acquisition as it applies to the use of culturally appropriate and responsive intervention strategies. Five identified SLOs from CACREP, along with the seven specific skill-based competencies from Arredondo et al., formed the constructs used to critique the development of the protocol.

This study sought to ascertain which components of a multicultural counseling course have been found effective for increasing multicultural skills in counselor education trainees. The information gleaned from this study will be used to augment the current literature and to fill a void related to multicultural skill development.

Research Questions

The central question for research proposed for this study is as follows: What attributes of a counseling program influence graduate students' perception of their ability to acquire multicultural counseling skills? The following research questions seek to provide supporting evidence for the main research question:

1. After the completion of a required multicultural counseling course, how do counselor education trainees articulate their level of confidence in their ability to provide skill-based interventions to culturally diverse individuals?

2. What importance do counselor education trainees attribute to multicultural counseling as part of the counseling profession?
3. How do counselor education trainees evaluate the effectiveness of the skill-based multicultural counseling education?
4. What aspects of their graduate education do counselor education trainees identify as most effective for increasing their ability to provide culturally appropriate skill-based interventions?
5. What changes do counselor education trainees identify as necessary if counselor education programs are to develop multicultural counseling skills effectively in the future?

Data Collection

Before the data were collected, this investigation was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Duquesne University. Upon approval, the researcher began to recruit participants for the study.

Participation in this study was offered to students who are currently enrolled in a CACREP accredited master's level training program or who have completed a CACREP accredited program within the previous 6 months. To be eligible, potential participants had to have completed a required multicultural counseling course, a practicum, and at least 300 hours of supervised internship. Each participant was identified by a numerical code.

Participants were assigned to a focus group consisting of eight participants. The focus group was prompted to discuss their experiences related to skill acquisition during their multicultural counseling course and various other courses within the program. Interview questions related to the participants' application of multicultural counseling skills during their

practicum and internship experiences were also discussed. The focus group session was audio taped and statements related to the SLOs or MCCs were identified and coded.

Key informants were selected from among these participants. These key informants engaged in a semi-structured interview process to ascertain specific helping or hindering factors. The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were sent to the key informants to verify accuracy. Each key informant was identified by numerical code. Once the transcripts were verified, the contents were coded and categorized. These methods of natural inquiry into the experiences of counselor trainees elicited data that was analyzed within a qualitative framework.

In order to minimize bias, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study. The journal contains the researcher's thoughts and questions related to the study as they occur. Researcher assumptions, as well as interactions with and feelings toward any of the participants, was also documented. Interview notes and participant observation notes were kept as well.

Data Analysis

The qualitative nature of the investigation supports the collection of data from multiple sources. Data collection occurred during both focus groups and during the interviews provided by key informants. Data were also collected from audio recordings that were transcribed and verified by the participants. Data analysis was conducted throughout the study and through a recursive process that was used to inform the remainder of the investigation. Additionally, data related to observations, non-verbal cues, subjective and objective views of the researcher, and other factors was garnered through a thorough review of the researcher's reflexive journal. This

journal was reviewed throughout the study, and the data gathered were applied to the existing body of knowledge.

During the focus groups, analysis of the data consisted of coding information into categories representing students' self-perceived multicultural skill acquisition and then further categorized into demonstrations of multicultural counseling skill acquisition. Other codes were developed as deemed appropriate from the data, and both codes and categories were refined as needed throughout the study.

In order to prevent researcher bias, several strategies were employed to maintain the integrity of the study. Review of the research strategies and coding by the Dissertation Chair and a reflexive journal was employed to ensure fidelity of the study.

Delimitation

A homogenous convenience sample was used to select study participants. All participants were currently enrolled in a CACREP (2009) approved counseling program. Participants must have completed the core multicultural counseling course as part of the curriculum. To be eligible, participants must also have completed a required 100-hour practicum and at least 300 hours of supervised internship. The sample was selected because it was representative of students who were near completion of their course of study and presumably have had experience that “provides for the application of theory and the development of counseling skills under supervision. These experiences will provide opportunities for students to counsel clients who represent the ethnic and demographic diversity of their community” (CACREP, 2009, p. 15).

Limitations

Some limitations are associated with this qualitative investigation. All of the participants in the research sample were derived from a two small universities in Western Pennsylvania. The

program design and multicultural course design are specific to the universities; therefore, the results are indicative of those particular universities. Within the particular programs sampled, variations exist in the material presented and in the way it is presented owing to differences among course instructors. Also, the participants were asked to recall their memories of helping or hindering events in the program or course. The length of time between a participant's enrollment in the course and that participant's enrollment in the practicum and internship experience may have been significant, with the possibility of affecting memory recall. Finally, the research was conducted at the university where they were currently enrolled. Participants may have been reluctant to report data accurately because of concerns that a faculty member may learn of the student's comments or criticisms. To account for possible respondent bias, issues of confidentiality were addressed before a signature was obtained on the informed consent, as well as prior to and after informant interviews.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study. Each term is operationally defined as it applies to this study.

Cultural Competency - behaviors, attitudes and skills necessary for an individual to deliver counseling services in a culturally respectful manner to clients who represent various cultures.

Culture - a set of common beliefs or practices that is learned and shared between individuals with similar ideals.

CACREP, Council for Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs - an organizing body responsible for developing the educational and curriculum standards for counseling preparatory programs.

Color-blindness – failing to view or acknowledge the discrimination that occurs for cultural and ethnic minorities and the attitude that all people are viewed and treated fairly regardless of race or ethnicity.

MCCs (multicultural counseling competencies) - a set of beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills developed to identify competencies related to cultural aspects of counseling and understanding of clients from their culturally subjective frame of reference. The MCCs are designed to support client success through the development of the counselor trainee.

MCC awareness - the acknowledgement that cultural factors are present and can affect the client. The counselor also acknowledges the impact of these cultural factors on the counseling process, outcomes, and therapeutic alliance.

MCC knowledge - the propensity for counselors to recognize and acknowledge culturally relevant factors in the client, presenting issue, or counseling relationship.

MCC skill - the ability to provide services to clients, either culturally similar or dissimilar, in a manner that is respectful of the client's culture and that increases the potential for successful outcomes in the counseling process.

Counselor trainees - students currently enrolled in a CACREP approved, master's level counseling program.

Chapter Summary and Organization of This Proposal

This chapter integrates into a working foundation the skill-based concepts from Arredondo et al.'s (1996) article on operationalizing MCCS and the CACREP SLOs related to multicultural skill demonstration. The interconnectedness of these concepts forms the central concern for counselor preparatory programs, that of ensuring the efficacy of the multicultural counseling course. The need for the counseling profession to respond effectively to the needs of

the increasingly diverse population being served has been highlighted. Researcher assumptions and a developed research approach are outlined and supported with a rationale for the study. The key terminology relating to this research topic is defined.

The remaining parts of this proposal include a comprehensive review of the literature related to students' perceptions of program attributes that increase their ability to acquire multicultural counseling skills. This review explored the experiences of cultural and ethnic minority clients in therapy, current literature on training therapists to work with culturally diverse clients, the development of the MCCs, and the development and implementation of CACREP's SLOs. Chapter III describes the conceptual framework for the research, as well as the research protocol, including participant selection, protocol development, protocol administration, data collection, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. Chapter IV presents the results of the research along with detailed information from the informant interviews. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings of the study, as well as an examination of the practical implications of the study, its limitations, and areas of future investigation that will be informed by the study.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of Chapter II is to review the research and literature relevant to the inquiry of the proposed study. The review will highlight the literature critical for understanding the theoretical groundwork for the development of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) that today are required for the successful completion of a CACREP-approved counselor preparatory program and the multicultural counseling competencies (MCCs) that have long been associated with effective counseling. The skills arising from each teaching strategy will serve as the impetus for this study. More specifically, this chapter will support the need to explore graduate students' perceptions of factors in a graduate counseling program that contribute to the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills.

The chapter is systematically organized, first, to elucidate the need for MCCs through a critical review of literature related to the client outcomes and satisfaction that result from the cultural competency of the clinician. This task will be accomplished through a review of literature that details the experiences of cultural and ethnic minority clients. A thorough exploration of research addressing the development of students in becoming culturally competent counselors will create the groundwork for the discussion of skill development. An exploration of the MCCs developed by Sue et al. (1992) as well as the current CACREP SLOs (2009) that currently guide many counselor preparatory programs will clarify the theoretical underpinnings of this investigation. The chapter concludes with a review of the information presented and a rationale for the study based on the supporting theoretical framework.

Cultural and Ethnic Minority Clients' Experiences in Therapy

It has been well documented that cultural and ethnic minorities underuse mental health services, with those who do use services having disproportionately high rates of dropout (Constantine, 2007; USDHHS, 2001). In terms of factors to which the lack of use and inordinately high dropout rates are commonly attributed, the mistrust of a counseling profession commonly staffed by White people is frequently cited as one of the chief reasons (Constantine, 2007). Cited also are minority clients' perceptions of insensitivity and prejudice, which the clinician sometimes displays (Chang & Berk, 2009).

In reviews of the literature related to the treatment experiences of cultural and ethnic minorities, a frequently explored construct is the therapeutic alliance. Patterson, Uhlin, and Anderson (2008) define the therapeutic alliance as the "quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between client and therapist in therapy" (p. 528). In further refining their definition, Patterson et al. address such tenets of the relationship as the affective bond between the dyad, the agreement on treatment goals, a commitment to achieving the goals, and also an agreement on the strategies to be used in achieving the mutually decided upon goals. The concept of the therapeutic alliance has long been acknowledged as one of the essential elements of successful and effective therapy (Vasquez, 2007). According to Patterson et al., a reported variance in therapy outcomes of between 7% and 17% can be directly related to the therapeutic alliance. Furthermore, they suggest that the ratings clients give to the therapeutic alliance on the third counseling session are a consistent predictor of therapy outcomes.

Patterson et al. (2008) asserted that although client expectations upon beginning treatment are significant, factors relating to the therapeutic alliance are still under examined. Their investigation of the pretreatment expectations of the client found that clients' expectations

play a pivotal role in the early development of a strong therapeutic alliance. Clients expecting to be responsible for doing the work of therapy, who were open and motivated, and who committed to the process of therapy were better able to develop a relationship with the therapist that was deemed to be productive, collaborative, and emotionally satisfying. In exploring the relationship between the clients' perceptions of the therapist's experience level and the therapeutic alliance, the researchers found no relationship. It is postulated that the perceived experience of the clinician may be a more significant factor to the therapeutic alliance during later stages of the counseling process.

Owen, Leach, Wampold, and Rodolfa (2011) investigated differences in clients' ratings of the multicultural competency of their therapists. The researchers found that there appeared to be no difference or support from the clients in terms of the notion that specific therapists consistently demonstrate more cultural competency with their clients than do other therapists. Clients' perceptions of the multicultural competencies of the therapists also did not differ based on the race or ethnicity of the client. Owen et al. asserted that the level of multicultural competency expressed by the therapist is actually an indication of the therapists' ability to work with a particular client. The researchers also hypothesize that the ratings of therapists may be affected by the clients' perceptions of whether strategies and interventions are culturally specific. Therapists using interventions considered to be overtly related to multicultural concerns were likely to yield higher ratings. Similar to other studies, the therapy outcomes were reported to be more a function of the therapists' general counseling competencies rather than related to multicultural counseling competencies.

Vasquez (2007) asserted that specific considerations may need to be addressed when one works with cultural and ethnic minorities within the context of the counseling session. Cultural

misunderstandings or other gaps in communication are cited. Clients often suppress negative feelings, thoughts, and reactions, and the tendency to do so may be exaggerated in cultural and ethnic minorities who have not formed a strong therapeutic bond with the clinician. This exaggeration or sensitivity may be experientially based because these groups tend to experience negative reactions from others regularly, and they are more likely to modify or downplay their true feelings. Such reactions may be based on a fear of rejection by the clinician, specifically if the thoughts or feelings are directed towards the clinician, or they may be suppressed out of respect for the authority of the therapist. Vasquez cautions that while cultural and ethnic minority clients may feel more comfortable with a counselor who is culturally and ethnically matched, and though some studies may demonstrate a longer course of treatment for culturally and ethnically matched clinicians and clients, those same matched dyads do not necessarily ensure greater therapeutic rapport.

It is important to note that clients will often derive their expectations and feelings for a particular group based on historical factors, which may be present in the therapeutic setting and replicated in the relationship with the counselor. The discriminatory experience of racial micro aggressions towards cultural and ethnic minorities is frequently present in cross-cultural counseling dyads. Constantine (2007) describes racial micro aggressions as actions that convey messages interpreted as insulting, demeaning, denigrating, and racist to cultural and ethnic minorities. These messages are frequently viewed as nonthreatening and innocuous by the clinician. These acts are frequently not overt, and often their affects are outside of the cognitive awareness of the counselor. Constantine refers to these instances as “aversive racism” (p. 2) and characterizes their origins as unconscious or preconscious racist beliefs towards cultural and ethnic minorities despite a self-perception of being fair and unbiased.

Colorblindness related to racial micro aggressions in counseling is related to the clinician's minimization or denial of the role of racism or the client's race in treatment (Constantine, 2007). This distortion or omission of the importance of the client's experiences or perceptions frequently resulted in lower levels of empathy on the part of the clinician. Noted also was a greater likelihood that the clinician would place a greater responsibility on the clients to overcome their own concerns. The results of White privilege for cultural and ethnic minorities were present less often and were less important to counselors who endorsed a colorblind attitude towards their clients of color. Blaming the victim was also identified as a frequent product of colorblind attitudes on the part of the clinician. Clinicians with a colorblind perspective frequently fail to recognize or address the social inequities that may have a lasting impact on minority clients. This lack of recognition may lead to the therapist's inability to address the circumstances or stressors that may be out of the client's control. Clinicians may perceive clients as unwilling to change their circumstances when, in fact, they may not be able to do so. Other common forms of racial micro aggressions Constantine addresses are "dysfunctional helping," in which the clinician offers ill-advised and unwarranted assistance in an attempt to hide the perception of racism, and "self-righteous assertions of being nonracist," wherein a clinician will present as nonracist or give specific examples of situations in which the therapist has been nonracist with the goal of proving allegiance to the client.

Constantine's (2008) study sought to explore the degree to which the ratings of therapeutic alliance were predictive of African Americans' perception of their White counselors' competence in counseling, multicultural counseling, and overall satisfaction with counseling services. Constantine found a negative association between African American clients' perceptions of the therapeutic alliance and the ratings of competence for both the general

counseling and multicultural counseling of White counselors when the clients felt that racial micro aggressions were present. Constantine posited that the effects of these interactions, whether conscious or unconscious, can be detrimental to the overall efficacy of counseling because the therapeutic alliance is critical element in helping relationships. Furthermore, the presence of micro aggressions within the counseling context may be especially difficult for cultural and ethnic minorities because the understood purpose of counseling is that it is a process of growth, development, and help. The micro aggressions displayed by White counselors tended to be subtle comments and interactions as opposed to being overtly racist. The participants who rated therapists lower in terms of their competence in multicultural and general counseling also reported a lower therapeutic alliance with the counselor. Constantine also noted the desire by some African American clients to discuss racially sensitive material with their counselors in order to assess the willingness, skills, knowledge, and abilities of the counselor related to racial issues. Such an assessment may be critical to the process and overall satisfaction with treatment because of the relative importance of these topics in the daily life of cultural and ethnic minorities because of the oppression they frequently experience.

For some time, the belief has been accepted that pairing clients with counselors who are culturally similar will facilitate a greater degree of trust and confidence so that a more effective therapeutic alliance may be developed. It is hoped, then, that this greater therapeutic alliance will lead to greater treatment efficacy. Cabral and Smith (2011) challenged this long-held assumption, arguing that matching does not necessarily predict better outcomes and that it may, in fact, have some inherent problems. In their meta-analytic review of the literature relating to client-therapist matching, Cabral and Smith agreed that such concepts as similarity in the cultures of those in the therapeutic dyad may lead to greater trust and willingness to discuss

issues based on purely hypothetical and visual congruence between the therapist and the client. This presumption, they argue, should lead consistently to positive outcomes resulting from reducing misunderstandings, increasing shared social networks, allowing the therapist to have more personal knowledge and experience with applicable resources, and reducing maltreatment. However, if primary cultural characteristics, primarily race, are used as the basis for matching, there will be gaps in similarity based on other factors such as country of origin, financial factors, language, acculturation, and numerous other cultural aspects. Differences in the dyad were also encouraged because of the possibility of promoting varied insights.

Compared with studies focused on determining the factors that influence therapists' efficacy in delivering adequate and culturally responsive treatment to cultural and ethnic minority clients, relatively few studies address the factors that lead to increased therapeutic alliance from the clients' perspective (Chang & Berk, 2009). Studies about the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of clients have largely been missing from the research, and Chang and Berk sought to fill the void. The researchers' investigation of client perspectives of the ways race influences the therapeutic dyad used qualitative measures to determine whether clients were satisfied or unsatisfied with their experiences in therapy with culturally dissimilar clinicians. In clients who were satisfied with treatment, frequently noted responses were that treatment goals were met; there was a sense of connection or emotional attachment to the therapist; termination occurred in an acceptable manner; and there was a general desire to continue working with the clinician. Conversely, clients who were dissatisfied with their course of treatment noted a disconnect from the clinician and lacked feelings of benefit from the therapy. Dissatisfied clients felt as though their needs were unfulfilled and as if the therapist was not able to meet their general needs. Clients noted a lack of investment over time and also observed that the therapeutic

alliance decompensated over time. Satisfied clients tended to describe their therapists as active, aware of the presence and impact of power and oppression, willing to self-disclose, and attentive to the clients' needs.

Clients' personal factors in relation to their experience in therapy were also investigated. Chang and Berk (2009) found that race was a salient factor for the majority of the subjects. The majority of clients who were satisfied did not attribute racial or ethnic issues to their primary presenting problem. Satisfied clients rated the importance of race or culture to be minimally related to the problems being discussed; they also found that having a therapist from a different cultural background was advantageous because they could discuss issues that might be uncomfortable to discuss with a culturally similar therapist; a broader, more varied viewpoint was given; and the client was able to explore how different cultural groups might perceive similar problems. It is important to note that a portion of the participants who thought it would be beneficial to work with a culturally dissimilar therapist noted feelings of oppression and disenfranchisement from their culture of origin. Finally, clients who were satisfied with treatment noted a willingness on the part of the therapist to repair ruptures in the therapeutic relationship.

The relational nature of counseling creates the need not only to explore the feelings and perceptions of the therapeutic rapport by clients but also to discuss the development and nurturing of the therapeutic alliance by the clinicians who will be engaging in counseling relationships. Vasquez (2007) asserted the need to build a strong therapeutic alliance with cultural and ethnic minorities by addressing the historical factors that may be present in specific populations or cultures. The experience of such aspects as racism and oppression may be different in various populations or cultural groups. Racial stress management is suggested for

clients who have experienced racism that is perceived as systematic. Special attention is to be given to clients whose minority status was achieved at birth as compared to those whose minority status changed or was acquired because of immigration. Vasquez recommends that therapists attempt to adopt the client's worldview to gain more knowledge about individual and group experience, but he cautions against developing stereotyped perspectives on specific populations. Exploration of language, terms, and concepts as well as adopting and clarifying meanings and understandings are other specific interventions recommended for developing a strong therapeutic alliance with cultural and ethnic minority clients.

Burked, Juarez-Huffier, and Ajmer (2003) conducted a study using 100 undergraduate students. All of the subjects participating in the study were identified as White European American students between the ages of 18 and 23 years. The students viewed videotaped counseling vignettes, and rated their desire and perceived capacity to form a relationship with the counselors in the vignette, who were made up of different racial backgrounds. The process of viewing and rating the tapes occurred after the subjects had filled out the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (WRAIS), originally developed by Helms and Carter (1990). Burked et al. found that the participants, all of whom were White, generally found the perceived ability to form a relationship with the White counselor to be higher than that of the African American counselor, which is consistent with past research findings. Noted in the study also was the finding that although the participants rated themselves to be at different stages of White racial identity, the particular stage did not appear to be related to the subjects' perceived abilities to form a strong therapeutic rapport with either counselor.

The issue of concern when related to cross cultural differences in the counseling dyad is frequently discussed in relation to the feelings or concerns of the client, but Chang and Berk

(2009) address the fact that counselors who are White are concerned that they may be perceived as being prejudiced by clients who are racial minorities. This concern expressed by therapists from the dominant culture may play a significant role in either the therapy dyad, ignoring the importance and ramifications of race and culture for the client, or a hyper focus on cultural issues and the placement of cultural issues as a central theme in treatment when it may actually not be clinically significant. The tendency for clinicians to address cultural issues relating clients typically begins in the early stages of counselor development and continues throughout the therapists' careers.

Therapist Training in Developing Multicultural Counseling Competencies

For many years, the counseling profession has trained its students based on the criteria established and endorsed by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD). Arredondo and Arciniega (2001) identified critical elements for the institution of the MCCs, including the lengthening of many counselor preparatory programs and the various programs' drive to become accredited through organizations such as CACREP. Furthermore, the researchers also express the need for competency-based curricula and institutions. Arredondo and Arciniega offer three premises to the importance of working within a competency-based structure in counselor preparatory programs:

1. An approach based on competency is strength-based; it is divergent from other models that focus on remediation or student deficits.
2. The identified competencies of knowledge, skills, and attitudes can be adaptive to a multitude of different therapeutic environments.

3. Learning is ongoing; as counselors progress throughout their careers, they will be able to acquire new skills, behaviors, and attitudes and adapt to the changing environment.

The philosophy regarding the development and implementation of the MCCs has been developed:

All counseling is multicultural in nature; sociopolitical and historical forces influence the culture of counseling beliefs, values, and practices and the worldview of clients and counselors; and ethnicity, culture, race, language, and other dimensions of diversity need to be factored into counselor preparation and practice (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001, p. 266).

As the climate of counseling continues to shift to meet the demographic changes that are occurring in the United States, the face of counseling continues to adapt to suit the needs of those who seek the service. That impending shift has led many in the counseling community to reassess the programmatic needs of counseling preparatory programs (Cates, Schaeffle, Smaby, Maddux, & LeBeauf, 2007). According to Cates et al., the current body of literature does not effectively represent, explore, or support the various methods of infusing multicultural-based content into the established course work. While multicultural skill and general counseling skills are separate constructs, empirical evidence supports a connection between the constructs even though the exact manner in which the relationship occurs is still unclear (Cates et al., 2007).

In the research by Cates et al. (2007), the relationship between general counseling skills and multicultural counseling skills was investigated as was the relationship between multicultural counseling knowledge and counseling skill. The investigators found that the students from the sample scored significantly higher in seven out of eight domains of the

Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) than the national mean and demonstrated high levels of competency in both general and multicultural knowledge. It is important to note for the Cates et al. study that the required credit hours consisted of 64 credits for this sample compared to the CACREP requirement of 48 credit hours at the time of the study. Observed in the study also were lower ratings of multicultural skill when compared to that of general counseling skill competency. While the curriculum had multicultural training integrated throughout, including during both practicum and internship experiences, the training program from which the sample was taken had no systematic or prescribed focus on either multicultural training or supervision. The researchers found no relationship between multicultural knowledge and the presence general counseling skills or multicultural counseling skills. Limitations noted by the researchers included a relatively small number of male and minority students in the population. A data collection period of 6 years and historical events, such as 9/11, were also noted as having possibly influenced results on particular portions of the sample.

Inman, Meza, Brown, and Hargrove (2004) researched both student and faculty perceptions of the incorporation of multicultural counseling competencies within a marriage and family therapy program. They also explored the effect of integrating multicultural issues into a training program on the students' own perception of multicultural competence. Overall, the student and faculty participants agreed that such areas as curriculum, direct practice and supervision, and actual presentations related to multicultural issues were areas of strength for their respective programs. Most participants also noted that they represented a program that had a single course focused on multicultural counseling combined with a policy of infusing multiculturalism into all other content and course areas. It is important to note that the faculty participant group had a more favorable view of the actual integration of multiculturalism

throughout the various programs. Both students and faculty noted, at a rate greater than 90%, that a broad range of teaching strategies was employed. Students and faculty reported clinical supervision, which multicultural issues were important and discussed with regularity. These experiences addressed content and process related to cultural concerns, self-awareness of racial and ethnic items, acknowledging the role of oppression, and also an emphasis on ecological perspectives in understanding various cultures.

Inman et al. (2004) noted several areas in which the research participants rated the need as unmet. Study participants reported underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities at all reported levels of their programs. The authors cautioned that this phenomenon may be a function of geographic location as well as an overall tendency of marriage and family therapy programs to have difficulty recruiting a diverse population of students and faculty. The researchers comment that the lack of diversity may have effects on other facets of the educational experience because of the narrower breadth of diverse experiences. Research focused on cultural issues was seen as deficient in the students as well as the faculty participants, although the faculty participants' ratings were markedly higher. A potential explanation offered by Inman et al. is that marriage and family therapy programs tend to focus on practice as opposed to research. This may be complicated by the discipline's lack of standards related to multicultural research and an inadequate research curriculum for multicultural research as well. Another factor may be the population of students involved in the study. Because the students were primarily enrolled in master's programs, they may have been limited in their awareness of faculty members' research. Finally, over 75% of the students and faculty reported that behavioral assessments designed to rate their multicultural competency were not used.

Another variable explored by Inman et al. (2004) was the participants' perception of how the multicultural competencies inculcated into the training program related to the participants' self-perceived competence related to multicultural counseling. While the researchers noted a statistically significant positive relationship between the self-reported multicultural counseling competency and the number of multicultural courses taken, the researchers noted a lack of relationship between the variables. Some explanations are related to the idea that the presence of and exposure to multicultural constructs and information does not necessarily create a feeling of multicultural competence. Furthermore, the authors identified a deficit in the field of marriage and family therapy in operationally defining the concept of cultural competency. A framework for defining cultural competency includes personal factors, self-efficacy ratings that are performance based as opposed to self-perceived, situational based multicultural counseling efficacy, and development of a strong therapeutic alliance. Finally, the researchers asserted that the results may be a function of instrumentation, which may not have accurately assessed students' ratings because of their lack of knowledge in some areas of their programs, particularly about faculty concerns.

Dickson and Jepsen (2007) addressed the concept of ambiance within the training environment—specifically, the extent to which the training program fosters a sense of importance for multiculturalism, is respectful of various ideas and perspectives, and facilitates openness for discussion and conversations around cultural issues. The respondents who rated their respective programs higher in cultural ambiance had statistically significant scores related to their multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills. The researchers expressed concern that the current tendency to simplify multicultural competence into the categories of knowledge, awareness, and skills may actually decrease the likelihood of open communication and have an

adverse effect on the acquisition of the competencies. Dickson and Jepsen elaborated that increasing the exposure to multicultural issues throughout the curriculum and expanding the course work from simply traditional strategies, those that are typically lecture-based, to an expanded curriculum of exposure strategies, and participatory strategies. The researchers also noted a scarcity of research related specifically to instructional strategies aimed at increasing cultural competency in counseling programs exclusive of psychology programs.

While the development of the MCCs piqued the interest of the counseling community and was the impetus of change for many counseling programs in their approach to multicultural counseling, it has been noted that the amount of empirical research done on the MCCs has been relatively small compared to the effects it has had on the counseling community (Chao, Wei, Good, & Flores, 2011). Chao et al. cited research suggesting that counseling trainees who come from cultural and ethnic minority populations may have a higher level of cultural competence than White trainees, based on their personal experiences of dealing with racial and ethnic issues.

Chao et al. (2011) hypothesized in their study of the relationship between color-blind attitudes and multicultural competence that multicultural training is related to the cultural empathy of the students as well as their understanding of client problems from a racial context; that it is more difficult for those with color-blind attitudes to resist change and develop greater multicultural counseling competence; and that the greater the level of color-blindness, the less likely a counselor in training would be to gain and integrate multicultural counselor training. The authors noted a greater likelihood of White counseling students' having a color-blind attitude and failing to acknowledge the oppression of minorities or the role of power bestowed upon the White majority population. The researchers also noted that the differences in ratings for multicultural counseling competency between cultural and ethnic minorities and White students

tended to decrease as the groups gained more knowledge and experience in dealing with multicultural issues. In fact, Chao et al. reported that among culturally diverse and White doctoral students, the differences appear negligible. A color-blind attitude in trainees often yielded lower scores of multicultural knowledge, as indicated in self-reports.

Of particular interest were the results of Chao et al.'s (2011) study in relation to the response to training for students from cultural and ethnic minority groups. The researchers found a lower rating, although insignificant, for multicultural awareness in minority populations compared to White trainees; and whereas multicultural training can have significant effects for White trainees, the same training yields no significant results for minorities. The researchers attribute this enhancement for White trainees to the notion that they may never have been required to collaborate, work with, or adopt the viewpoint of minority populations, whereas for cultural and ethnic minorities, the information on navigating minority structures is already known and experienced. The authors propose a ceiling effect as a rationale for the lack of increased awareness for cultural and ethnic minorities. Along with an increase in the frequency and types of multicultural training for White trainees, the authors also recommended a "deepening" (Chao, Wei, Good, & Flores, 2011, p. 80) of the multicultural training that occurs for cultural and ethnic minorities.

A study was conducted to assess clinical psychology graduate students' definitions of diversity, their exposure to various types of diversity training, and their reported levels of satisfaction with their experiences related to diversity training (Green, Callands, Radcliffe, Luebbe, & Klonoff, 2009). The authors found that although students demonstrated awareness for a broad variety of diverse cultural groups that represented several identifying characteristics, the sample predominantly related diversity to ethnicity, race, and culture. Furthermore, the

researchers noted that the aspects most often equated with diversity corresponded to those populations with whom the participants had interacted most during internship and practicum experiences. Cultural areas such as sexual orientation, religion, primary language, and physical ability were rarely noted in terms of experience or identified in terms of being diverse populations. Related to the exposure to various populations, students tended to rate their direct clinical exposures as being more important than indirect experiences. For instance, the researchers noted a lower rating on the importance of diversity research and suggested it might be related to a lack of mentorship from minority faculty members. Green et al. did note that although there may not be a significant minority population of faculty members in the students' various programs, over half of the sample had focused a portion of their research on ethnicity, race, or gender.

Green et al. (2009) reported finding a significant portion of their population being dissatisfied with the overall training related to diversity in the areas of coursework, practicum, and in research. The authors suggested training programs to enhance the multicultural environment and increase the importance of diversity training, with the use of small group discussions and lab work, as well as recruitment of more diverse faculty in order to improve the efficacy of the training program. Consistent with the findings of other researchers (Chao et al., 2011), Green et al. found that ethnic minority students expressed more exposure to culturally diverse experiences. Ethnically diverse students were also more likely to conduct research based on their own cultural values, most specifically on race and ethnicity, and English as a second language. Cultural and ethnic minority respondents' ratings of dissatisfaction with the multicultural training programs were consistent with those of their White counterparts.

Development of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies

The adoption of the MCCs (Sue et al., 1992) by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development represented a significant step in asserting the legitimacy of the role of culture in counseling. These standards were created through the sentinel work of Sue et al. Prior to the development of the standards, Sue et al. noted that several conferences detailed the need for a greater inclusion of culture in counseling, as well as several surveys in which there was a greater emphasis and relevance placed on multicultural counseling. Other rationales for the creation and subsequent adoption of the MCCs by the counseling community were the trend towards increased immigration rates and the aging of the United States population. As the immigration rates increased and there was more interaction among underserved populations, increasingly noted in the literature was the lack of the effectiveness of traditional counseling techniques when employed with minorities, which the authors attributed to ineffective counselor training.

Worldview, an important aspect in understanding alternative perspectives in counseling, can be indicative of societal views and, therefore, counseling can frequently reflect the views of the larger society (Sue et al., 1992). Historically, the research mirrored societal views and labeled minorities as pathological, furthered biased and racist counseling practices, and served as a basis for professional practitioners and researchers alike to ignore the need for change. It was recognized that minority groups were subjected to racism, both covert and overt, within the context of counseling. Sue et al. (1992) regarded such instances as the “English-only movement” (p. 479) as attempts to limit cultural and ethnic minorities despite research suggesting that relationships between cultures increase when a second language is encouraged, positive identity is enhanced when bilingualism is present, and language proficiency and academic achievement

were higher in programs that promoted bilingualism. In summation, Sue et al. asserted that because White counselors were so much the norm, oppression and disservice to cultural and ethnic minority groups were not apparent.

A critical review of the Bylaws and Ethical Standards of the predecessor of the American Counseling Association, the association for Counseling and Development (AACD), raised concerns about the counseling profession for Sue et al. (1992) after they failed to find any significant focus on cultural and ethnic minority populations in many areas and standards, and no references to minority populations in other sections. Sue et al. contended that the reasons frequently provided to account for their findings were that addressing the standards would make the documents long and cumbersome, and that an implicit understanding of the need to address culture was present, even in the absence of explicit wording. Sue et al. argued that the standards in place led to a universal view of clients and implied that all people should be treated in the same manner, which ignores the cultural ethnocentricities that are the hallmark of individuality. Another major criticism of the AACD Ethical Standards is the lack of addressing competence in relation to the culture of the client or clinician. The authors, at the behest of the AMCD, developed a framework of cross-cultural competencies for both the AMCD and the AACD.

Arredondo et al. (1996) expanded on the initial MCCs after being asked to provide clarifications and revisions. In the expansion of the original competencies, multiculturalism was defined as referring to discussions related to and counseling for five major cultural groups within the United States: African/Black, Asian, Caucasian/European, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American. The authors asserted that the culture groupings are not solely racial in description but are also indicative of geographical and historical information. Weinrach and Thomas (2002) were critical of the operationalized competencies, feeling as though they represented a view that

was inherently racist in their description as well as their intent. Weinrach and Thomas asserted that few groups seemed to be represented and that the competencies implied that all members of a cultural group would respond in the same manner, which goes against the espoused values of the counseling profession. They further asserted that to leave any group or population out of the dialogue was indicative of diminishing the value of said group. Jews and women, the researchers said, were specifically mentioned as groups who were overlooked or not represented in the operationalization of the competencies.

Weinrach and Thomas (2002) addressed several discrepancies that they alleged would be created by the operationalization of the competencies. Some, they said, were in direct opposition to others. They went on to address the division of the terms “multicultural” and “diversity” which, they asserted, is “the single most serious flaw in the Competencies” (Weinrach and Thomas, 2002, p. 26). They argued that the operationalized definition of multiculturalism puts the focus on tenets of race, ethnicity, and culture, whereas the definition of diversity address individual differences in people—such as sexual orientation, age, gender, religion, and physical ability. This classification, they argued, does not permit individuals to self-define, and the characteristics with which some might most identify are left out and not used as a central descriptor. In sum, Weinrach and Thomas described the emphasis on multiculturalism as failing to give equal representation to all.

Weinrach and Thomas (2002) continued their critique by addressing the manner in which the competencies were created. The validity of the competencies was questioned, and the authors reported a lack of empirical data in the development of the competencies, although they reported that the literature supporting an empirical basis is “robust” (p. 30). More specifically, they noted a lack of inter-rater reliability, a lack of validity of application of competencies in simulated

activities to actual life events or counseling situations, and also a lack of equivalent relationships to the reality of counseling with diverse clients. Further noted in the critique was the relatively small group of individuals who participated in the development of the competencies as opposed to starting with a larger group of competencies from a more diverse population and narrowing the focus through a recursive and iterative approach. Finally, Weinrach and Thomas's (2002) critique expressed concern that the ramifications of instituting sweeping changes based on the adoption of the competencies had not been explored.

Development of the Student Learning Outcomes

Prior to the 1990s, the focus of accreditation for higher education programs tended to be on process indicators such as faculty size and class size (Urofsky, 2013). Over the past 30 years, institutions of higher education have seen a trend towards greater accountability and outcome-based measures to assess the effectiveness of students' education (Minton & Gibson, 2012). The trend towards accreditation in higher education has been aimed at instilling quality control measures that are consistent throughout given professions and professional schools. According to Minton and Gibson, assessment activities and accreditation are frequently paired, and accrediting organizations have policies and procedures that ensure quality through assessment of established standards.

Counselor educators are the gatekeepers for the profession and, as such, are expected to protect those who choose to seek counseling services by ensuring that students matriculating from counselor education programs are competent and qualified to function effectively with an increasingly diverse group of clients (Swank & Lambie, 2012). The gatekeeping entails supporting as well as assessing student development and facilitating remediation when necessary and possible. Assessment of student learning and development has proven to be difficult for

counseling programs. Swank and Lambie asserted that the counseling programs have been limited in their ability to effectively assess competencies because limited research paired with the established guidelines has led to poor reliability and validity in the evaluation of student competencies. This critique is echoed by Minton and Gibson (2012), who also urged accrediting bodies to help educate stakeholders about strategies for successfully assessing learning. Furthermore, “psychometrically sound programmatic evaluation processes to identify students with deficiencies and provide effective remediation plans, supporting both the students’ development and their future clients’ well-being” are needed to ensure effective gatekeeping (Swank & Lambie, 2012, p. 2).

The weight of responsibility for informing students of the expectation that they must meet the competency levels for a given course lies with the counselor educator, as does the responsibility to accurately assess the competency of the student (Swank & Lambie, 2012). Swank and Lambie identify the four steps necessary to fulfill the standards set forth by CACREP as a) formal screening of applicants prior to admission into the program, b) formalized evaluative processes, c) presenting feedback regarding development and competence back to the student, and d) develop and implement remediation plans with the goal of correcting deficiencies. The assessment provided should be both formative and summative. Roach et al. (2012) advocated using formative feedback relatively early in the program, coupled with summative feedback throughout the final stages of assessment, including internship and comprehensive exams. Once the student has been assessed, the student and instructor then begin a shared, ethical responsibility for the continued development of competencies or the remediation of competencies that are not meeting established standards. Involving students in the process of

assessment not only instills confidence but also promotes self-learning, self-assessment, and self-reflection, which is one of the core values of being a counselor (Roach et al., 2012)

The importance of effective metrics for assessing learning may not be debated; however, there is a paucity of research concerning SLOs that may indicate resistance on the part of instructors, according to Minton and Gibson (2012). The authors argued that instructors' feelings of pressure from externally mandated organizations, language that may alienate the faculty, concern that lower ratings may delay or inhibit promotion or tenure, feelings that assessments are irrelevant, and lack of preparation for conducting assessments may all be reasons that instructors are resistant. In fact, Minton and Gibson conducted a literature review on the assessment of SLOs and were not able to identify a single article meeting the criteria.

According to Liles and Wagner (2010), assessment is considered a difficult endeavor by many leaders in higher education. Related specifically to the SLOs, each CACREP accredited program faces the inherent challenge of developing measures that are in line with the mission and vision of the program. Liles and Wagner's suggestion to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measures through a mixed-method, evidence-centered approach was meant to increase counselor educators' ability to triangulate data and then to use the data to make changes to the program while, in turn, assessing the students. They also noted that it is likely that the result of purely quantitative measures would "limit or constrain data" (Liles & Wagner, 2010, p. 2). The use of mixed-methods was seen as a way to permit "a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the phenomena" (p. 2).

Action Research

Action research, a term coined by Kurt Lewin in 1946, is a research orientation designed to elicit new theoretical understandings as well as to bring about social change through the

interaction of the research with the social system, according to Susman and Evered (1978). These authors argued that action research should be a cyclical process. The five phases of action research cited are (a) diagnosing, (b) action planning, (c) action taking, (d) evaluating, and (e) specifying learning. Each phase represents a different and separate type of interaction between the researcher and the subject or system. Susman and Evered also advocate for the use of multiple strategies in the actual data collection based on the background of the researcher and the area of investigation.

Susman and Evered (1978) also identify six characteristics that describe action research. It is a future oriented technique using a process of planning to provide a more desirable and focused future for the participants. Present also is a collaborative process between the researcher and the participant that allows the researcher's own subjective observations to be a part of the process inasmuch as the participant's observations are represented in the relationship. Action research promotes the development of systems and structures, and reorganizes the interactions between the participants and the social system. Effective action research results in the development of new theories that are action focused and informed by potential consequences, yet it is also understood that not all consequences can be identified and that they may become known through engaging in the research process. Finally, Susman and Evered noted that action research has situational aspects and that it strives to determine how the previous interaction of actions and outcomes can be identified and applied to future situations to yield desired outcomes.

Meyer (2000) did not view action research as a specific *method*, but rather a *style*, of conducting research. According to Meyer, the researcher plays an integral role in the manner that research is conducted and in the eventual outcomes of the investigation. Meyer's collaborative view stresses that the focus of investigators is to conduct research *with* the participants as

opposed to more traditional techniques of conducting research *on* participants. The outcome of the research, according to Meyer, should be to identify problems, develop solutions (which may be implemented), and monitor and reflect on changes that may occur.

The critical elements of action research, according to Meyer (2000) are participation, democracy, and contributing to social science and social change. Participation is necessary for both the researcher and the research subjects. All those involved in the research are encouraged to take part in not only the research but also the process of change. Similar to Susman and Evered (1978), Meyer (2000) held the collaborative nature of action research in high regard and stressed that it is important for the research to relay information to the participants through an iterative process of gathering data, sharing results, and formulating next steps in the process. Collaboration is built on openness and trust between the investigator and the participants, and rules, actions, and conflicts are negotiated with the participants. Meyer identified this democratic process in action research as another critical element. It allows researchers to be responsive to events, assuming the researcher is able to recognize and overcome boundaries and barriers.

The final critical element identified by Meyer (2000) for action research is the need to contribute to both social science and social change. The new information gleaned and subsequent changes that occur from action research may at times influence only those directly involved in the research because subjects are frequently selected purposefully. However, the results of the study can still be shared with the larger population, which may lend to the discovery of solutions in others who may have similar concerns. Success does not necessarily have to be measured in action or change, but can be measured in the knowledge gained from the experience. In this way, success can be seen for both the participants and the researcher. Other advantages of action

research are that remaining gaps in knowledge or unfavorable situations may come to light and future concerns may be identified.

According to Checkland and Holwell (1998), research addressing social processes needs to include aspects of critical inquiry, be focused on social practice, be a process of collaboration between the researchers and those who have experienced the phenomena identified in the inquiry, and a purposeful and deliberate process of reflective thinking. The fact that social phenomena are constantly changing and that those same social events often cannot be replicated within the artificial context of a laboratory setting are supporting factors that legitimize the use of qualitative and, more important, action research methods. Furthermore, the researchers argued that in action research, the actual process of change is the only aspect of the research that is certain to occur. The changes can come from a specified action; however, thinking about, discussing, and arguing about a given phenomenon can also bring about change. Thus social phenomena are constantly in a state of flux, continually changing and developing new social processes.

Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (2005) defined action research as “the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (as cited in Elliott, 1991, p. 96). Like other researchers (Checkland & Holwell, 1998; Meyer, 2000; Susman & Evered, 1978), Altrichter et al. espoused the notion that the ultimate goal of action research is to bring about ways of coping and change through a reflective process that involves the individuals experiencing the condition. Altrichter et al. identified four stages of action research; the first is determining the specific information that is going to be assessed or identifying the problem. The next step involves bringing clarity to the current situation by engaging in reflective processes and collecting data. This data, once analyzed, is used to develop action strategies and then

incorporate those strategies into meaningful practice. Recursive in nature, the action stage may inform the need for more clarification of the information garnered. Analyzing the final data and sharing the newly synthesized information is the final step in the iterative process.

Specific characteristics of action research identified by Altrichter et al. (2005) include the idea that the groups of individual who are experiencing the phenomena should conduct action research. It is a collaborative effort; however, the researcher is an outsider, and the role involves providing support as opposed to taking responsibility for change. Action research is designed for gaining more knowledge about both the situation and those participating in the research. Searching for solutions to real life or practical questions informs the research to be conducted. Action research is value driven in that it must be compatible with the values of the participants, yet it may also contribute to the evolution of those values. Each action research project is different and specific based on not only the issues of investigation but also the participants and researcher. Lastly, action research is distinguishable by “a continuing effort to closely interlink, relate, and confront action and reflection; to reflect upon one’s conscious and unconscious doings in order to develop one’s actions; and to act reflectively in order to develop one’s knowledge (Altrichter et al., 2005).

Critical Pedagogy

Freire’s concept of critical pedagogy is applicable to a variety of settings, particularly education. The education of counselors represents a unique opportunity to view the impacts and outcomes of oppression. Alschuler (1984) discussed the systemic issues that facilitate ongoing and self-replicating oppressive thinking and actions. The implications for the profession of counseling are that those matriculating from counselor education programs experience increased difficulty in experiencing egalitarian, respectful, and open relationships with clients, teachers,

and other counselors. Even when counselor educators have good intentions, Alschuler argued, their methods of teaching and rigorous application of rules, expectations, and teacher-student roles are inherently oppressive and can do nothing except develop students who act in an oppressive manner. While not necessarily purposeful, the system's inherent design flaws often result in victims' being blamed for various situations.

Alschuler (1986) identifies three stages that counselors go through in developing the critical skills necessary for becoming self-affirming, caring, and loving counselors. In the first stage, identified as *magical conforming*, counselors are not apt to believe that certain groups can change, that change is beyond control. Counselors in the magical conforming stage view situations as if they are being controlled by a supernatural force and thus experience unwillingness to change and unconscious collusion with the systems designed to maintain the status quo of oppression. In *naïve reforming*, the second stage, individuals who have attempted to make changes and go against the norm have received consequences for their actions and frequently blame themselves for the resulting situations. They may also harbor resentment toward others whom they perceive as levying the consequences. According to Alschuler, the naiveté comes from the students' or counselors' false belief that if they change their personal actions or views, the system will change as well. A prerequisite for meaningful change is for practitioners and students to gain a realization of and understanding about the ways in which the system creates and maintains unequal power (Alschuler, 1986; Muller, 2012). Only then can practitioners work to transform those parts of the system that are oppressive. Then the *critical transforming* stage can take place, which allows the oppressed to be treated fairly and in which practitioners advocate for change (Alschuler, 1986).

Muller (2012) expressed concerns about many individuals' ability to gain an understanding about the ways in which the system oppresses groups because many of the clinicians are from a culture in which individualistic qualities are encouraged. The resulting withdrawal from civic engagement and the focus on self-reliance exacerbates the oppressive state. Counselors with a theoretical orientation who are geared toward self-reliance will have a tendency to blame the oppressed, the victims, for their current state (Alschuler, 1986; Muller, 2012). Kincheloe (2008) has posited that the current state of self-focus has been brought about by social, economic, political, and historical factors; and, conversely, the concept of critical pedagogy is rooted in understanding oppression and suffering.

The educational system represents a pivotal component in students' ability to obtain an education that supports the development of critical thinking skills. Education is frequently hindered because educators are relying on banking education, the uni-directional transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the student (Alschuler, 1986; Freire, 2001; Muller, 2012). Placha (2007) described a moral dilemma that teachers experience constantly: the juxtaposition of empowering students with democratic values and teaching the values espoused by the school and the community. Because it is not only a way of doing but also a way of being, democratic education goes beyond the classroom and becomes pervasive throughout all domains in the students' lives. The goal of democratic education is action oriented in that it not only aims to inform students of systemic oppression but also strives to reduce the oppression and change the structures creating the condition.

Martin (2009) explored possible explanations for why the current educational system continues educational practices that reinforce the current status quo. Capitalism, competition, economics, and politics were seen as having a negative influence on students' ability to think

critically. Placha (2007) identified stressors on the teacher—constant performance evaluations and reviews, various standards, and organizations—that are analogous to Martin’s (2009) ideals and corporate and financial influences. These two viewpoints intersect at the notion of the teacher’s need to earn a reasonable living while being rewarded for maintaining the status quo. Teachers with students who are successful in the educational system’s banking style are more likely to be viewed positively and to receive raises and promotions. Creating effective educational systems entails changing the focus from a banking educational system where the goal is based on the quantity of information attained to a problem-posing educational system that focuses on the quality of the change brought about by the integration of information.

Chapter Summary

The underuse and early termination of mental health and counseling services by cultural and ethnic minorities has been widely researched and discussed in the field of counseling. Most frequently, therapeutic alliance is cited as the most significant factor in the continuation of and satisfaction with services; however, such variables as the clients’ expectations of treatment and their perceptions of roles, as well as personal history, are all relevant in the success of treatment. Cultural gaps such as misunderstandings, language barriers, and other forms of lapses in communication can lead to the disenfranchisement of clients.

Counselor preparatory programs have been tasked with providing future counselors the necessary skills to work effectively with a diverse population of clients. This need, fueled by the ever-changing demographics of the United States, has shaped the curricular strategies and instructional goals of counselor educators. Educators and students both recognize some shortcomings and positive attributes of various programs in preparing student counselors to deal with effectively diverse clients. Therapists frequently are able to recognize core concepts in

creating a welcoming environment for diverse clients as well as the importance of tailoring interventions to specific clients. Though clear progress has been made in multicultural counseling, a common theme of dissatisfaction remains, with the overall quality of the multicultural education provided by counselor education programs.

Of the significant advancements in the area of multicultural counselor education, the development of the MCCs marked a milestone for the counseling profession as a concerted effort to address cultural and ethnic minority concerns overtly and effectively within the counseling setting. The operationalization of the competencies laid the groundwork for many counseling programs for the next 30 years. Despite criticisms that the competencies would increase racism, have a negative effect, and exclude many cultural groups, the competencies represented a standard that was adopted by many programs as a guiding principle until the development of the 2009 CACREP standards.

CACREP accreditation made it possible for the counseling profession to legitimize its educational strategies and to create a standard to which the internal and external stakeholders should be able to hold both the counselor preparatory programs and the students matriculating from those same programs. Though the intent was to identify specific, observable, and measurable outcomes for the students, ambiguity remains about what might be the most effective ways for assessment, and this ambiguity detracts from the overall purpose of the SLOs. Program administrators continue to seek reliable metrics for evaluating program effectiveness. Ongoing research in the area of SLO assessment is necessary for truly successful implementation.

Action research is a method of inquiry that is based on understanding the experience of the participants along with the views of the researcher. It is a collaborative endeavor that stresses a recursive and iterative process for enacting change and disseminating information for more

study. The researcher's ability to be an actual part of the study as opposed to an outsider is a hallmark of action research. With careful planning, action research can be held to the rigorous standards of research: it can be measurable and replicable. It is essential for understanding the experiences and providing opportunities for change.

Critical pedagogy stresses the importance of counselors' gaining a socially constructed orientation. The educational system parallels the social system, and many mechanisms are in place for maintaining the current state of power and oppression. It is essential for counselors not only to realize that oppression and power differentials occur but also that they must work to eliminate the current structures. Counselors' gateway to enacting change is the educational system, which is in many ways isomorphic to the cultural systems of oppression. As gatekeepers, educators must strive to instill a problem-posing educational system and to abandon the current banking style educational system.

The convergence of MCCs and the CACREP SLOs with the interactions of culturally diverse clients and therapists willing to challenge the oppression and power experienced by cultural and ethnic minorities creates an opportunity to explore, by means of action research, how critical pedagogy is delivered in an educational system.

CHAPTER III

Methods

This study explored graduate student reflections about specific program attributes that were helpful to them in acquiring multicultural counseling competencies. In short, this investigation aimed to explore graduate students' perceptions of aspects of counselor education programs that are found to assist in the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills.

The Researcher

As a professional counselor, I have frequently participated in efforts to increase the cultural competency of organizations and programs. My participation consisted of various roles including committee chair, consultant, and team member. It was clear that counseling organizations tasked with providing quality mental and behavioral health services sometimes employed staff members who were ill prepared to deal with a diverse clientele. Evidence of this state of affairs consists of the numerous conflicts and incidents borne out of cultural misunderstandings and misperceptions on the part of the clinical staff and frequently even the administrators, who were trained clinicians themselves. In my various roles, I advocated for training to improve employees' ability to recognize and manage culturally based issues more effectively and to improve the overall quality of the services with respect to the clients' culture.

After moving into administrative roles, in which I was responsible for the clinical and administrative supervision of therapists and supervisors, I continued to witness gaps in client care. I began to notice a trend in which the clinician or supervisor frequently appeared to comprehend the issue or potential conflict from a culturally relevant point of view; however, the same individuals were not then able to navigate the labyrinth of cultural issues successfully. The results ranged from agitated and angry youths, to parents signing their children out of care

against medical advice, to the filing of formal grievances against staff and organizations. When we debriefed or conducted root cause analyses of the situations, a frequent finding was that staff did not have the skills necessary to manage a situation effectively based on their level of culturally competent skills.

Most relevant and poignant in my recognition of the need to investigate the actual acquisition of multicultural counseling skills were my experiences both as a graduate student in a counselor education preparatory program and as a group and individual supervisor for students participating in practicum and internship. In my own educational experience, overt attention was given to the development of multicultural knowledge and beliefs and to the development of self-awareness. Frequently, students asked skill-based questions, but they were not directly answered. Though such situations were less prevalent in the actual multicultural counseling course, when skill-based, culturally related questions were asked in other courses, often a discussion occurred with no clear answer or else the inevitable “it depends.” While providing supervision to students during their practicum and internship experiences, I observed frustration on the part of the students because they felt ill prepared to manage culturally related issues or to work with cultural and ethnic minority clients in a culturally competent and culturally responsive manner. These repeated incidents, whether I experienced them as a student or as supervisor and throughout various systems, have led to the development of this proposal.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine graduate students’ perceptions of the factors in a counseling program that contribute to the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. A qualitative research methodology was used because of its interactive nature and focus on participant experiences. The iterative character of qualitative research shaped the multilevel

approach of key informant interviews and focus groups. Action research allowed the participants to contour the various aspects of their educational experiences that have aided in the acquisition of counseling skills; it also permitted the researcher to gain insight into the “practitioners’ tacit ways of knowing” (Guiffrida, Douthit, Lynch, & Mackie, 2011, p. 282).

Qualitative research methodology was selected for the current study because of the focus of the research: the meanings, symbols, metaphors, and concepts (Berg, 2007) learned while enrolled in a multicultural counseling course at a CACREP accredited university. Qualitative research frequently parallels the interactional nature of counseling and the subjective experiences of those involved. Being theoretical in nature, qualitative research aims to add to the current body of knowledge by sharing the meanings that participants assign to their experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). According to Glesne (2006), “Every human situation is novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting, meanings and interpretations” (p. 27). For the purposes of this inquiry, qualitative research strives to elucidate how the participants assign meaning to the activities and program attributes throughout their educational experience. These various situations are critical in informing the manner in which students will practice. The intent of this study is to allow participants to discuss their experiences in relation to the development of multicultural counseling skills.

Theoretical Framework

In this section various aspects of critical pedagogy and action research were explored in relation to the current investigation. The intent was to apply a research framework designed to assess graduate students’ perceptions of program factors that the students believe facilitated the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills.

Critical Pedagogy

Conscientização is a term that relates to one's ability, first, to perceive cultural contradictions whether social, political, or economic and then to take some sort of action against what is perceived as oppressive (Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire asserted that all humans, when prepared properly, possess the ability to recognize their own personal worlds as well as the social world in which they live, understand their own perceptions of their worlds, and subsequently manage those worlds in a critical manner, which he called critical consciousness. The concept of critical consciousness may be seen as a radical departure from the norm in many situations, but according to Freire, necessary for change and for education to be most effective.

Critical pedagogy attempts to explain the process by which an individual is able not only to comprehend the external world, but also to become an active participant in the world. Freire (2001) postulated that education takes place in two distinct forms, banking education and problem-posing education. Banking education refers to a process in which information is transferred, whereas problem-posing education is seen as liberating education.

The processes Freire (2001) described are in stark contrast to each other. Banking education represents a more traditional approach of the teacher-student dynamic in which the teacher takes the primary responsibility for providing knowledge to the student. The student responds, typically, by remembering information. The transfer of knowledge is unidirectional, from the teacher to the student. Freire viewed banking education as a strategy used by those in power to hold the oppressed in subservient positions. Inherent in the unidirectional education is the transfer of knowledge that reinforces the realities of the poor and oppressed. The lack of information and resistance to other viewpoints and the static, finalistic nature of the dissemination in banking education are critical in maintaining the status quo.

Conversely, the ability of an individual to view the world in a critical manner was predicated on an education based in problem-posing ideology. Freire (2001) viewed problem-posing education as creative and dynamic, a process able to view humans as individuals capable of not only interacting with, but also having an effect upon, their environment. The relationship between the teacher and student is bidirectional, and both parties undertake the functions of learning and teaching. Dialogue between the parties is imperative for learning. Education is collaborative, lifelong, dynamic, empowering, and stimulating. The transformative nature of problem-posing education allows individuals to view and act critically upon their worlds. Freire argued that critical thinking, a byproduct of problem-posing education, is a threat to the majority as it permits the poor and minority to see, understand, and fight against the inequities of the status quo in order to improve their worlds. The questioning nature of problem-posing education has frequently been met with harsh criticism from the established majority.

Freire (2004) identified four categories that he believed are present during educational processes: a) a person who is responsible for teaching, b) an identified student, who is in turn capable of teaching the instructor, c) the content or material to be taught, and d) the methods or strategies used to educate the students.

Action Research

An essential component of action research is the shift from focusing on the researcher to the prospective participants of the research (Guiffrida et al., 2011). The method is collaborative, and frequently the researcher engages with the participants as opposed to a more traditional or quantitative approach to research.

Developed by Kurt Lewin, action research frequently is used to bridge the gap between research and social change in predominantly racial and ethnic minority groups (Guiffrida et al.,

2011). Action research lends itself to the counseling field because inherently it uses many of the skills that are present in effective counseling, such as finding meaning in a particular way of feeling. Furthermore, the flexibility of action research and its lack of reliance on any one particular methodology, whether quantitative or qualitative, allow counselors to be methodologically pluralistic and to select a method that is best suited for the study and the participants. While the results of action research frequently are not meant to be generalizable to larger populations, they are intended to offer insight into the population investigated in hopes of creating some positive improvement in the system or condition.

An appropriate research question for counseling would typically be determined by, or in consultation with the counselors and/or clients from a particular school, agency, or other community setting. Because of the increased need for outcome-based assessment, combined with the growing number of practitioners who are pursuing doctoral degrees in counseling, it is often the practitioners themselves who formulate these questions to improve their own practice and/or to earn their doctorates. (Guiffrida et al., 2011, p. 283) Three outcome-based categories frequently frame the questions used by action research:

1. Is the current situation or application effective?
2. If so, what aspects of that given situation or application are most effective?
3. How can we further or improve on what we are currently doing? (Guiffrida et al., 2011)

Sampling

CACREP accreditation represents the generally accepted standard in counselor education. Accredited programs share a fairly homogenous structure related to specific course offerings and subsequently the desired outcomes. While variations may be present in instructional strategies, instructor qualifications, and course sequencing, the expected outcomes, as represented by the

SLOs, are consistent. Selection of participants from a CACREP approved program increases the likelihood that the results of the investigation will be applicable to larger segments of counselor education programs.

Convenience sampling was employed as a means of recruiting subjects for the study. The primary demographic factor for student selection was current enrollment in a CACREP accredited counselor education program in Pennsylvania or the completion of a CACREP accredited counseling program within six months of graduation. The counselor education program chosen for this investigation was selected specifically because the students comprise primarily individuals belonging to a middle-to-upper-middle-class socioeconomic strata. The student population reflects the social groups frequently cited in research as having difficulty changing their perceptions of cultural and ethnic minorities and also having difficulty developing therapeutic rapport. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the counselor education program selected, more detailed information regarding the site will not be presented.

Sample size is a variable factor that is dependent on the richness of the information provided in fulfilling the aim of the study (Patton, 2002). In addition, convenience sampling procedures were used because the focus of the study, while valuable to a large number of individuals who will be receiving counseling services in the future, is not generalizable to those individuals who will not be attending counseling preparatory programs (Berg, 2007; Glesne, 2006).

The participants included both currently enrolled students who have completed a practicum and a minimum of 300 hours of supervised internship, and recent graduates of a CACREP accredited counseling program, who have graduated within the previous 6 months of data collection. Each participant must have completed a multicultural counseling course offered

by the counselor education department of the school or university. The prerequisite that participants should have completed a practicum and a minimum of 300 hours of supervised internship experience is to increase the possibility that the student will have intercultural contact with culturally diverse groups or individuals in a counseling capacity. Moreover, intercultural contact may provide at least a cursory understanding of the participant's ability to work with diverse cultural and ethnic groups. Furthermore, the selection criteria ensure instruction in specific knowledge, awareness, and skills relating to multicultural competency as well as ample opportunities for remediation of sub-par skills based on the CACREP SLOs. The 6-month post-graduation limit on participants is to minimize the effect of outside training or educational experiences and misperception of the educational process or course material because of the time elapsed since instruction.

A focus group was employed as the primary method of data collection. The focus group is a method of qualitative data collection that permits participants with like interests or experiences to engage in discussions surrounding a particular topic while researchers gather information through participant observation (Levers, 2006). Large amounts of information can be recorded within a relatively short time based on the flow of interactions among group members (Smithson, 2008). Focus groups allow individuals to interact with each other in a group setting with the goal of providing insight through mutual discussions (Berg, 2007). An aspect that distinguishes focus groups from other qualitative appraisal techniques is the interaction that occurs between the group participants and the researcher, who facilitates the group (Smithson, 2008). Though the focus group was selected as a research method primarily because of its ability to elucidate students' overall impressions of their multicultural training in terms of developing multicultural counseling skills, such a group also provides a nonthreatening environment for the

participants' discussion of their multicultural educational experiences, making the group an essential factor in the efficacy of this study (Levers, 2006). Other secondary factors in the selection were the focus group's ability to facilitate new research hypotheses for future study, to identify potential problems in the current curricula, and to assess the participant responses in order to develop future quantitative tools related to multicultural counseling skill development (Berg, 2007).

The connection between focus groups and counselors or counseling students is apparent in that not only are the groups able to focus on the content, but also the researchers are able to identify the interpersonal processes and the quality of the interactions among the group members. Non-verbal responses can be observed, providing quality and richness in the data. The use of the group setting for counselors and counselor trainees may be a more familiar and comfortable environment for many of the participants as they will have had structured coursework in group counseling and may have been involved in a personal group counseling experience through the course of their counselor preparatory experience. Key informants were selected from the sample for later participation in semi-structured individual interviews.

The secondary method of data collection took place through the use of these individual interviews. Key informant interviews are designed "to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). The key informant interview is a process by which individuals with knowledge of a particular subject area are selected to provide individual information to the researcher regarding their perceptions, understandings, feelings, and experiences surrounding the area of investigation (Center for Development Information & Evaluation, 1989). The person-to-person interaction that occurs during the key informant

interviews permits for a greater richness of data expressed by the participant (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The interviews created opportunities for participants to reform their perceptions of the experiences and educational strategies (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) that were most beneficial throughout their multicultural educational opportunities. The sequencing of courses within many counselor preparatory programs creates opportunities for multicultural learning early in the educational process and for practical experiences later in the program. The key informant interview allowed the researcher to use in-depth questioning designed to evoke memories and feelings related to multicultural course and other class experiences.

Protocol

With approval from the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (IRB), participant recruitment occurred. Contact via email, with follow-up communication via telephone if necessary, was made to the Chair of the Counseling Department at the university selected for the study. The initial contact introduced the researcher and the proposed investigation. Established criteria for inclusion in the investigation was provided. The chair of the Counseling Department was requested to forward, via email, information related to the investigator, the purpose of the proposed study, and requirements for participation in the study to the listserv of current counseling department students and alumnae. Contact information, including a telephone number and email address, was provided for persons interested in participating.

The Internship or Field Placement Coordinator for the selected university was contacted via email, and was given information about the researcher, the proposed study, and the participant inclusion criteria. A request was sent to the Internship or Field Placement Coordinator to permit the researcher to attend a portion of the counselor education program's orientation

meeting for students who are participating in an internship experience, or for the researcher to attend and speak to students following an internship class meeting. Students were introduced to the researcher and given a brief description of the investigation. Potential participants were informed that their participation is in no way related to their educational requirements. Furthermore, potential participants were informed, because of the sensitive nature of the investigation, that they would not be identified to any program or university staff or faculty; focus groups would not take place in any building in which counseling courses are held; and individual interviews would take place at a location mutually agreed upon between the researcher and participant. A flyer containing study information as well as contact information was distributed, and interested students were requested to contact the researcher via email or telephone for additional information or inclusion in the study.

When contacted by potential candidates, the researcher answered any questions and explained the rationale for the investigation. The researcher reviewed voluntary participation and again informed the potential candidate that participation is not required as part of the counselor education program or coursework. The researcher inquired about the number of practicum hours that have been completed by students currently attending the counseling program. For individuals who have graduated from a CACREP accredited counseling program, inquiry about the date of graduation was made to ensure adherence to established participant guidelines. The researcher ascertained available dates and times for focus groups.

The researcher secured a room for conducting the focus group and participants were informed of time and location via email and asked to confirm. Participants not confirming via email were contacted by telephone to confirm plans to participate. Once participants arrived, the researcher began induction by informing the focus group of the nature of the study.

Upon arrival for the focus group, participants were reintroduced to the researcher and the purpose of the study. Background information about the current state of counselor education related to multicultural counseling skill development was explained. During the induction, the researcher explained the difference between the concepts of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed that the researcher would maintain their confidentiality by keeping transcripts in a locked safe and that names associated with any data would be coded and removed, as well as any information divulged during the group that may identify other persons not included in the study. In addition, any statements that may lead to identification will be removed. Participants were again informed that participation was voluntary and not required by the university or counselor education program.

The researcher stated that the identity of no participant would be revealed to university or departmental staff. Should participants choose, they may withdraw from the investigation at any point. Time was provided for participants to ask questions related to the study or participation. At the end of the question period, informed consent forms were provided for all participants and returned to the researcher. The researcher then began to conduct the semi-structured interview questions for the focus group.

Upon completion of the focus group, the researcher identified some of the participants as key informants. Key informant selection was based upon the focus group participants' identification of strongly positive or strongly negative views of their perception of the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. Participants selected for key informant interviews were contacted via telephone to schedule an interview at a time and location mutually agreed upon with the researcher. Participants were informed that selection is based on the responses given during the focus group.

Data Collection

Data were collected via the use of audio recordings. Each interview and group was recorded using a digital audio recorder. During the individual and the group interviews, the investigator kept notes on behavioral observations, such as posture, facial expressions, hesitation, and interactions. These notes were used as a second source of information to aid in the process of triangulation or to validate the information using multiple sources or lenses (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012). A reflexive journal was maintained during data collection and the subsequent review, assessment, and interpretation of the data. The reflexive journal was used to assist in triangulation of the data, to record investigator thoughts, to bring to light biases that may be held by the investigator, to formulate ideas on future ways to analyze data, or to track changes in the semi-structured interview process or questions (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Data were transcribed verbatim and individual transcripts were returned to the participants for review to ensure trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

A critical component in obtaining accurate and reliable results from an investigation, data analysis is able to provide “a source of well-grounded, rich description and explanation of processes occurring in local contexts” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Qualitative data analysis was ongoing process by which data is collected, analyzed, and synthesized into further information. Miles and Huberman noted that consistent procedures for data analysis would allow for the investigation to be verified and replicated as well as the results to be rigorously tested. They divide data analysis into three distinct activities: a) data reduction, b) data display, and c) conclusion-drawing and verification.

Data reduction refers to the actual selection of the information deemed to be data, using an iterative and recursive process to narrow the focus of the data, and turning information found in field notes and reflexive journals into usable data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data reduction allows for data to be organized and sorted in a manner that will permit future conclusions to be drawn. It is a means of eliminating information that is not useful or pertinent to the investigation. Data reduction is further divided into two categories: anticipatory data reduction, which represents many of the subsections of this investigation, including the conceptual framework, research questions, and sampling techniques; and interim data reduction, which includes the recursive process of reviewing the current data and developing new strategies for collecting further data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Interim data reduction may include developing summary sheets of contacts, developing and assigning codes, and creating memos.

Data display refers to how the data is organized so that the researcher can draw conclusions and decide on further actions related to data collection or analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data display is visual representation of the data so that it is not limited to a narrative format, which tends to be cumbersome and not ideal for analysis. These representations may include graphs, matrices, and charts. These visual representations are additional forms of data analysis that permit the investigator to view and analyze data in a variety of ways (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data display can be descriptive or explanatory in nature; however, each must be clearly defined in order to provide the intended analysis or information.

Finally, Miles and Huberman (1984) described the conclusion-drawing and verification portion of analysis, which refers to deriving meaning from the data that has been reduced and displayed as described previously. This analysis involves exploring patterns that have become evident or developing explanations for behaviors or responses. When possible, the flow of items

appearing to be causal is explained, and information garnered during the analysis phase is tested for plausibility as well as validity (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Although conclusion-drawing and verification are described last in this section, it is important to note that this process is continuous during the investigation, data collection, and analysis. The conclusions gathered are verified during further analysis, thereby establishing the recursive nature of the data analysis.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of all participants was preserved. All identifying data were removed, and participants were assigned an individual code. Identifying information was available only to the principal researcher and the dissertation chair.

Limitations

This qualitative investigation had a number of limitations. All of the participants in the research sample were derived from a two small universities in Western Pennsylvania. The program designs and multicultural course designs are specific to the universities; therefore, the results are indicative of those particular universities. Within the program sampled, there was variation in the material presented and the manner in which it was presented because of differences among the course instructors. In addition, the participants were asked to recall their memories of events that were either helpful or a hindrance in the program or course. The length of time between a participant's enrollment in the course and that participant's enrollment in the practicum and internship experience may have been significant and may affect memory recall. Finally, the research was conducted at the universities where the participants were currently enrolled. Thus, the participants may have been reluctant to report data accurately owing to concerns that a faculty member might learn of the student's comments or criticisms. To account

for the possible respondent bias, the issues of confidentiality were addressed prior to participants' signing of the informed consent, as well as prior to and after informant interviews.

Summary

This study used the underpinnings of action research to explore counselor education students' experiences in attaining multicultural counseling skills. The investigation was framed by critical pedagogy, which provided a context for describing the attributes reported by the research participants. The use of a semi-structured protocol for conducting individual and focus group interviews, combined with a reflexive journal, allowed for trustworthiness of the data in this qualitative inquiry. All participant data remained confidential, and all participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

CHAPTER IV

Qualitative research uses an approach that allows researchers to “focus on naturally emerging languages and the meanings individuals assign to experience” (Berg, 2007 p.14). The recursive and iterative nature of qualitative research allows researchers to identify themes, patterns, and ideas that can frame a problem or question. This chapter provides a narrative review of the data collected on a case-by-case analysis. Additionally, the phrases of significance collected from the interviews are illustrated in tables that provide the reader with a greater understanding of the conceptual framework that frames this investigation. Themes that have emerged through data collection are identified in this chapter and will be explicated in Chapter 5.

Demographic Information

Nine participants were interviewed as part of this qualitative inquiry. All of the participants were master’s level counseling students enrolled in a counselor education program accredited by CACREP. At the time of the investigation, all of the research participants were enrolled in an internship course at their respective universities.

Data were collected through two primary sources, the first of which was a focus group. The focus group consisted of eight female participants, ranging from 23-55 years old (average, 32.2 years). Participants of the focus group reported having completed between 320 and 949 hours (average, 515.1 hours) of supervised internship. Participants also reported having between 1-15 years (average, 5.4 years) of experience working in the mental health field. The second source of data was key informant interviews. Three key informant interviews were conducted with one male participant, age 36, and 2 female participants, ages 24 and 55 years. The average age for those participating in the key informant interviews was 27.7. The average number of years of experience working in the field of mental health for those participating in the key

informant interviews was 4.7, and the average number of supervised internship hours completed was 554 hours.

When asked to provide demographic information related to their self-reported race and ethnicity, eight participants reported Caucasian and one participant, African American. The self-reports on participant ethnicities demonstrated increased diversity: 10 distinct ethnicities were reported, and one participant who did not report any ethnicity. In order to ensure the confidentiality of all participants, individual names were removed and each participant was assigned a number for identification purposes. Table 1 outlines the demographic information for all study participants.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

ID#	Gender	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Years experience	Internship Hours Completed
01	Female	37	African American	African American	10	400
02	Female	25	Caucasian	Filipino	1	540
03	Female	24	Caucasian	Serbian	2	567
04	Female	55	Caucasian	Slovak	6	450
05	Female	26	Caucasian	Italian, German, Irish	3	320
06	Female	26	Caucasian	Italian	4	400
07	Female	23	Caucasian	Czech, Irish	2	495
08	Female	41	Caucasian		15	949
09	Male	36	Caucasian	English	10	600

Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews Data Collection Procedures

The procedures used to collect data from the focus group and key informant interviews are detailed here. Furthermore, several researcher presuppositions will be discussed in an effort to address potential researcher bias.

All interviews, focus group and individual, were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol and were audio taped with digital audio recorders. Multiple digital recorders were used during the focus group to ensure that all members of the group could be heard. In addition to audio recording, the focus group was video recorded to allow the researcher to distinguish between individual group members. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. A reflexive journal was kept throughout the interview and analysis process so that the researcher could maintain field notes on possible researcher bias, non-verbal interactions among group members, the group processes, interview notes, and notes on the researcher's experience. The focus group lasted approximately 1 hour and the key informant interviews were each approximately 40 minutes in duration. The focus group interview took place on campus in a private room that was not close to the members of the counseling department. The key informant interviews took place at a location chosen by each of the participants. Thus, two key informant interviews were held in private rooms at local restaurants and one took place in a private study room at the university library.

Presuppositions

As a researcher, I am aware that I may influence the outcome of the study; hence, it is essential, when possible, to mitigate the researcher effects. Qualitative research regards the researcher as an integral piece of the investigation and as a primary research instrument (Tufford & Newman, 2010) that affects the manner in which data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and subsequently presented. The process of reflexivity allows the researcher to identify presuppositions, assumptions, biases, or experiences that may affect the research and then bracket the identified constructs so that they impinge on the research as little as possible (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

The first presupposition was that students in a counselor education program have not developed adequate skills related to multicultural counseling. The literature suggests that clients have low satisfaction ratings with clinicians' ability provide services within a culturally competent framework or to develop a strong therapeutic rapport. This presupposition is based on my years of experience as a practitioner, supervisor, and administrator in a variety of mental health settings and interacting with mental health professionals, who report a lack of skill based knowledge when working with culturally dissimilar clients.

The second presupposition was that students will report perceiving the primary emphasis of the required multicultural counseling course to be on the students' own awareness of self, specifically on biases, with a secondary focus on knowledge and beliefs about cultural and ethnic minority populations. In my own experience in graduate school, I experienced a heavy focus on the self-awareness of the counselor and also on developing knowledge about cultural and ethnic minority groups. Having had the opportunity to teach the required multicultural counseling course at several universities, I had access to the syllabi from previous sections and other sections of the course. These syllabi lacked any clear focus on the development of skills aside from the requisite mention of the CACREP SLOs. The concentration was geared heavily towards the development of self-awareness.

The third presupposition was that counselor education students would report a lack of representation from cultural and ethnic minority groups in the counseling program staff and that the participants would report the counseling staff to be primarily Caucasian with unremarkable representation of males and females. Throughout my experiences as a student in a master's and doctoral counselor education program, I have encountered few staff representatives of cultural and ethnic minority groups. In my capacity as an adjunct instructor, I have been the only racial or

ethnic minority on staff in some situations. Based on the population demographics of the geographic area, some groups have been grossly underrepresented on the faculty of counselor education programs in the area.

The final presupposition was that participants would not feel as though multicultural counseling was emphasized as being an important aspect of counseling outside of the required multicultural course. After completing a CACREP accredited master's program and the required coursework for a doctoral program, it has been my experience that multicultural counseling is emphasized only during the required multicultural counseling course. While CACREP and program materials report that multicultural counseling is to be infused throughout all of the other courses, it has been covered in a cursory manner, at best, and typically discussed only when there were specific concerns related to multiculturalism and a particular topic. While functioning in the role of adjunct instructor at several universities, I have had the opportunity to review course materials prepared for other instructors and have not found an emphasis on multicultural counseling to be present.

Focus Group and Key Informant Interview Analysis

After the focus group and key informant interviews were completed, audio recordings were transcribed to provide the information in a format that could be readily reviewed and analyzed. In order to minimize the effects of researcher bias, it was important for me to have frequent meetings with my dissertation chair to receive feedback on my own feelings as I progressed through the study, to discuss my reactions to the data collected, and to review and refine the future steps in the investigation. Throughout the process, I was mindful to maintain a reflexive journal as another means to mitigate the effects of researcher bias and my own presuppositions. The reflexive journal also served as a means to triangulate the data because it

contained my thoughts regarding the interviews, the participants, my reactions to participant comments, and ideas for emerging themes.

Berg (2007) proposed a 7-stage model for qualitative data analysis:

1. Identify the research question.
2. Determine analytic categories.
3. Read through data and establish grounded categories.
4. Determine systematic criteria of selection for sorting data chunks into the analytic and grounded categories.
5. Begin sorting the data into the various categories.
6. Count the number of entries in each category to obtain descriptive statistics and to allow for the demonstration of magnitude. Review textual materials as sorted into various categories seeking patterns. Remember, no apparent pattern is a pattern.
7. Consider the patterns in light of relevant literature and/or theory. Offer an explanation for your findings. Relate your analysis to the extant literature of the subject. (p. 326)

Immediately following the focus group and each interview, I added information, reflections, and ideas to the reflexive journal. I then reviewed the video of the focus group, listened to the audio from each key informant interview, and added additional notes to the reflexive journal. The recordings for the focus group and the key informant interviews were transcribed verbatim, and additional notes were added to the reflexive journal. I began to highlight significant phrases, ideas, and initial themes that surfaced. This open coding permitted me to view the entirety of the research in a manner that was not constrained by the research questions (Berg, 2007) or by my own presuppositions or biases. I then reviewed my research questions and began to develop categories for the data presented during the interviews.

Once the categories were developed, I placed the coded segments into the specific categories as a means of organizing the data. During the coding of the focus group, it became clear that the participants perceived their experiences similarly across the majority of the analytic categories and clear themes emerged. After the two key informant interviews had been conducted, the similarity and consistency of the responses demonstrated that saturation of the data had occurred. In order to ensure trustworthiness, a third key informant interview was conducted using a participant who had different training experience at a different university and who was not a member of the same cohort. The third key informant interview also represented a significant departure from the homogeneity of the focus group in that he is a male student, whereas all other participants were female. The consistency of the information collected during the third key informant interview validated that saturation had been achieved.

As discussed in Chapter 3 in the section on critical pedagogy, more specifically problem-posing education and action research were used to frame the investigation and to serve as the analytical categories under which the emerging themes became apparent. These categories and themes are represented and supported through the inclusion of phrases of significance from the study participants. These phrases are placed in tables with representations of the following analytic categories:

1. Action Research
 - a. Have students been learning multicultural skills?
 - b. If so, what has been most effective?
 - c. What would make the learning of multicultural skills more effective?
2. Critical Pedagogy (problem-posing education)
 - a. A teacher or instructor responsible for teaching

- b. A student responsible for teaching others, including the instructor
 - c. The content or material of the course
 - d. The methods or strategies used to teach the students
3. Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo et al., 1996)
- a. The “A” dimension.
 - b. The “B” dimension.
 - c. The “C” dimension.

Focus Group Analysis

In the following section, a critical review and analysis of the focus group is provided. The focus group is explored to present specific responses to questions.

The focus group was conducted in a classroom on campus. Owing to the nature of the campus design, it was not possible to conduct the focus group at a location outside of the building that housed the counseling courses and faculty. I arrived early and secured the room. I moved the tables against the wall and placed chairs in a circle in the center of the room. I set up the video equipment and tested for both audio and video clarity in each of the chairs. The audio recorders were then tested. During the testing, I determined that it might be difficult to hear some of the participants in the group, depending on the placement of the audio recorder in proximity to the participants, the orientation of the participants relative to the recorder, and the voice level of the participants. Therefore, three audio recorders were placed in various locations to provide redundancy. Participants began to arrive over the course of approximately 12 minutes and when they arrived, first seating themselves in seats at tables outside of the circle of chairs. I engaged in casual conversation with the participants prior to the beginning of the group in order to begin to

build rapport. Much of the conversation focused on the National Counselor Exam, which the participants were preparing to take in the coming weeks.

Once all the participants had arrived, I asked them to be seated in the circle of chairs in the middle of the room. Each participant was provided with a copy of the informed consent, and I reviewed the document with them to ensure understanding. I reminded the participants that as the researcher, I would keep the content of the focus group confidential; however, the researcher cannot guarantee that group members will keep the information in confidence. Thus, I stressed the importance of the group's preserving confidentiality. As this point, many of the group members looked at each other and smiled. I also emphasized that participation was voluntary and in no way required for any course, and that it would have no bearing, positive or negative, on their grade or status in the program or university. I then asked if they understood, and the participants nodded in understanding. I finished by stating that participants could opt to end their participation anytime, either by informing the researcher or by leaving the focus group, and there would be no repercussions or negative effects. At this time I informed the participants that I would begin to record our interactions. Several of the participants commented to each other regarding their anxiety about being recorded, more specifically video recorded.

Table 2. Focus Group Demographic Information

ID#	Gender	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Years experience	Internship Hours Completed
1	Female	37	African American	African American	10	400
2	Female	25	Caucasian	Filipino	1	540
3	Female	24	Caucasian	Serbian	2	567
4	Female	55	Caucasian	Slovak	6	450
5	Female	26	Caucasian	Italian, German, Irish	3	320
6	Female	26	Caucasian	Italian	4	400

7	Female	23	Caucasian	Czech, Irish	2	495
8	Female	41	Caucasian		15	949
			Caucasian=7			
			African			
Average	F=8	32.1	American=1		5.4	515.1

The participants of the focus group were all familiar with one another because they are members of the same university and have been attending classes as part of a cohort. Not all members of the cohort were present. The group members' familiarity appeared to create a comfortable atmosphere with the participants, and they were able to engage in easy banter throughout the group session. I began the interview by asking the participants to discuss their ideas about what it means to be a multicultural counselor. After a brief pause, two participants began to speak at the same time. After they looked at each other, Participant #5 continued,

I think in general, I'm sorry [to Participant #4 for talking that the same time], the program and like our culture classes kind of opened my eyes to the importance of being a multi—to be a multi-cultural counselor, and now when I am out in the field and I'm doing it, I am mindful of asking certain questions because there are some racial groups... I have no idea. Like when someone says they're a Jehovah's Witness then I'm like tell me what that means. What are your beliefs? So in that aspect, the course kind of opened my eyes to how important that stuff is.

Participant #4 then immediately added:

Of course I knew there are other cultures in existence. I think that the thing that I got out of the education, the classes that we... that we took here is the class that we took here was to be... to be mindful of it and to realize that that, um, differences do exist and again to be conscious of those differences whenever you are working with your... especially in the environment with your client because if you... if you... if you're working with a client and a certain type of behavior is acceptable... so, so perhaps just talk about

subservience of women, ok... just as an example, that could possibly be looked at as something that's maybe a problem, when in their culture this is what is accepted and this is what you will frame your therapy... you understand that this is how the um, the situation is and you move forward in that perspective. And that was, was an eye opener for me too because I... though I realized there were different differences, this kind of made it conscious that I have to make sure that when I am seeing clients, that if there is that difference, that I have to... that I have to account for it and prepare for it accordingly.

Throughout the comments of Participant #5 and Participant #4, I noticed several group members nodding in agreement. At the conclusion of Participant #4's comments, there was a brief pause and then Participant #6 commented:

So for me, I feel like I got this much [gesturing with hands demonstrating a small amount], this little, tiny crumb of information from multicultural class and then being at my internship, I work mainly with the LGBT population, um, so I feel like I got this little crumb of information [hand gesture signifying a small amount] and then... in there it's so much more in depth, I mean what pronouns they use, how they identify with their sexual orientation, what... how they identify their sexual orientation... every... there's thousands of words that people go by or they like or they don't like. So, I feel like it's more of I chose to kind of learn that myself. So, here I got this [hand gesture demonstrating small amount], and at my internship I wanted this [hand gesture demonstrating large circle that is encompassing], if that makes sense.

Again, as Participant #6 spoke about her experience, the group nodded, implying agreement with her comments.

As the group sat quietly, I felt as though it would be beneficial to ascertain a better understanding of how the participants determined what aspects of culture most focused their attention. I asked the group to describe the factors they found to be most important when addressing culture. Participant #1 responded immediately by stating:

Ask. I think... just the respect issue is the biggest thing. I think that I would say before classes and things like that... at times I was hesitant to even ask. Ok, they identify this way or that way and that... ok, so, I don't know that much about that culture, and now I know it's ok to ask... that questions... to be aware and to be respectful of you know, your culture.

The group nodded in agreement as she was speaking, and Participant #6 added "And to ask in a way that you're curious. Like... that you actually are curious to... like, what is a Jehovah's Witness. What is, how do you identify? What's your sexual orientation? You know, that's ok." Again, the group seemed to share Participant #6's sentiments as they nodded in agreement. Participant #7 stated, "And I think that's important because people can ask it in the wrong way and people can take it as offending," whereupon Participant #1 quickly added "condescending," and Participant #7 responded by saying "wording it the right way is very..." and as she stopped speaking, she motioned with her hands as if to imply important, as if it needed to keep going. At this point in the interview, I became aware that many non-verbal communications were occurring. I realized that the video recording would be an invaluable tool during the analysis and reporting of the data; however, I also became anxious and started to consider how I would interpret and represent some of the non-verbal aspects.

I wanted to transition the group conversation into the specific learning elements and coursework that allowed them to develop the skills and understanding that the group discussed. I

asked the group members if they had been presented with the CACREP Student Learning Outcomes in their courses. There was a confused look on the faces of many of the participants. They looked around at each other inquisitively and then looked at me. I felt as though they were waiting for me to explain in further detail and after several seconds of silence, Participant #1 said “I’m sure, I mean... Yeah, we saw them once. I only saw one... well, no... I don’t know about anyone else.” When she said that, the group laughed and several group members shook their heads as if to say no. Participant #4 asked, “Isn’t that the thing that’s on the syllabus... tacked to the end of the syllabus? It says what the outcomes are? That’s where they are; they were there.” As Participant #4 was speaking, all of the group members were nodding their heads in agreement. I responded “yes” to Participant #4’s inquiry. I then inquired as to whether or not the SLOs were discussed during class, and several members commented “no.”

In order to investigate further the manner in which multicultural skills were outlined and presented to the participants, I asked if they had ever been presented with the multicultural counseling skills originally developed by Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992). The group members again looked at each other in a confused manner, and several members looked at me and responded “no.” Participant #4 responded “No, I don’t even know what that is—I think it’s the first time I have heard of this.” I then explained that they are a list of competencies, first developed several years ago and then revamped, operationalized, and used by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD).

After my explanation of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies, Participant #5 observed,

I don’t know... color is important... also, just generally having a knowledge of the different ethnic groups that are out there. Because, you know, the group that I think I

presented in multicultural class is Asian Americans. Some of the things that I learned about the culture I didn't know beforehand. Such as for that population, you know, making eye contact was not a good thing or typically for that population also laughing is a sign of being nervous whereas, me being a Caucasian, it's because I'm happy or I'm laughing. So, also having the general knowledge of maybe the stereotypes, but the ones that speak... that are true for that particular culture could be true. I think that's important, to know as well.

Participant #4 added,

And one of the things that um, [to Participant #1] I think you brought up, one of the things that... that I was made really aware of is that our differences are kind of to be embraced. Not just like to pretend that we're all just the same. That it's ok to acknowledge a person's difference and... and to ask for information on it... and again, how, how can you tell me about that or, you know, how do you like to be referred to or, you know, when we are talking about your ethnicity, how would you like to... and before I was like... like I was a little bit nervous about should I broach that, I mean, and... and that was that [Instructor] presented it, it's like... yeah... you know this is... this is something that you want to be comfortable with, and that helped me a lot.

When Participant #4 mentioned the word "comfortable," the other group participants began to nod. I chose this time to explore the group members' comfort level in delivering culturally competent and appropriate skill-based interventions. Participant #8 commented:

I'd say, I think... like with the... I work a lot... right now I'm primarily working with homeless individuals, working with lower income, working with... where I'm at now, I think that it's extremely helpful. Before that I worked with students with behavior

difficulties, so it was kind of that same population, so I am really comfortable with that. I am comfortable if I don't know... and where I'm at, I think the kids kind of warmed me up to that, too, before taking the class. Like "miss, you don't know"... well, tell me. And then they, you know, and they were happy to tell me about it. So that helped me feel comfortable with that, but as far as some of the other cultures that I don't really know a lot about [in a whisper] I'm not sure how comfortable I am with that [back to regular voice] even like the going to higher income and some of the things that go with that, I'm not sure if I'd be completely comfortable.

When Participant #8 was talking and began to whisper, her body language changed and she hunched over, leaned in towards me, and whispered. I took her body language, voice volume and tone to imply what while she was stating that she was not sure how comfortable she is in working with unfamiliar cultural groups, the underlying sentiment in her statement was that she is extremely uncomfortable. Participant # 1 interjected:

Yeah, I think in my experience, I am so confined to just certain populations that I really don't see a wide diversity. Mainly just work with Caucasian or African Americans so I don't see a wide range of every... we just got our first transgendered person too, and so like the whole staff is like, what do we do? And we've all had LGBTQ training, and this and that, so now it's more of a thing of falling back on some of those skills that we've learned before and trying just implement them. I don't know.

The demeanor of Participant #1 as she made her statement showed frustration, and I felt a sense of helplessness as she expressed the deficits in her knowledge and skills to work with individuals who are transgendered.

During the discussion, the extent to which the focus group members' clientele is diverse was not immediately apparent, so I asked the group to describe the diversity in clients they have encountered. Participant #2 responded by stating, "No, I'm like you [to Participant #1], I'm mainly Caucasian. Like, I literally just got my first Asian American Friday. And like, usually that's it. I've never had African American or nothing, just Caucasian." Participant #4 nodded in agreement and added:

With me... my internship is... I've kind of like referred to the area that I work in as the whitest county I think I've ever had in the nation. I think I saw one person of color there, once, however, where I've been for the last five years working as a peer specialist, the majority of my clients were a different ethnicity or... ethnicity or... socioeconomic, homeless... so it's a very big difference and um, I don't... what I've found with myself is I don't have a problem, not a problem... but I don't... I have more comfort level dealing with somebody who... or less comfort level dealing with somebody who's in a higher socioeconomic status than I do with somebody who is perhaps my own or perhaps in the less of a socioeconomic status. I... that's how I identify with my comfort.

I sensed that Participant #4 was either trying to phrase her comments in a manner that was strength-based or wanted to be viewed by the researcher or group as being skilled. At this point in the interview, I was aware that I wanted to ask deeper, more probing questions, but I was unsure if I should ask or try to remain closer to the actual interview questions. I was unsure how much flexibility to have with the semi-structured interview. Participant #5 added:

I've been exposed to Asian Americans, Caucasians, African Americans, and I do therapy in the home and my partner, like me, is a white female, so there are times when I go into an African American home, I'm ok with it and I see the difference there. I don't know if

this is a projection or not, but I wonder how they are experiencing having two little white girls in their house. Sometimes I don't know if that creates something that I am not aware of or how they perceive me being there. Nothing has come up yet, but... I just... I get... I get a little bit curious about that.

The hesitation of Participant #5 at the end of her statement led me to believe that there are definite concerns on her part aside from what she relayed in her statement. There also seemed to be a sense of anxiety over not knowing, or feeling able to find out, the true feelings of the clients in the African American homes she visits.

The statements by Participant #4 and Participant #5 provided a natural segue into a new topic, multicultural counseling skills. I asked the participants to identify some of the multicultural counseling skills they have used with their clients. The group was silent, looking around at each other for approximately 20 seconds. I observed group members shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads from side to side. Eventually, they looked at me in a questioning manner, and I elaborated. I stated that multicultural counseling can be broken up into the categories of knowledge and awareness, beliefs, and actual skills. With some hesitancy, Participant #7 said, "I don't know if I know too many of them. To be honest... I'm not sure... Besides broaching the subject with them and asking in an appropriate way..." At each pause, all members of the group nodded and made soft comments of assent to her statements. Participant #1 followed by saying, "I think maybe once you ask a question just being cognizant of the answers that you got and, like knowing to make direct eye contact with this group." Participant #8 added, "You know, she [Participant #4] said, like subservience from a woman is something that they want to keep, and they want to hold on to—that, it's not like you are trying to change that." The group appeared to agree with the statements being made and appeared to be

galvanized by the comments. At this point I purposefully attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible to allow the group process to take place.

Participant #7 continued the conversation by saying, “Being very self-aware is... we can feel as open minded as we want, but we still might try to push... so I think that would be... I don’t know if it is or not....” Participant #5 added, “Well, we did learn that a lot... kind of learning what your different stereotypes and prejudices are about different...” Participant #7 continued, “Mm hmm, to make sure that we don’t let them interfere, I guess.” Participant #4 commented:

I try to... I mean, one of the things that I try to watch... I want to see... I guess my judgment if I am working with somebody who perhaps is in, you know, has... that’s has an 8th-grade education, or a 9th-grade education... I’m just cautious. I’m not going to use 25-cent words, I’m not going to... to come across as somebody who would say something like, so tell me, what kind of car do you drive? I mean, I’m going to be conscious of that and not to, to either look like I am better or make them feel bad, you know? Just kind of work with them and watch my feelings and the way that I present to them. I have some marginal ID clients, you know, and I just try to meet them where they are and try to understand what their limitations are, if there are, and just work with them at that level.

Participant #1 expanded on the comments of Participant #4 by saying,

I also just think if you are just talking straight skill I think [Instructor] did a good job like you said [to Participant #5], pointing out our own prejudices and our own things that we bring in, but I mean just... you know, playing back what class... in my head, I don’t

remember learning any skills like using specific techniques, like yeah... I don't really remember anything like that, yeah...

As Participant #1 was talking the group members seemed to be paying close attention. When she made the statement about playing back the class in her head and not remembering any specific skills being taught, every group member either nodded in agreement or made a comment acknowledging agreement. Participant #1 continued,

I mean even with our class... I mean even everybody is not here. Our class is predominantly Caucasian women, like there's two African American females in the class and the rest... so you know... so the class isn't very diverse either [Participant #5 nodding in agreement], so I don't know if that has something to do with it as well, but I mean there's never been a time where, you know, there's... you know its caused any conflict or anything like that, but if you look at the class, it's not very diverse.

Participant #5 immediately added,

I was just going to say, I don't know if this would tie into multicultural counseling skills or not, but one of the things we have learned is to pick up the language of our clients. Kind of, you know, say things in similar intonations and verbiage that our clients are using, so I don't know if that would apply to your question or not, but that's one thing that [Instructor of a different course] is very [chopping hand motion implying rigid and concise] about.

The comments from Participant #5 elicited laughter and agreement from the group.

The group seemed to have addressed their feelings adequately in relation to learning multicultural counseling skills, so I next asked the members of the group to discuss their level of comfort in working with a diverse group of clients. Participant #1 immediately answered,

I feel a little uncomfortable with the transgendered client that we just got now, and it's learning the words to use, and that's where I'm struggling with the learning, you know. It's a male that wants to be a woman, you know, so it's... I'm struggling with... you know, "she."

Participant #6 said, "Pronouns...", and Participant #1 replied, "He said... she said... and people that don't know that are like 'wait, I thought she was a man'... so that's what I... that's what I struggle with right now." As I was listening, I was acutely aware that Participant #1 referred to a client who is transgendered as "it" as opposed to he or she. As Participant #1 was talking, there were several group members nodding in agreement. When the group was silent, I commented that I saw members nodding in agreement, and Participant #3 began:

I went from like a private practice to a rehab, so a lot of different individuals to just addiction. So... I mean, right now, I feel comfortable in the addiction track, but I don't want to stay in the addiction track, but I still think... like when... like whatever career I find I still feel like the first couple weeks or month or so will... I'm still going to be wondering if I'm a doing the right thing since I have worked with one specific population for about 6 months or so.

Participant #6 followed up on these comments:

I just feel like the main thing is to educate yourself on the population. I mean I couldn't work with the LGBT population without understanding what it is to be transgender... biologically, mentally, physically, emotionally, I mean there are so many components that it's my... on my end, to educate to educate myself on what it means. What is HIV? What does it do to you? How to you contract it? You know, just different populations like that, and if you don't know about them, then it's like really hard to help them.

The group seemed to be in agreement and sat quietly nodding in agreement with the comments from Participant #6 and Participant #3.

As the group sat in silence, I determined that it would be beneficial to discuss the personal culture of the participants as the next area of inquiry. I asked the participants to define their own personal culture. Participant #1 stated,

I mean I identify as African American, but my grandfather is Italian. One of my grandmothers is American Indian, my grandmother on the other side is American Indian, and then my grandfather is African American. So really I am less African American than anything else, but I mean my skin tone identifies as African American so....

Participant #7 did not answer the questions directly, but instead stated, "It's kind of how I am. There is a lot that makes up who I am.... I don't know how to, you can't...and then really label that, and I don't like labeling anyways, so...." Several group members agreed with Participant #7 by nodding as she commented about not liking to place labels on others. Participant #1 expanded her previous comments by saying, "And I don't know anything about the other cultures, so."

Adding to the conversation, Participant #8 said,

My mom is all Polish on her side, my dad is Irish and Italian, but my dad is adopted, so he really doesn't identify with any real culture. My mom is probably pretty much Polish. Her...um, my grandmother and great-grandmother spoke Polish, but I don't know if I would say that she really identified with it.

Participant #8 discussed the cultural background of others in her family, but she did not discuss her own personal cultural identity. Also relevant to note, Participant #8 did not provide any information on her ethnicity for the demographics section. Participant #3 commented:

I'm a little different. I am half Serbian, half German and there is like, whatever, like Dutch, Cherokee Indian, and everything but like my culture, I have always been raised in the Serbian culture, so even though I am only technically half, my last name is nowhere near as complicated as what my mom's maiden name was, but I've just always considered myself more than half Serbian because that's like the only thing I know.

I noted while Participant #3 was talking that whereas she reports being a member of various cultural groups, she did not recognize the multiple cultural identities and considered herself to be a member of only one cultural group.

For the next area of inquiry, I asked the group to discuss their feelings about the importance of multicultural counseling in relation to the larger profession of counseling as a whole. Participant #3 immediately answered,

I think it's really important. I mean you don't really know who is going to walk through your door, and what are they going to believe. Is it going to like damage the rapport if you say something because you are not aware of what they are? You just always need to be cautious in this job.

The group showed agreement with the comments of Participant #3 by nodding as she was speaking. I took note that Participant #3 commented about being aware of "what" they are in reference to clients as opposed to "who" they are. Participant #6 added, "And like they might look one way and identify some other way," which garnered agreement from the group. Participant #1 recounted an incident from her internship that supported the comments of Participant #3:

I was going to say we had a client that came in, and he was an African American male and it was one of the Jewish holidays or something, and he was saying he couldn't come

in and one of the counselors just assumed that he was Christian and was like “that’s not a holiday for you anyway, so what are you talking about” and he went ballistic... so yeah... yeah... and I... yeah, and it was like I can’t just assume...

Participant #1 appeared to be pensive as she was speaking, particularly towards the end of her statement. Participant # 7 related Participant #1’s latest comments to comments she made earlier and said, “That’s what... I was kind of thinking with you, you said, you really you’re more, what’d you say Indian?” Participant #1 replied, “Indian, America, I don’t know... a little bit of everything.” Participant #7 continued the dialogue stating, “You could identify with that probably a lot of people assume that you identify more with the African American culture. You should never assume because it makes a you know what...” which elicited laughter from the group.

The group members appeared to have covered the topic and it was clear to me that a hierarchy was starting to appear. Participants #1 and #7 seemed to be the spokespersons for the group. They took a leadership role, and the group appeared to follow their lead. Participants #4 and #5 were also outspoken members of the group, and their feedback was acknowledged and accepted. I transitioned the focus of the group to the program’s attitude towards the importance of multicultural counseling and asked the participants to discuss their perception of the program’s view of the importance of multicultural counseling. Participant #4 immediately commented:

Highly! I mean I, I, if somebody asked me... if I if I only had one term to define how I would... if they said what was the most important thing that they, they stressed on you, it would be multi... even, even above the non-judgmental listening cycle, it would be multicultural counseling—I mean that’s...

As Participant #4 paused, Participant #1 added emphatically, “And see, I disagree with that,” prompting Participant #4 to say, “Really?” Participant #7 interjected, “Yeah.” Participant #1 reasserted her position and stated, “I totally disagree with that. I don’t think enough, yeah.” Participant #5 stated, “I’m probably in between you guys.” The interaction among the group members was not caustic or outwardly challenging. Participant #4 seemed to be very surprised that other members of the group did not feel as though it was stressed. Participant #7 elaborated on her previous statement:

Well, yeah, it’s like, not that I necessarily agree. Like I wouldn’t stress that it was the most important thing that they put on us, but I wouldn’t say it it...but mine’s a little bit of a different spin. Coming into the program... so this is a Christian college and for me technically being part of like the LGBT community that was kind of... I was worried that it was going to be a barrier, but in the interview process, I think that I realized that yes, they are open. So I think they are open culture wise, and they do discuss it but I wouldn’t say that they stress it every class, all the time. Does that make sense?

Seemingly back tracking on her previous statement, Participant #4 stated, “Maybe I was overly sensitive.” During this time, there appeared to be a tension among the group members, and Participant #6 said, “I feel like they do, but I feel like they incorporate it a little bit into the class,” in actual reference to the other classes in the program. Clarifying her previous statement, Participant #4 added,

You hear it in every class, they do connect... maybe that’s what I meant... maybe I misspoke. What I meant is that in every class that I have been in, they have like tied back the importance of what we are doing to multicultural counseling.

In disagreement, Participant #7 stated, “And maybe I just don’t pick up on that.” Participant #1 concurred, stating, “Yeah... I was getting ready to say that.” Participants #1 and #7 seemed to be particularly in disagreement with the notion that multicultural counseling was stressed or even addressed in all of the courses. Several participants added comments about the difficulty in learning about all cultural groups and the fact that it would not be possible. Participant #1 explained her previous statements:

I want... I mean my thing is... why I disagree, I just don’t think that, I don’t think that it was stressed. I maybe... like maybe I... just it totally went over my head, but I don’t think anything really... they mentioned it, but it seems to me like it’s, like a side note, like ‘this is what we are doing’ and you then you’ve got to think about all this and then they move on to the next subject. But there's never, I think, any emphasis on it.

In agreement with Participant #1, Participant #2 added, “Yeah, that’s how I viewed it too. Like they kind of... kind of dig into it, but not really. Maybe there would be a question or two,” which garnered nods of approval from Participants #’s 1, 2, and 5.

The group’s focus shifted towards the difficulties they found with the course and I inquired further in order to ascertain more specific knowledge about the barriers they felt were present. Participant #5 recalled, “Our class is this big [hand gesture to represent the entirety of class], each class, this much [hand gesture to represent a small portion], this much would have been culture”; her comments were expanded upon by Participant #3, who expressed frustration over the length of the course, which was eight weeks. Several other group members commented that the time period was too short. Participant #3 commented that owing to the structure of the course, a significant portion “was us doing our own work because it was online” and further expressed her frustrations with the online format of the course stating, “I mean, how much can

you really learn?” Later during the focus group, the topic again shifted to barriers, and Participant #5 shared her feelings with the course format and duration: “There is a lot of information that is pushed into like a very short time span so that is something that has definitely gotten in the way, I think.” Other group members agreed by nodding, and Participant #7 described how the length of the course affected her experience: “I know for me, I mean, I would love to read more about other cultures and other theoretical orientations, and try to grasp that stuff better, but there is just no time.”

As the conversation about the barriers slowed, I transitioned the topic to specific activities or assignments that were deemed to be helpful in the development of multicultural counseling skills. Participant #8 immediately shared her feelings by commenting, “I was just going to say ‘experience, being in the field and doing it.’” The several group members agreed with comments about experiential activities being the most beneficial. Other group members started sharing their experiences as part of the course. Participant #3 described an experience that stood out for her:

I think like just pertaining to the class, our one activity where we actually had to go somewhere and write a paper on it. I came, I come from a hard Orthodox Serbian culture where you do not wear pants, you do not clap in church, the whole nine yards. I did my experience... my church choir got invited to a church with a church of the round choir church service, and like people standing up and yelling, and like I was actually lonely because I was completely out of my own little experience... But like, for me, it was a good experience because I had never went to another church. Going to a church that was completely on the other end of the spectrum was the first time I really got hit with multicultural[ism]. We got to meet with them after, and I actually got to ask them some

questions. After for the paper, but um, just like, um just like asking them some questions was probably... it was helpful.

I noticed her body language and her facial expressions, which were animated when she stated that she was “hit with multicultural.” As the members of the group began to share their experiences, many stated that they “got a lot” from the activity. Other cultural experiences included a Jehovah’s Witness service, attending a synagogue, and going to a predominantly gay and lesbian bar. Participant #6 drew attention to the self-directed learning that came from the experience: “I feel like the project did help too, but it was your own. If you wanted to do it and you wanted to immerse yourself in another culture, you could go ahead; if not, you could do something that was sort of out of your realm. It was how serious you took the assignment.”

As various members were describing their experiences, they were commenting on how they gained awareness and felt like it was a good learning experience. Participant #5 stated in an almost frustrated tone:

See, I don’t know, I think those activities—we had those two assignments. One, we go and submerge yourself in a different culture, and one in groups where you research different ethnic minority groups, and I think those assignments really helped with cultural awareness, but I don’t know if they helped with the skill sets.

After Participant #5 made her statement, the group stopped talking for a moment and Participant #1 said, “Yeah, I agree with that,” and Participant #7 added, “Good point.” She then elaborated, “The only thing that I can recall is just draw attention to it. If you feel like there is some kind of reason and even if you don’t and check in with the client and see. That’s all I would know how to do.”

The progression of the discussion moved towards their experiences in their internship. Group members found that their site supervisors pay varying degrees of attention on the issue of culture with the clients. The group members began to describe their experiences with culturally diverse clients. Participant #7 discussed her internship in which she works with clients who may have psychotic disorders and religiosity:

I try to kind of feel out their religious background I guess, but you still don't always know... but I guess I kind of back away from that in a sense—not that it's an issue that needs to be pushed anyways. But I don't want to push it and try to, ah... you know, make them realize that it was a delusion, not that you could do that anyways, you know... like, you know what I'm trying to say? So I don't want to... right, like challenge their religious belief because they are having some delusion about it because it still something that they believe in. So I guess I kind of tread lightly around that which I don't necessarily think is a bad thing, you know?

Participant #1 felt as though some of her clients who are African American have attempted to connect with her; however, she discussed the lack of cultural connection she felt:

I have clients sometimes that say to me, you know how it is? Just because we're both African American or they just assume that... that I know... no, I don't know what it's like to smoke crack. You know, I don't. I don't know, you tell me. That's why you're here. So I do find that they want me to align themselves with them, but sometimes it's something that I can't align with. Like, I don't think like that.

Conversely, Participant #7 addressed those whom she found to be dissimilar:

I guess for me—and I've managed. I've certainly got clients that don't agree with the gay and lesbian population, so... but it doesn't really bother me. I guess because you are

exposed to it all the time. You come across people. So I just I kind of... just try to check out their viewpoint and just listen, I guess. I don't probe it back that I think they are wrong because I don't. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions.

While no group members actually reported concerns or problems, several group members reported that they have become aware of their own cultural biases. These biases mentioned were related to personal values, such as work ethic and independence.

The conversation naturally flowed, and participants began to discuss their self-awareness and attributing their ability to recognize their own biases and feelings concerning a client to the multicultural counseling course, and more specifically to the instructor. Descriptors such as "independent," "open minded," and "culturally aware" were used to describe the instructor. The unique design of the programming and the location of the campus necessitated that the same faculty member would teach several courses. Group members stated that multicultural counseling was addressed as part of the courses taught by a specific instructor and briefly discussed by other instructors. The group would mention a course where they felt it was addressed and then state that the instructor was the same person who taught the multicultural course. Students felt as though the instructor's flexibility in teaching allowed material to cross over to other courses more readily. In describing the instructor, Participant #7 stated, "[Instructor] is open and [Instructor] explains that where others are like 'were doing it our way.'" Participant #2 reinforced other group members' comments and stated, "We lucked out because [Instructor is] our advisor and whatever goes unaddressed in a certain class, whatever class [Instructor] teaches us next, [Instructor will] go back to it so in that way we have been fortunate."

As the interview concluded, I asked the participants if they had anything to add or if there were any questions. After a few moments of silence, I thanked all of the focus group members for their participation. I informed the group that if any questions or concerns were to arise, they could feel free to call me. The group members thanked me for the experience and began to exit the room. Once all group members were gone from the room, I packed up the audiovisual equipment, and went to a lounge area to write some ideas in my reflexive journal.

Table 3. Quotations of Significance

Analytical Categories	Quotations of Significance
1. ACTION RESEARCH	
Have students been learning multicultural counseling skills?	I don't know if I know too many of them to be honest; I'm not sure. Besides broaching the subject with them and asking in an appropriate way.
	See, I don't know; I think those activities we had those two assignments. One, we go and submerge yourself in a different culture, and one in groups where you research different ethnic minority groups, and I think those assignments really helped with cultural awareness, but I don't know if they helped with the skill sets.
	I also just think, if you are just talking straight skill, I think [Instructor] did a good job like you said, pointing out our own prejudices and our own things that we bring in, but I mean just... you know, playing back what class... in my head, I don't remember learning any skills like using specific techniques, like, yeah... I don't really remember anything like that.
	I don't know if this would tie into multicultural counseling skills or not, but one of the things we have learned is to pick up the language of our clients.
	As far as some of the other cultures that I don't really know a lot about, I'm not sure how comfortable I am with that.

I feel a little uncomfortable with the transgender client that we just got now, and it's learning the words to use and that's where I'm struggling with the learning, you know. It's a male that wants to be a woman.

I think maybe once you ask a question, just being cognizant of the answers that you got, and like knowing to make direct eye contact with this group.

The only thing that I can recall is just draw attention to it. If you feel like there is some kind of reason and even if you don't, and check in with the client and see. That's all I would know how to do.

If so, what has been most effective?

I was just going to say experience, being in the field and doing it.

Just pertaining to the class, our one activity where we actually had to go somewhere and write a paper on it.

Going to a church that was completely on the other end of the spectrum was the first time I really got hit with multicultural.

I feel like the project did help too, but it was your own. If you wanted to do it and you wanted to immerse yourself in another culture you could go ahead; if not, you could do something that was sort of out of your realm. It was how serious you took the assignment.

What would make the learning of multicultural skills more effective?

They have like their own way that they want to teach the specific course, and if you try to stray away like you are like yanked back on a leash.

There's no room for our input of what we feel like would be beneficial to learn from. No flexibility.

The hybrids, I mean how much can you really learn?

I feel like they need to focus more on clients we would actually see.

2. Critical Pedagogy (Problem-posing Education)

A teacher or instructor responsible for teaching	<p>We lucked out because [Instructor] our advisor and whatever goes unaddressed in a certain class, whatever class she teaches us next, she'll go back to it; so in that way we have been fortunate.</p> <p>[Instructor] has gone out of her way to do those things, post extra stuff on Blackboard and stuff.</p> <p>So there is a lot of information that is pushed into like a very short time span, so that is something that has definitely gotten in the way I think.</p> <p>I think one barrier is definitely the fact that this program is so accelerated.</p> <p>[Instructor] has really given us the most insight and round about experience. [Instructor] pulls everything in somehow.</p>
A student responsible for teaching others, including the instructor	N/A
The content or material of the course	<p>The career counseling class, and it's only because we had to do presentations and I had to look up our group and do, um, different tests that you can give clients, and she asked us to talk about the cultural piece.</p> <p>I think our family class now is putting a lot on cultures [group members nodded agreement] just because of like families and some people are blended families, and there are like different cultures.</p> <p>I feel like drug and alcohol a little bit because you had to go to these meetings.</p>
The methods or strategies used to teach the students	Half of the culture class was us doing our own work because it was online.

I remember on some of those NCE CDs. [Instructor] was talking about how some of the populations are shifting and how it's a very important topic.

I was just going to say experience, being in the field and doing it.

I just feel like the main thing is to educate yourself on the population.

3. Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo et al., 1996)

The "A" Dimension

I work mainly with LGBT population, um, so I feel like I got this little crumb of information, and then in there it's so much more in depth.

Mainly just work with Caucasian or African Americans, so I don't see a wide range.

We just got our first transgendered person too, and so like the whole staff is like "what do we do?"

I'm mainly Caucasian. Like I literally just got my first Asian American Friday. And like usually that's it. I've never had African American or nothing, just Caucasian.

I think I saw one person of color there.

That was quite an experience because I really wanted to challenge myself, so I went to a gay bar solo.

The "B" Dimension

I work a lot—right now I'm primarily working with homeless individuals [inaudible] working with lower income.

I work with people who have psychotic disorder so a lot of them have delusions that are around a religious basis, but at the same time like it could be their religious preference.

Coming into the program so this is a Christian college, and for me technically being part of like the LGBT community that was kind of—I was worried that it was going to be a barrier.

We might be culturally similar, but we just have different values. That's definitely a challenge, I think.

The "C" Dimension N/A

Key Informant Interview Analysis

After conducting the focus group, I determined the participants who might be best suited to participate in a key informant interview. I telephoned each potential subject and requested participation in an individual interview. I was able to schedule interviews with two participants. I let the participants know that I would be willing to meet at a location and time that was convenient for each of them. I suggested a restaurant in each of their geographical areas that had a private meeting room. In total, two participants, Participant #5 and Participant #4 from the focus group were willing to participate in the interview. Owing to the small number of group members who were willing to conduct a key informant interview, I recruited a subject from a different university. The selection choice of this participant will be explored in Chapter 5. Table 4 shows the demographic makeup of the participants who gave key informant interviews.

Table 4. Key Informant Interview Demographic Information

ID#	Gender	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Years experience	Internship Hours Completed
4	Female	55	Caucasian	Slovak	6	450
5	Female	26	Caucasian	Italian, German, Irish	3	320
9	Male	36	Caucasian	English	10	600
N=3	F=2, M=1	39	Caucasian =3		6.3	456.7

Key Informant Interview #1 (Participant #4)

Prior to the beginning of the interview, I spoke with Participant #4 and verified the time and location of our scheduled meeting. I arrived early and secured the meeting area. When Participant #4 arrived, I greeted her and walked her back to our meeting area. During the walk to the area, I engaged participant #4 in casual conversation as a way to increase rapport. As we sat at the table, our conversation continued for a few moments until there was a natural break in the conversation. At that point, I shifted the conversation to the nature of our meeting. I reviewed informed consent and confidentiality, and when she acknowledged that she understood and agreed, I turned on the audio recorder.

I began the actual interview by explaining to Participant #4 that I had chosen her because she provided a lot of information during the focus group, and I would like to explore her experiences in more detail. I inquired about her concept of culture and its importance to counseling. She responded:

It was an eye opener because I know there are cultures, I realize that there are differences in cultures; however, to be conscious of it when I'm counseling... you know there's things that I never even thought about before, and what's important to me is to be able to understand where a person is coming from, culturally, because I want to bond with them. I don't want to offend them. I want to be able to help them in the best way that they receive the information I'm giving them.

When prompted, she continued to say that her understanding of the importance of culture was something that she did not recognize until it was brought to the forefront by her experience in the multicultural counseling course at her university. In describing her beliefs about the importance of culture in counseling prior to taking the multicultural counseling course, Participant #4

commented, “When I first heard of it, I thought, well, why, my first thought is why does it matter? We just treat everybody the same.” After she had taken the multicultural counseling course, though, Participant #4 described the change in her understanding of the importance of multiculturalism in counseling:

What I am realizing is, and this was huge, is that not only do they not learn the same, they haven’t had the same experiences in life. They don’t process the same way that maybe another person would or again, some of the things I learned about the cultures I studied on is that not everyone is on the same playing field.

As she spoke, she smiled and motioned vigorously with her hands. Summing up her previous comments, she said, “You know that it is ok to embrace the differences and to be looked at a little differently or to be perceived a little differently with some people than with others, just to make sure the experience is going to be effective and helpful.”

Participant #4 recounted an exercise her cohort participated in at the beginning of their graduate experience in which members all started in a horizontal line and then took steps forward or backwards based on various cultural aspects. As she discussed the experience, she used the word “memorable” as it was still meaningful to her, and it was one of the first activities of her graduate program. As she was speaking, I commented, “It sounds to me like what you are describing is the concept of privilege. Did you talk about privilege in your multicultural class?” She responded that privilege had been discussed prior to that discussion, and recollected, “it interesting that you said that because we talked about privilege class vs. minority class and what privilege is. I didn’t have a good concept for that.” As she detailed her experience, she recounted that it was difficult for her to understand the concept at first because she did not feel privileged; however, once she gained a better understanding, she was able to compare her experience to that

of minorities and to appreciate the privilege she has. Participant #4 concluded by saying, “I can’t ever say that I know what it’s like to be there, but I can at least look at it from a perspective now that I am much more informed.”

As the interview progressed, Participant #4 appeared to become more relaxed. Her posture became more relaxed, and we easily engaged in conversation. I commented that during the focus group, she initially stated that she felt the program placed an emphasis on multicultural counseling, and when some of the other group members disagreed, she appeared to change her mind. She responded,

I see where they were coming from. I see that in some cases that it seemed like it was just touched on. Maybe for me it was important, very important, because multicultural in counseling... seriously, if someone had asked me, and I still stand with this today, what was the most important message that you got out of that... that might be in my top three... how important multicultural counseling is.

Participant #4 seemed to be introspective. She stopped talking for a moment, tilted her head looking up slightly, and commented that the participants in the group who disagreed with her may have done so because their experiences as cultural minorities may have given them a different lens to view the program and the course. As she explored her thoughts, she stated:

Perhaps they wanted to see more emphasis placed on it. I guess I came from a place where I didn’t have much to grasp at that, and so it was important in every class that I’ve had. Every class, no matter it is was a little bit or a lot, it wove in how multicultural counseling was in important in that area.

Participant #4 seemed to be confident in her response. She acknowledged that perhaps more could have been done in the courses and the program; however, she felt as though the importance of culture and the way it was presented in each course was personally meaningful.

The conversation naturally progressed to the various courses that she had taken and the perception of Participant #4 about the degree to which multiculturalism had been stressed. Participant #4 identified a certain course on techniques that she perceived as demonstrating the importance of multicultural counseling. During the conversation about this course, Participant #4 elaborated by mentioning that the same instructor responsible for teaching the multicultural counseling course was also responsible for teaching the course on techniques, stating that the instructor, “made a point to make sure that [Instructor] incorporated it.” As previously mentioned, owing to the format of the program and location of the campus, one instructor had been responsible for teaching a significant number of courses to the cohort. Conversely, Participant #4 specifically identified the Group Counseling and Testing and Appraisal courses as having little emphasis on or content relating to multicultural counseling. She also did not recall significant multiculturally related content in the Diagnosis or Psychopathology courses, including culturally bound syndromes.

Following this, I chose to explore the comments related to the degree to which an emphasis on multiculturalism might be a product of the instructor vs. the course content vs. the program focus. She commented on the emphasis concerning the instructor by saying, “I think that it was very important to [Instructor] to get that across. She incorporated it into the syllabus as well, it was always there.” She added, “It’s an important issue and... it’s important, and I feel like [Instructor] made sure that we got it.”

The conversation progressed into a discussion of the attributes of the instructor of the multicultural counseling course that assisted with learning. Participant #4 described the instructor as “incredible” and said that one of her strengths is in the way the material is presented, as she delivered the material by using examples as a teaching tool. Role-plays, activities, and discussion questions were also used to provide opportunities for students to incorporate different aspects of multiculturalism into their learning. Participant #4 explained that the instructor would address things that students were afraid to ask, both in class and also with the client. She recounted her biggest concern in working with culturally diverse clientele: “I never want to offend anybody. God, I don’t ever want to do it, but I know that I will do it. I’ve already had to apologize for it.”

Participant #4 also found that the instructor of the multicultural counseling course treated the issue of identifying and acknowledging cultural differences by encouraging students simply to have the confidence to address such differences explicitly:

I could never even imagine saying that to a client, but I got comfortable with the idea of saying, you know, it’s an issue. We are different, you know, and it’s an obvious difference. It’s ok to bring it up. It’s ok to be genuinely curious. Of course, respectfully. That to me... that was another big learning experience for me because again, I don’t do that.

I commented that it seemed Participant #4 had gained a significant amount of self-awareness while in the program, as well as a lot of knowledge related to other cultural groups, and she agreed. I then commented that during the focus group, it seemed universal that group members had difficulty recalling any skills that were learned. Participant #4 commented, “Is that what I just described, skills?” I responded by saying, “Do you think it was a skill?” Participant #4

replied, “I think so, but then...” She seemed to ponder her answer for several seconds and then she continued:

I think one of the things I was thinking when we were in a group... I wasn't sure as far as skills. I mean we practiced skills, like how to connect to be non-judgmental. That's a skill. But what skills did we practice? I don't know that we've practiced skills, but the things that we've learned in that class helped me to develop my skills.

Participant #4 explored her experience of acquiring what she labeled as skills. She acknowledged that her upbringing may have contributed to the biases she held and that she is less judgmental now. She also described being more apt to broach the subject of culture with a client.

I asked Participant # 4 about any program attributes that she felt might have hindered her acquisition of multicultural counseling skills, and she responded instead by again discussing the strengths of the instructor. Participant #4 identified the instructor's willingness to spend time with students outside of class discussing concerns or helping to clarify material as important attributes. She also mentioned that the instructor would frequently provide extra material designed to help the students gain knowledge. She felt that the instructor went above the expectation to a level wherein “the stuff that was presented, we were able to get it. We were able to ask questions enough that if we didn't get it, it was our own fault.”

The focus of the conversation shifted to the CACREP Student Learning Outcomes. I asked Participant #4 if she remembered the outcomes being presented as part of the course. She did remember seeing the outcomes in the syllabus, and she did remember the instructor briefly touching on them; however she stated that after the initial class, they were not discussed and not emphasized. During the brief class discussion, Participant # 4 recalled,

I can't say that they were or if someone had actually said, "Well, this is what CACREP says we need to do," so I don't think it was ever phrased where it was worded like this is what we need to do, this is the outcome of what you should be able to do. I don't remember hearing that.

She suggested that her focus when reviewing the syllabus with the outcomes was to learn what she would be required to do for the successful completion of the course.

As the conversation drew to a close, I asked Participant #4 if there was anything else she would like to add to our discussion. She said,

I think the role of multicultural counseling is more prevalent now than it has ever been. I think it will be even more prevalent in 10 years because especially here, we are huge multicultural, of course. We've got people coming in. The populations of the minorities are coming up. Not only that, we are becoming a mixed race of people... Because there are implications, and so yeah, I see us as more and more needing to be involved in multicultural counseling and to be aware... to be very conscious of what we do and how we do it.

After her comments, I thanked Participant #4 for participating in the investigation. I asked if she had any questions and told her if she did, she could feel free to call me. I turned off the audio recording equipment and again thanked her for participating. She then left the restaurant. After she left, I remained and added comments to my reflexive journal about the interview.

Table 5. Participant #4 Quotations of Significance

Analytical Categories	Quotations of Significance
1. ACTION RESEARCH	

Have students been learning multicultural counseling skills?

I wasn't sure as far as skills. I mean we practiced skills, like how to connect to be non-judgmental. That's a skill. But what skills did we practice? I don't know that we've practiced skills, but the things that we've learned in that class helped me to develop my skills.

Is that what I just described, skills?

I want to build a rapport with them; I don't want to offend them; I want to be able to help them in the best way that they receive the information I'm giving them.

It's a product of my environment; however, the skills that I am learning, it's kind of opened up another level of understanding.

Ok, maybe it was a little easier for me to work with my clients when they are different it's a little bit easier for me not to judge too quickly if they are telling me something that I am not sure about.

If so, what has been most effective?

We were able to ask questions enough that if we didn't get it, it was our own fault.

We had to study a culture and learn about a culture, and in that everyone did presentations, and there were a couple things where I wasn't aware.

We would role-play things like reflecting, responding, attending, how to, um, repair a ruptured relationship, and these are just ones off the top of my head.

What would make the learning of multicultural skills more effective?

I can't be 100%. It was a whirlwind, but nothing that sticks out to me.

2. Critical Pedagogy (Problem-posing Education)

A teacher or instructor responsible for teaching	Every class that [Instructor] teaches, every one. Maybe the most so in the course the class itself about multicultural counseling course, but all of [Instructor]'s classes [Instructor] taught us, I can't remember exactly what all of them were, [Instructor] made a point to make sure that she incorporated it.
	A couple things is that [Instructor] presents material in a way that we can get it from examples.
	[Instructor] also addressed in class what maybe people were afraid to ask.
A student responsible for teaching others, including the instructor	I also noticed that some of the people who were saying that and that actually I'm thinking of [Classmate], and [Classmate] and [Classmate] and both, all three of them are minority groups. 2 racial minorities and [Classmate] is sexually in the minority.
The content or material of the course	Every class, no matter if it was a little bit or a lot, it wove in how multicultural counseling was important in that area.
The methods or strategies used to teach the students	The role-plays. Now I like, I love, I so realize how important it was.
	The activities. The exercises like [Instructor] would give us an exercise and almost in every class.
	[Instructor] would incorporate into a discussion board. Saying ok, from a multicultural perspective, how would you do whatever the question was? You know, how would you handle it? Pick a population, and how would you handle it.

3. Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo et al., 1996)

The "A" Dimension	One of things is if you are working with a client who is a different ethnicity or race than you, it's ok to say how you're feeling about this?
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I live in [Identified Area] and just the mixed race of folks that we are becoming, so we are bringing in issues from not only from each of the persons individual ethnicity but now we are mixing them together.

There were a couple things where I wasn't aware of like when the Asian culture, you know, there's a certain issue with trust.

The "B" Dimension

So I need to not judge that the higher levels realize that's something that we learn that these people get misdiagnosed because it's like wait, they've got all of this money, they don't need help.

The thing that I mentioned to you about the gentleman who I went to shake his hand, again I was pretty sure he was Muslim, then when I researched, I realized yes, that was what it was.

You don't want to use 25-cent words with them you know because they were not afforded, a lot of them did not get the education so it was, it was good to learn about some of the different cultures

I don't have a problem in that area and maybe because there were times we were on public assistance.

The "C" Dimension

N/A

Key Informant Interview #2 (Participant #5)

Prior to the scheduled interview date, I called Participant #5 and verified the meeting time and location. Participant #5 requested to meet at a local restaurant with a room that afforded privacy for the interview. I arrived at nearly the same time as Participant #5 and walked to the private area with her. During the walk we engaged in conversation about the end of the semester and the National Counselor Exam. Once we were seated, we continued our conversation for approximately 3 minutes. This time allowed for the building of rapport and increased comfort as the interview began. Once there was a natural break in the conversation, I changed the subject of

the conversation and reviewed the informed consent and confidentiality with Participant #5 and asked if she had any questions or concerns. She responded that she did not. I then turned on the audio recording equipment and began our interview.

I began the interview by asking Participant #5 to discuss her understanding of culture as it applies to counseling. She responded by describing it as, “an individual’s background whether that may be their ethnic background, religious backgrounds, value system.” She further elaborated by saying, “I think it’s important for our counselors to take culture into effect because everyone is different; everyone comes from different value systems, different religious backgrounds, different ethnic backgrounds so in order to kind of help with the counseling process.” After a long pause, Participant #5 concluded her thoughts on the importance of culture in counseling by stating, “I think it’s important for counselors to have an understanding of where that person has come from in their life situation.”

Participant #5 reports that she does not feel culture has been a significant issue throughout her internship experience. She did recount a particular client whose religion was a relevant factor in the counseling work that was done. Participant #5 was not familiar with that person’s particular religious aspects and felt it was important to “just ask questions instead of, you know, just assuming that I know because I don’t. It’s important to me.” She reports that she was able to develop a rapport with the client and continue with the counseling relationship.

The conversation shifted to the internship experience, specifically the supervision she receives while on-site. Participant #5 did not feel as though culture was regularly addressed, nor did she feel as though her on-site supervisor would be willing to address those topics. She reports avoiding discussing cultural topics because “if it goes against [Supervisor’s] belief system or what he’s already set [his] mind to, I’m not sure it wouldn’t go very well.” She said that while

her internship site may not stress the importance of culture, she felt as though her university “has done a reasonably good job at impressing the importance of culture, but in terms of other professionals in the field that I work with? I don’t know. I don’t think so.” As she spoke, she put an emphasis on the word “reasonably” as if her expectation had not been entirely met. She elaborated by saying:

I think in all of our classes, they have addressed culture in some aspect. It’s either been discussion based or they’ve incorporated it into our discussion board posts or some assignments. Like, there is a small question that will ask, “how would this relate to culture?” or “how would, do multicultural counseling with a particular client?” so it definitely has been present.

Finishing her thought, she added, “I definitely don’t think it’s been the majority of the coursework, but it’s definitely been brought up, for sure.”

Participant #5 explained that she felt as though culture was addressed, and it was incorporated into various assignments, but “I don’t know if they have necessarily stressed the importance of it.” She reports that she felt it was important, so her attention to culture was self-imposed as opposed to being directed by the counseling program or university. She did state that she felt the instructor of the course was the impetus for relaying cultural concerns in the instances she felt it was present: “Mainly all the classes that [Instructor] has taught ... I think that [Instructor] taught as well, and then even now in our internship, and then [Instructor] is also teaching us professional issues and ethics ... so in those classes the culture is being stressed more.” In sum, Participant #5 reported believing that the instructor was the single most important facet for learning the importance of culture.

After discussing the importance of culture, I inquired about the acquisition of multicultural skills, and Participant #5 said,

I think you had asked us, what skills did you learn, and I was like racking my brain, like I don't know. You know, I know it's important. I know why it's important, but I don't know how to kind of facilitate that with my clients.... The focus of the course I think was just to bring awareness to the multicultural counseling and the importance of it. So, I would say the course did a really good job in opening my eyes to how important the culture piece is. But in terms of how to apply that awareness, like the specific skills sets, I think that piece was lacking.

Participant #5 reported that although she has not experienced a situation where she has felt ill prepared to deal with a culturally based issue with a client during her practicum or internship, she can envision an occurrence in which she would not feel capable.

I recalled a statement made by Participant #5 during the focus group in which she discussed her curiosity about the perceptions of an African American family she had worked with during her internship, and how at the time she felt uncomfortable. She acknowledged her previous statements. I then asked her to explore her discomfort. She described a situation where the mother of a bi-racial child was upset with Participant #5 because the mother's son had been placed in a home where all of the other kids and all of the staff were Caucasian. She expressed the way she experienced the situation by stating, "I know the culture is an important piece, but how can you implement or bring him pieces of his culture when everyone one around him is white and not familiar with African American culture?" As she discussed her experience, I noted a sense of frustration in Participant #5 that had not been present before. Drawing on more conversation from the focus group, I asked Participant #5 about her comfort with broaching

culturally related subjects. After she responded that she was comfortable broaching culturally related subjects, I noted the discrepancy between her previous comments and her stated comfort. I then asked if she had broached the subject of culture with the family with whom she reported being curious about their perceptions. After a long pause, she said,

No. And you know, thinking of that client I was just talking about, I didn't really know how to address it or broach the subject. I mean, I brought awareness to it. Like listen, I get it, I know, I get it. I know you want him to have his culture with him, but I don't know how to really do that. So I'm comfortable with broaching something even if it means me not knowing the answer, like I would feel comfortable having the conversation, like listen, I don't get this. I don't understand this. Help me understand what you want.

I followed up by asking if she would feel equally comfortable broaching the subject of culture even if it were not brought up first by the client and she responded that she would, in fact, feel less comfortable.

Participant #5 seemed to become introspective after discussing not broaching the subject of culture with her client and, without prompting, she stated:

I feel like... so that's something I want to work on because in general one of the things I want to work on as a counselor is being more assertive, and being more... I hate the word "confrontational"—sounds a little strong—but confronting clients on discrepancies and whatnot. So I hope that I would get more comfortable with bringing it up even if the client hasn't already brought it up.

She stopped frequently while talking and appeared to search for words. This was a different presentation than she had shown at other times.

After discussing the concept of broaching and multicultural counseling skills, the conversation shifted to the CACREP Student Learning Outcomes. Participant #5 recalled seeing the outcomes listed on the syllabus, but she admits to not paying attention to them. She also noted that the instructor did not put any emphasis on them: “it’s like here’s your syllabus; here’s the CACREP outcomes that you are going to get from this course, but really no detail or how we are going to achieve those outcomes.” She does not recall any other discussion or reference to the outcomes for the duration of the semester.

With regard to the focus of the course, Participant #5 recalled, “I would say much of the stress has been on ethnic minorities in general, but as far as specific—Asian Americans, African Americans, Indian Americans—I would say no.” In her internship experience, Participant #5 reported dealing primarily with African American clients. She wished that the required multicultural class had placed a greater focus on African Americans. However, Participant #5 felt that while she may not have learned a lot from the instructor,

I mean we do have two students who are African American, so they have been able to talk from their experience about some of the things that go along with their culture and things that they don’t like. So that piece has been helpful; having those students in the classroom and being able to bring that stuff up.

Participant #5 expressed a different perception when asked about the diversity of the program faculty:

Diversity of the staff? That’s interesting. They’re all white. Not very diverse, I guess. Never really thought about it. Yeah, they’re all Caucasian. I mean as far as like gender or sex, that was kind of equal. I think we’ve had just as many female professors as males, but in terms of ethnic backgrounds, not diverse at all.

When asked if she felt the lack of diversity had an impact on the teaching, she responded, “Yeah, I feel as though maybe culture would have been more stressed if there were some, if the staff was more diverse in terms of culture... I think, yeah, it definitely would have been beneficial.”

The focus of the conversation shifted to Participant #5’s comments during the focus group related to the duration of the courses in the program. She recounted “I found myself, especially the 8-week course, doing the bare minimum to get by. Just doing the assignments and not doing anything extra.” She described her perception of the course as it was delivered. She stated, “It was very rushed, and it kind of showed in the teaching too because we wouldn’t spend very long periods of time on particular subjects or topics; yeah, it was just kind of rushed.” Her outlook, as she recalled, was, “All right, [Participant #5], you have 8 weeks, do the bare minimum, get your A or B or whatever you get, and keep it moving.” During the conversation about the constraints of the program, Participant #5 reported feeling stressed, but ambivalent toward her grades owing to the limited time in the class. She described her work schedule and reported feeling “jealous” of those students who didn’t have the same external constraints and had more time to focus on their education.

We next discussed the attributes of the instructor for the multicultural counseling course. She described the instructor as follows:

I’d have to say [Instructor] is very open minded, very knowledgeable, [Instructor] is very easy to approach, and you can tell like [Instructor] has been doing this for a really long time and [Instructor is] just good at it. And her personality is really good too. [Instructor is] funny and [Instructor] just has a way of teaching the class where you can learn the theory and we always had time to practice behind it. So a teacher that’s able to somehow balance the learning piece and the actually-doing-it piece.

She went on to describe the most important quality that she found in her instructor to be the instructor's open-minded nature. When asked how the instructor facilitated the students' practice in using the multicultural material, Participant #5 recalled:

We practiced like doing, CBT techniques and Gestalt techniques to counseling, but I don't know that we ever practiced the multicultural piece or how to do that. We learned about it. It goes back to one of the initial questions you asked as far as the skill sequence, I don't think that we've ever done that.

Her comment was made in a matter-of-fact manner.

The final area of discussion was related to Participant #5's use of the *Encyclopedia of Counseling* as an adjunct to the material that was taught throughout the program. Participant #5 described the book as a helpful resource. She stated:

To be really honest, like, some of the stuff in there we've never learned. I didn't learn it in undergrad, I didn't learn it in my first master's and I'm not learning it now. And I think some of the stuff is really important stuff in there to learn because even before going through the encyclopedia, I couldn't remember who came up with the social learning theory, so like the book kind of stresses the very important part of counseling that counselors should know, that I haven't received that learning elsewhere.

I asked her if she had reviewed the section on multicultural counseling, and she replied that she had completed the section 2 weeks prior. I next asked her what she got out of reading the section and she responded with a smile, "Well, I got that, I knew a lot more than culture than I thought I was going to. I went into it like, I'm not going to know anything about this, but I actually did pretty well." She then expanded her previous comment by saying,

The biggest things I got from that is that culture is an ever-changing, always-changing kind of dynamic. And just as counselors, it's important to kind of stay up on the statistics and the different trends that are going to be happening in terms of culture over the next 10, 15, 30 years. So that, that's the biggest piece I got.

I asked if the demographic shifts she referred to had been discussed in class, and she replied that they had not.

As I began to bring the interview to a close, I asked if there was anything she wanted to add related to her experience with multicultural counseling at her university. She paused for several seconds and said:

I would have to say, overall, [University] did a mediocre job with the culture piece, and different professors put different stress on the culture piece, [Instructor] being one that definitely stressed it more than others. Overall, [University] has done a really good job bringing an awareness to the importance of culture, but has kind of neglected to kind of teach the skill set behind the culture piece.

After her comment, I thanked Participant #5 for participating and asked if she had any questions or anything else she would like to add. When she responded that she did not, I informed her if she had any questions or concerns, she could feel free to call me. I then ended the interview and stopped the audio recording device. I once again thanked Participant #5 prior to her leaving. Once she left, I took notes related to my experience and thoughts in my reflexive journal.

Table 6. Participant #5 Quotations of Significance

Analytical Categories	Quotations of Significance
1. ACTION RESEARCH	
Have students been learning multicultural counseling skills?	I think we all get it because [University] has done a reasonably good job at impressing the importance of culture.

I think that I in particular have grasped that it is important, but I don't know if they have necessarily stressed the importance of it.

So, I would say the course did a really good job in opening my eyes to how important the culture piece is. But in terms of how to apply that awareness, like the specific skills sets, I think that piece was lacking.

I think you had asked us, what skills did you learn and I was like racking my brain like I don't know. You know, I know it's important. I know why it's important, but I don't know how to kind of facilitate that with my clients.

[Instructor] brought up an issue like "this is my son he's biracial and you folks are treating him like he's white" and um, I didn't really know how to handle that.

It goes back to one of the initial questions you asked as far as the skill sequence, I don't think that we've ever done that.

If so, what has been most effective?

N/A

What would make the learning of multicultural skills more effective?

I definitely don't think it's been the majority of the coursework, but it's definitely been brought up, for sure.

Eight weeks is a very short amount of time to learn a lot of stuff there's a lot of assignments too. Every week you are reading, you're turning stuff in. So I found myself, especially the 8-week course, doing the bare minimum to get by.

2. Critical Pedagogy (Problem-posing Education)

A teacher or instructor responsible for teaching

They're all white. Not very diverse, I guess, never really thought about it. Yeah, they're all Caucasian. I mean as far as like gender or sex, that was kind of equal. I think we've had just as many female professors as males, but in terms of ethnic backgrounds, not diverse at all.

Mainly all the classes that [Instructor] has taught so ... I think that [Instructor] taught as well, and then even now in our internship, and then [Instructor] is also teaching us professional issues and ethics, so in those classes the culture is being stressed more

I am thinking of [Instructor]. I'd have to say [Instructor] is very open minded, very knowledgeable, [Instructor] is very easy to approach, and you can tell like [Instructor] has been doing this for a really long time and [Instructor]'s just good at it. And her personality is really good too. [Instructor]'s funny and [Instructor] just has a way of teaching the class where you can learn the theory and we always had time to practice behind it. So a teacher that's able to somehow balance the learning piece and the actually doing it piece.

I would have to say, overall, [University] did a mediocre job with the culture piece, and different professors put different stress on the culture piece, [Instructor] being one that definitely stressed it more than others

A student responsible for teaching others, including the instructor

We do have two students who are African American, so they have been able to talk from their experience about some of the things that go along with their culture and things that they don't like. So that piece has been helpful, having those students in the classroom and being able to bring that stuff up.

The content or material of the course

N/A

The methods or strategies used to teach the students

It's either been discussion based, or they've incorporated it into our discussion board posts or some assignments.

There is a small question that we'll ask: "how would this relate to culture?" or "how would, do multicultural counseling with a particular client?" so it definitely has been present.

You know, the multicultural course was very discussion based and that was helpful.

3. Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo et al., 1996)

The "A" Dimension

I would definitely say African American for sure, because that's the majority of my caseload.

Specifically, I would say much of the stress has been on ethnic minorities in general, but as far as specific—Asian Americans, African Americans, Indian Americans—I would say no.

The one in particular was like a starting line. We all stood on a line. It was like the first class, our culture and identity class and [Instructor] would ask questions. Are you white? And if you are white, you move up. If you are African American, take one step back.

I remember working with an African American client in particular probably like 2 years ago, and her son is biracial. He was in a foster home that is Caucasian, and he is the only biracial kid in his school.

The "B" Dimension

I'm thinking of one client in particular, with her religious background and it's not one that I am very familiar with at all.

The "C" Dimension

N/A

Key Informant Interview #3 (Participant #9)

Participant #9 was selected to be included in the key informant interview portion of the investigation because he represented a contrasting viewpoint to the homogeneity of the other participants. It was important to expand the scope of the participants beyond those from a single university who had the same experiences in relation to the materials that were taught as well as the instructors. Participant #9 also added a more diverse cultural representation of participants, as he was the lone male in the investigation.

I spoke with Participant #9 initially during recruiting efforts at the university he was attending and then in a subsequent telephone call to attempt to schedule his participation in a focus group. Owing to the lack of interest from other students at his university, I initiated a telephone call to ask if he would be willing to participate in an individual interview. When he accepted, he requested that the interview take place on campus. I suggested the interview take place in a private room in the university library, and he agreed that he would feel comfortable in that environment. I arrived early and met Participant #9 in the lobby. We walked together to the private study room and casually interacted. Our discussion focused on his transportation to the university and access to his workplace. Once in the private study room, I transitioned the conversation to a review of confidentiality and informed consent. When he acknowledged that he understood and agreed, I turned on the audio recorder and initiated the interview.

Participant #9 took a relaxed posture as I explained that although he had not been able to participate in the focus group, he would still be able to provide valuable information for the investigation. I began by asking him to discuss his understanding of multicultural counseling. He responded by saying,

Certainly being aware of the individual and having an idea of who you are talking to before they come into the room, just identifying basic information, age, race, ethnicity, what area of the country they are from, if they are from another country, maybe even what area of the city an individual is from, sometimes—so, culturally speaking, different areas of the city can be quite different.

He continued by discussing the importance of counselors' remaining cognizant of the information throughout the counseling session. He added that it was important for counselors to be attuned "to the history with that particular race if there is a history of [oppression]." He described a client with whom he worked, an elderly African American man who had grown up in an impoverished neighborhood. Participant #9 discussed historical factors, such as growing up post-Depression and living through the civil rights era as important factors to recognize while working with the client. He then suggested using a subjective frame of reference to create a relationship and increase the clinician's awareness. He then drew comparisons to a White, Jewish man of the same age, growing up in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood and discussed how, although they may have lived through the same historical events, their perceptions of the events and the impact on their lives were most likely not equivalent.

Participant #9 stated that much of his understanding of the relevance of culture came from personal life events. There were instances in which he had learned through educational experiences, including one where "they had us, sort of absorb yourself into a different culture than your own and see what that experience is like." He reports that the experience "was a little uncomfortable." He explained "The discomfort is certainly reflective of what different... you know, how another person must feel when interacting in a culture that's not their own." He reflected on the concept of privilege by saying "you walk around and everything has always been

geared toward White people; it's different being a different... the opposite if you could say it was the opposite of the African American culture." As he continued to explain his feelings during the activity, he summarized by saying, "It's kind of uncomfortable because it's unfamiliar. It's like, do they have some concerns? Are they judging me? What do they think, and uh, how do they see me? sort of thing. But, um, it was pretty good. It was a decent exercise."

When asked if he remembered discussing the CACREP Student Learning Outcomes, he responded, "Vaguely." He then asked for clarification, and after an explanation, he stated, "I don't remember what those were" nor did he remember talking about outcomes in general. According to Participant #9, "A lot of it was education about other cultures rather than interacting with other cultures in a counseling setting." Participant #9 recalled discussions focused on addressing gaps in the knowledge and skill of diverse cultures by "maybe doing some research into it." I then asked Participant #9 if he remembered an emphasis being placed on multicultural counseling skills, and he replied, "No." I then asked about the importance of multiculturalism to counseling, and he replied, "I think it's pretty goddamn important. Yeah, it is."

Participant #9 stated that he felt as though the school and counseling department put an emphasis on multiculturalism as being an important aspect in counseling. He recalled his application process to the program and a telephone interview that ensued. He distinctly remembered a faculty member asking him about the importance of culture and discussing the university's belief of its importance. He recalled, "He asked me about diversity and I said, 'race, different cultures, ethnicities but also diversity with MH diagnosis, personalities...' the world is a very diverse place."

I transitioned to discussing Participant #9's self-perceived comfort level in using multicultural counseling skills with culturally diverse clients. He responded by saying, "I don't know what exactly, how those skills would differ, you know other than just being aware and cognizant of this individual's role in society as a Black male or a Hispanic male or Asian, or you know, um, just being aware." He went on to describe some specific thoughts during sessions such as, "I wonder what that must have been like for them" and also "not asking questions or going in a direction that doesn't apply or [that] may be insulting for them." He also mentioned addressing culture specifically:

Where it's not reality. You know, unfortunately it wouldn't be like realistic because in reality on the outside, people are racist and prejudiced, and the individual may run into some barriers, so it's not really fair to go in a direction that is not likely to happen.

There seemed to be a sense of frustration as Participant #9 was discussing the barriers that many cultural and ethnic minorities face.

We began to discuss the groups that he had encountered in his field experience, and I asked if there were groups that he found to be more challenging than others. Participant #9 explained that he works primarily with African American and Caucasian men who have substance abuse concerns. He recounted his experience growing up in an area that was divided by race and feeling comfortable dealing with both groups owing to his life experiences. He acknowledged that he is "certainly aware of my prejudices because I've felt them come out, throughout the course of doing this type of work. It's nearly impossible for them not to come out, or to come up... rather come up." As he began to refocus on the question asked, he sat back, sighed, and ran his fingers through his hair. Then, leaning forward, he said,

Sometimes, it is, you know. At times, stuff is more challenging, you know... attitudes. Some attitudes are more challenging. If I feel like I am being drawn into like a race argument where someone wants to make it about race, often times I find myself like, I don't know... I find myself defensive and I start taking it personal. Like, does this guy think... am I coming across as a person that would argue such a point? So I'm almost kind of insulted by it and you know, that doesn't happen with people of the same culture. They don't say "hey, let's start bashing white people," and white people make little slights and I've certainly had my fair share of racist clients, that's uncomfortable. Yeah, it's just uncomfortable.

He elaborated on his statement and began to talk about the comments that he has heard coming from White clients:

It's as if "Well, you know how they act." It kind of comes out—well, you know... you hear the "n word" dropped here and there, and it's kind of like, how are you going to react, and are you cool or not, or are you one of us? Are you like us... and I address it. Put it right out on the table. "Wow! When you talk like that, it kind of sounds like you are a racist. And I would... I never would have known that about you." So for me it's more comfortable when white people, when white clients are doing that.

Participant #9 then shook his head disapprovingly and stated that he feels "very uncomfortable when staff makes insinuations like that." He did not elaborate on his negative interactions towards staff.

Quickly, he returned the conversation to his own experience in managing the stressors around racial topics. He discussed how he broaches the issue of race and discrimination when working with African American clients.

With black people it's... you know, I don't know if its disrespectful to like, sometimes call white people "crackers" or whatever or derogatory terms because I joke around and play with it like that. Maybe that's kind of culturally insensitive on my part because it's kind of minimizing all the hurt and pain. Yeah, this word came out for a reason, this is our, ah, term that we use to express our hatred, and I'm sort of making light of it. I hadn't really thought about that, but that might be kind of culturally insensitive on my part.

Participant #9 appeared to be pensive as he considered how his attempts at building a therapeutic rapport may have been, in fact, negatively affecting the relationship. After several moments he discussed that he frequently attempts to use comedy as an icebreaker and relationship builder.

Participant #9 stated, "The role that I usually play is the goofy sort of white guy that's sort of...but, all I'm looking for is whether or not its effective in building some bond and some dialogue that can exist. Showing some of my cards—that it's not all serious. That we can talk or whatever."

As he finished talking about his attempts at building a relationship with culturally dissimilar clients, Participant #9 appeared to be frustrated. I inquired if he was ok to continue, and when he acknowledged that he was in fact okay, I transitioned the conversation to his experiences of addressing culture in supervision. He stated of his current internship site, "No. At work, not so much. I mean it's something we are aware of; it's sort of assumed that you're being that way, but it's not addressed." When asked, he reflected on the supervision he had received through the university for his internship. He recalled, "It is, because when we are looking at the whole aspect of the person we're figuring out and kind of putting ourselves through the lens of this individual, but yeah, it comes up." He also reported that he felt as though multiculturalism was discussed throughout the various courses in the program.

I asked Participant #9 to share his experiences with any program or class qualities that interfered with his acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. He reported that one of biggest hindrances was the instructor of the multicultural counseling course. Participant #9's experience was that the instructor was primarily focused on African American history and "was living in a black-and-white world, and I would have liked to see more understanding of like Hispanic and Asian cultures and how people feel about counseling. What are people's beliefs on counseling?" He described his instructor as being African American and growing up in a rural area. He further described his instructor as being educated, "very intelligent," and liberal. He reports that there was no discussion of the changing demographics of the United States, but that he has gained knowledge of it through his own study.

After discussing the multicultural counseling course and the course instructor, I revisited the challenges he experienced when working with a diverse clientele. Participant #9 discussed more situations that make him uncomfortable:

I like having the boundary that's the difference between client and counselor. I enjoy that boundary and sometimes, if you are a similar age group... people at times, will say "what was your thing? Like what scene were you into?" I feel very uncomfortable when people ask me personal questions, so you know, I observe... you know, I observe what's going on with them, and I talk about it afterwards with somebody else. Not really... I mean, what makes me uncomfortable is when someone assumes or that there may be some racism there. Because you know, it can really do damage the therapeutic alliance and the counseling because, you know, what does it mean to this person that I'm not a racist like they are? I don't have the same views that they do. What's going to be the ripple effect of this? That's what makes me the most uncomfortable.

I noted that although he was asked to discuss other topics that he found to be challenging when working with culturally diverse clientele, his response echoed his previous concerns of facilitating and maintaining a positive rapport with clients.

I asked if there were any other challenges that may have inhibited his development of multicultural counseling skills, and Participant #9 responded that some of the other students in the program took away from his experience. He reported that the diversity in the program was a concern for him, stating,

I can count the number of African Americans that I know in the program in one hand.

And apart from that, gee whiz, hardly anybody else. I mean male-wise, you can probably count them on two hands. So it's kind of limited.

He continued, explaining the impact on his experience:

I didn't identify with a lot of the people that were coming directly out of undergrad with no experience working in the field... I was expecting more people, a little bit older that have worked in the field, than were seeking to get their credentials to support, like, the work that they've done.

He appeared to be disappointed in his experience and the lack of experience-based input from his classmates.

As the interview was drawing to a close, I asked Participant #9 to describe his overall experience with multicultural skills development in the program. He responded,

They could have really done the topic justice and given some helpful tools to use in the future. I would rank it a 4, and I think the 6 points in between could have been more diversity in what they are teaching us about and how those people relate to counseling. I don't know if some, some way of talking about it or... I don't know. I just...

multiculturally speaking there wasn't a lot there. But there also wasn't a lot there with a lot of other things, you know. Just being objective and knowing what a good education looks like—I give them a 4 out of 10.

I thanked Participant #9 for taking the time to speak with me and asked if he had any questions or concerns. He responded that he did not. I told him that if anything comes up in the future, he could feel free to give me a call. I again thanked him, and he left the study room to attend class. I remained in the study room, listened to parts of the interview, and took notes in my reflexive journal.

Table 7. Participant #9 Quotations of Significance

Analytical Categories	Quotations of Significance
1. ACTION RESEARCH	
Have students been learning multicultural counseling skills?	<p>I notice maybe insensitive stuff coming out with me where I want to build that rapport with somebody.</p> <p>I mean there's nothing, nothing stands out specifically the multicultural class was ok.</p> <p>Yeah, this word came out for a reason; this is our term that we use to express our hatred, and I'm sort of making light of it. I hadn't really thought about that but that might be kind of culturally insensitive on my part.</p> <p>I want to establish that relationship—that therapeutic relationship by connecting, uh, and you know, and I try to break the ice with comedy at times, lightheartedness, um, so I might reference like a popular hip-hop song or rap song or something like that, and the role that I usually play is the goofy sort of white guy that's sort of...but, all I'm looking for is whether or not its effective in building some bond and some dialogue that can exist. Showing some of my cards—that it's not all serious. That we can talk or whatever.</p>

If I feel like I am being drawn into like a race argument where someone wants to make it about race, often times I find myself like, I don't know, I find myself defensive and I start taking it personal.

When we are looking at the whole aspect of the person we're figuring out and kind of putting ourselves through the lens of this individual.

If so, what has been most effective?

If you are asking about the multicultural class that [University] provides, um, I think that it, I found it beneficial.

What would make the learning of multicultural skills more effective?

It seemed like [Instructor] was living in a black-and-white world, and I would have liked to see more understanding of like Hispanic and Asian cultures and how people feel about counseling.

I would rank it a 4, and I think the 6 points in between could have been more diversity in what they are teaching us about and how those people relate to counseling. I don't know if some, some way of talking about it

I was expecting more people, a little bit older that have worked in the field, than were seeking to get their credentials to support like the work that they've done.

2. Critical Pedagogy (Problem-posing Education)

A teacher or instructor responsible for teaching

[Instructor] was most, [Instructor] focused a lot on African American history.

A student responsible for teaching others, including the instructor

N/A

The content or material of the course

A lot of it was, was education about other cultures rather than interacting with other cultures in a counseling setting.

Specifically, tonight we are going to talk about multiculturalism in counseling—that, I mean that doesn't happen.

The methods or strategies used to teach the students

I found it beneficial in, I don't know, I mean they had us, sort of absorb yourself into a different culture than your own and see what that experience is like. You know, that's a good tool/exercise to have students do, but, I don't know. I knew a lot of things multiculturally about different cultures regardless of the class.

3. Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo et al., 1996)

The "A" Dimension

I wonder what it was like for an African American male growing up in [City name] post-Depression and then through the civil rights era and through all of the changes throughout history.

The sociology term is, when you are not... when you are the majority, a White male or whatever... White in this country, you walk around and everything has always been geared toward White people, its different being a different... the opposite if you could say it was the opposite of the African American culture.

With black people it's, you know, I don't know if its disrespectful to like, sometimes call white people "crackers" or whatever or derogatory terms because I joke around and play with it like that.

When I get a client, Black or White, which is usually the case here in Pittsburgh, um, it's almost, it's the same; it's about the addiction, it's about whatever their presenting issues are.... um, certainly there's some cultural characteristics that are common with black folks from a particular area and white folks from a particular area.

The "B" Dimension

He asked me about diversity and I said "race, different cultures, ethnicities but also diversity with MH diagnosis, personalities...." the world is a very diverse place

The "C" Dimension

Being sensitive to any particular... to the history with that particular race if there is a history.

I wonder what it was like for an African American male growing up in Pittsburgh post-Depression and then through the civil rights era and through all of the changes throughout history.

Emerging Themes

As described earlier in this chapter, the same process was followed for recording researcher thoughts and ideas, and reviewing the conversation after each interview. Immediately following the conclusion of the interview, I sat and reflected on the content, the non-verbal language and my own personal thoughts, ideas, and biases. I recorded these thoughts in my reflexive journal. After the focus group and the second key informant interview, it was already clear that the data had reached saturation. The information provided by the participants was repetitive, consistent patterns were emerging, and no new data points were emerging. In order to test for trustworthiness, I conducted an additional interview with a student from a different university who was not enrolled with the other participants and who had a different experience. The data from the final interview reinforced my findings that no new data sources were emerging, and the results were consistent in following the previous patterns.

As I was collecting and analyzing the data, I was frequently aware that the information given by the participants mirrored my own personal experiences when I was taking mandatory counseling courses in CACREP approved counseling programs, as well as the subsequent inadequacy I experienced when working with culturally diverse clients. After a close analysis of the data, six themes became evident, which will briefly be identified in this chapter and more

thoroughly elucidated in Chapter 5. The themes, which became apparent during the analysis of this investigation, are represented in Table 8:

Table 8. Emerging Themes

Theme	Categorical Description
MC Skills Gap	Students have not learned multicultural counseling skills. This theme relates to the fact that students were not able to identify multicultural counseling skills, and they identified specific situations where they did not have the skills necessary to meet the needs of culturally diverse clients.
Lack of Attention to CACREP SLOs	Counseling courses do not focus on CACREP SLOs. This theme relates to the participants' recognition that the only mention of the CACREP SLOs took place during the review of the syllabus on the first day of class and was not mentioned thereafter.
Cultural Perception Myopia	Students are myopic in their perception of culture. This theme relates to the concept that throughout the interviews, a consistent pattern of identifying components of culture was present.
Meaningfulness of Experiential Activities	Experiential activities are the most meaningful. This theme relates to the participants' descriptions of what was most helpful for them as they progressed through the course.
Program-level Diversity	Diversity in the program matters. This theme is related to the participants' reports of ways that having or lacking diversity affected their ability to gain multicultural counseling skills.
Instructor Role	The instructor has a significant role in the students' learning multicultural counseling skills. This theme is related to the participants' perception of the role of the instructor in their ability to learn multicultural counseling skills.
Course Format	The course is a hybrid course including face-to-face and online sessions. The course is also only 8 weeks in duration. This theme relates to participants' identification of the course format as being an impediment to learning throughout the course.

Summary

This investigation was conducted to gain a better understanding of graduate students' perceptions of the attributes of a CACREP approved counseling program that is supposed to assist with their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. I conducted a focus group and key informant interviews to provide data. Audio and video recording were used to capture the data in the focus group, and information from the key informant interviews was captured through the use of an audio recorder. Following each interview, I wrote detailed notes regarding my thoughts, biases, and observations. After fully reviewing the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim, and the key informant interviews were sent to the informants for verification of accuracy. Once the interviews were verified as accurate, I analyzed the interviews for themes and patterns related to the respondents' experiences in terms of multicultural counseling skill acquisition. Throughout the investigation and analysis of the interviews, I continually referred to my reflexive journal as a means to reduce researcher bias. After transcribing and reviewing the data obtained from Participant #9, I was confident that no new data points would emerge and that the data had reached saturation.

From the analysis of the data, several themes emerged as consistent and relevant for the future of counseling and counselor education. Counseling students were not taught specific skills related to multicultural counseling, and when presented with situations involving cultural and ethnic minority clients, students did not possess the skills necessary to meet the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse clients. Participants reported little focus on the CACREP SLOs beyond mere acknowledgement during the initial review of the syllabus on the first day of class. The participants were able to identify a broad group of cultural traits, but they focused on a very narrow group of traits during discussions. The students reported a lack of diversity among the

staff and students; however, they felt the diversity that was present helped them to acquire multicultural counseling skills. Finally, students reported that the most important factors in their ability to gain multicultural counseling skills were the experiential activities presented during the course and the actual instructor responsible for presenting the material.

Chapter 5 presents the themes identified through data analysis and discussed them in detail, highlighting the ineffectiveness of the current methods of multicultural counselor education on the skill development of counselor trainees. In addition, the implications for future counselor educators and for counselor education program development are elucidated.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The demographic population within the United States is currently in a state of rapid and significant changes. The percentage of the population represented by minorities is becoming larger in relation to the dominant culture. This dynamic requires the counseling profession to take a closer look at the way it teaches its future counselors and provides services to clients.

The counseling profession is tasked with providing culturally responsive and appropriate services for clients that represent a broad array of diverse cultures. As the population of the United States shifts, it is likely that the diversity of the clientele will change to reflect the overall population. It is imperative for counselors to develop and maintain the skills necessary to provide services effectively to the changing demographic. Counselor education preparatory programs are key stakeholders in the ability of the profession to adapt to the changing needs of the clients, as they are the gatekeepers to the profession. It is incumbent upon counselor education programs to provide a consistent quality education and to ensure that students matriculating from the programs have the skills necessary to be effective with diverse clients.

The purpose of this qualitative investigation was to elucidate the perceptions of graduate students in CACREP approved counselor education programs in relation to their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. The goal of the investigation was to examine a CACREP accredited counselor education program in order to identify the specific attributes that students perceived as most helpful in gaining multicultural counseling skills. The results are intended to help graduate training programs revise their teaching strategies to increase counselor multicultural efficacy. Furthermore, revising the instructional methods to be more effective can

better prepare counselor education students to be more effective in adapting to demographic changes in the overall population and those seeking counseling services.

This multilevel investigation took place with a sample of nine graduate students from two universities in Southwestern Pennsylvania. All of the participants were enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor education preparatory program at the time of the investigation. A focus group was conducted initially, followed by in-depth key informant interviews from focus group participants. Another key informant interview was conducted to provide an additional source of data and to verify saturation. After collection, the data were transcribed verbatim and then placed into analytic categories. The data were then read again and grounded categories were created. Data chunks were placed into the analytic and grounded categories. Patterns were then sought based on the frequency, magnitude, and relevance of the data presented. The study was based on the following research questions:

1. After the completion of a required multicultural counseling course, how do counselor education trainees articulate their level of confidence in their ability to provide skill-based interventions to culturally diverse individuals?
2. What importance do counselor education trainees attribute to multicultural counseling as part of the counseling profession?
3. How do counselor education trainees evaluate the effectiveness of the skill-based multicultural counseling education?
4. What aspects of their graduate education do counselor education trainees identify as most effective for increasing their ability to provide culturally appropriate skill-based interventions?

5. What changes do counselor education trainees identify as necessary if counselor education programs are to develop multicultural counseling skills effectively in the future?

Discussion of Findings

Action Research

Action research was used as part of the framework for this investigation, in part because of its applicability to addressing social change with minority populations (Guiffrida et al., 2011). Furthermore, Meyer (2000) stressed the identification problems, development of solutions, and monitoring and reflecting on changes that may occur. Participants' statements during the focus group and the key informant interviews related directly to the first research question of this investigation: "After the completion of a required multicultural counseling course, how do counselor education trainees articulate their level of confidence in their ability to provide skill-based interventions to culturally diverse individuals?" The responses demonstrate that the current application of multicultural courses does not appear to be effective in teaching multicultural counseling skills to students.

Theme #1. Multicultural Skills Gap

The lack of appropriate skill development was present in each of the nine participants of this investigation. The groundwork for this theme became apparent early in the focus group interview when the participants were asked how they identified multicultural counseling skills. The group became silent, and the participants exchanged questioning looks with each other and with the researcher. This incident prompted an explanation of the difference between multicultural counseling skills, multicultural counseling knowledge, and multicultural counseling awareness. Group members made comments such as, "I don't know if I know too many of them

to be honest; I'm not sure. Besides broaching the subject with them and asking in an appropriate way" or

I also just think if you are just talking straight skill, I think [Instructor] did a good job like you said, pointing out our own prejudices and our own things that we bring in, but I mean just... you know, playing back what class... in my head, I don't remember learning any skills like using specific techniques, like yeah... I don't really remember anything like that.

It was clear within the group setting that the concept of skills related to working with a multicultural client was not at the forefront of the consciousness of the participants, yet there was a collective agreement that the topic of multiculturalism is important to the profession of counseling. Some of the statements made during the individual interviews echoed those of the focus group, like the following: "But in terms of how to apply that awareness, like the specific skills sets, I think that piece was lacking."

The skill that was consistently present and one with which participants reported feeling comfortable was broaching the subject of race. A participant commented, "The only thing that I can recall is just draw attention to it." However, there were several instances where the issue of culture was present and the participants did not address the issue, "I didn't really know how to address it or broach the subject." In essence, the perceived skill did not match the actual efficacy of the participant. There was a sense of helplessness on the part of the participants as they realized that they might not have the skills necessary to provide culturally responsive interventions. Many described situations in which they felt ill prepared to manage a situation or conflict with a client with whom they did not share a similar cultural identity. Comments such as "I'm not sure how comfortable I am with that," and "I know it's important. I know why it's

important, but I don't know to kind of facilitate that with my clients" highlight the lack of confidence in their ability to deliver culturally appropriate interventions. A participant described not knowing how to address a person who is transgendered and, during the focus group, referred to the client as "it" when discussing the lack of the necessary skill to address the client with the proper pronoun. Another participant discussed using humor in the form of self-denigrating "cracker" jokes as a way to build rapport with African American clients. The participants appeared to struggle increasingly as the cultural differences increased.

The aspects with which participants seemed to express the most comfort were their knowledge and self-awareness. The focus of the multicultural counseling course, as reported by the participants, was geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and education. Participants stated:

I also just think if you are just talking straight skill, I think [Instructor] did a good job like you said [to Participant #5], pointing out our own prejudices and our own things that we bring in, but I mean just... you know, playing back what class... in my head, I don't remember learning any skills like using specific techniques, like yeah... I don't really remember anything like that.

Similarly, other comments reinforce this perception:

See, I don't know, I think those activities, we had those two assignments. One, we go and submerge yourself in a different culture, and one in groups where you research different ethnic minority groups, and I think those assignments really helped with cultural awareness, but I don't know if they helped with the skill sets.

A consistent response from participants was related to their expressed desire to bond and build relationships with their clients, yet there were no specific comments relating to the desire to be able to use culturally specific interventions.

Implications

The gap in the presence of multicultural counseling skills as they relate to the level of multicultural knowledge and self awareness proves to be significantly based on the research that demonstrates the need for counselors to be well-balanced in their approach to working with cultural and ethnic minorities. The reported lack of ability to demonstrate multicultural counseling skills in the sample population of this investigation is consistent with the findings of other research published recently on the same subject.

The participants of this investigation consistently expressed a desire to form a meaningful therapeutic alliance with their clients. Often, counselors regard the therapeutic alliance, particularly with cultural and ethnic minorities, as the single most important factor in the ability for clients to achieve treatment goals successfully. The therapeutic alliance must be developed quickly because the ratings given by clients on the third session of treatment are consistent predictors of therapy outcomes (Patterson et al., 2007). Given the lack of multicultural counseling skills, it seems reasonable to expect difficulty on the part of the participants in developing a strong therapeutic rapport with culturally and ethnically dissimilar clients.

The participants in this investigation were able to identify few multicultural counseling skills that were acquired during the course or throughout the program; however, they were able to identify using the language of the client as an acquired skill that they felt comfortable in using. Vasquez (2007) supports the exploration and use of language, terms, and concepts as a means to clarify meanings and understandings as a way to increase therapeutic rapport.

Participants were able also to identify broaching cultural differences as a specific skill that may be employed with clients who are cultural and ethnic minorities. While participants in the investigation noted broaching as a skill that had been acquired and reported feeling comfortable with broaching the subject of race, they reported several instances in which broaching did not occur; therefore, the racially based concerns of cultural and ethnic minority clients went unaddressed. This is a matter for concern in light of a study published by Chang and Berk (2009), in which the researchers noted that race was a salient factor for clients who were considered to be cultural and ethnic minorities. They reported that clients found it was beneficial to discuss their culturally based concerns with a therapist from a different background because they believed the therapist would be able to provide a varied viewpoint and would also give insight into how other cultural groups may perceive the problem. The reluctance of therapists to engage or initiate conversations about race or other multiple cultural identities represents a significant problem in the therapeutic dyad. It places the burden of bringing up issues on the client. Cultural and ethnic minority clients may be predisposed not to want to bring up racial or other cultural issues owing to their self-perceived sociocultural expectations. Inherently, race or other cultural concerns may become the proverbial elephant in the room: ever present, significant, yet not addressed or acknowledged.

Studies demonstrate the importance of clinicians' ability to employ multicultural counseling skills when working with cultural and ethnic minority clients. Owen, Leach, Wampold, and Rodolfa (2011) found that clients' ratings of their therapists were likely to be higher for clinicians that used interventions that were overtly related to the multicultural concerns of the client. The results of this investigation suggest that the participants have not acquired the multicultural counseling skills necessary to attain high ratings or satisfaction from

cultural and ethnic minority clients. The participants consistently reported an inability to provide effective, culturally specific, skill-based interventions. This was clearly demonstrated when on one occasion reported during the investigation, a parent addressed her culturally related concerns for her son, framed as a concern inappropriate grooming of his hair, stemming from the lack of cultural knowledge of the staff. Through continued conversation, the parent addressed the fact that her son was the only biracial person in the facility, whether staff or child. Lacking the appropriate multicultural counseling skills, the therapist addressed the child's hair, but neglected to address the underlying issue of the cultural isolation of the child and family.

Theme #2. Lack of Attention to the Student Learning Outcomes

A consistent pattern emerged among all of the participants of the investigation related to the presentation, usage, and focus of the CACREP Student Learning Outcomes. Consistently, participants stated that no emphasis had been placed on the SLOs. During the focus group meeting, the students required an explanation of the SLOs in order to be able to answer the question. Several participants do not remember covering the SLOs in class while others stated that they were pointed out during a review of the syllabus on the first day of class for the semester. One participant stated that the SLOs may have been discussed briefly; however, the focus was on the requirements to pass the course successfully. Consistent for all students was the reported absence of any reference to the SLOs after the initial class.

Implications

CACREP accreditation, and subsequently the Student Learning Outcomes, were designed to ensure that counseling programs provide a consistent and quality educational experience (Minton & Gibson, 2012). As the gatekeepers of the counseling profession, counselor educators are responsible for ensuring that students matriculating from their programs are effectively able

to provide culturally appropriate and responsive services to all clients, including those who are cultural and ethnic minorities (Swank & Lambie, 2012). The Student Learning Outcomes provide counselor educators with identified outcomes in specific content areas, including multicultural counseling. It does not appear, however, that the identified outcomes are actually taught during the multicultural counseling course or that effective appraisal techniques are being used to assess the abilities of the students or instructional methods. All of the participants in the investigation successfully completed the multicultural counseling course and progressed through their educational experience to the internship course; yet, the students did not demonstrate skill-based efficacy in providing interventions to cultural and ethnic minority clients. The responses of the participants in the investigation reflect the findings of Heppner and O'Brien (1994), who found that students struggled to integrate multicultural knowledge and awareness into multicultural counseling skills.

Though not addressed in this investigation, a lack of consistency is apparent in skill-based assessment measures and possibly a lack of skill-based measures altogether. The absence of effective appraisal techniques requires counselor educators to assume the students are gaining the requisite skills. The appraisal techniques used for the participants in this investigation failed to identify deficient multicultural skills, provide remedial instruction, or use developmental feedback in a manner that permitted participants to correct multicultural skill-based deficiencies.

Theme #3. Program-level Diversity

During the discussion of various program attributes, the participants raised and addressed the issue of diversity on multiple levels related to their experiences while in their respective counselor education programs. Participants explored the effect of diversity on the student level,

the program staff level and also the extent to which they experienced diversity during their internship experiences.

The presence of diverse students seemed to be important to the students. This issue was raised during the focus group and in each of the key informant interviews. The focus group was made up of a homogenous group in relation to sex, but was representative of various cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, races, sexual orientations, and other cultural attributes.

The group members who shared multiple minority identities felt as though there was little diversity among the group members, whereas the group members with fewer minority identities felt as though the group were more diverse. One student in the focus group who described her own multiple minority identity as African American and Native American addressed her perceived lack of diversity in the cohort, which is a larger sample of the focus group: “our class is predominantly Caucasian women,” she noted, citing the fact that she represents one of two African American women in the cohort. Conversely, Participant #5 stated that the diversity, specifically having cohort members who are African American, was helpful in gaining knowledge about the African American culture. She stated, “We do have two students who are African American, so they have been able to talk from their experience about some of the things that go along with their culture and the things that they don’t like.” Participant #5 also stated that she wished she had learned more about the African American culture because her caseload at work is made up primarily of African American clients.

Participant #9 recalled a different perspective on the role of culture within his classmates. He reported that there was very little diversity among the students in the program and that the students represented a fairly homogenous mix of young, Caucasian females with little or no experience in the field of counseling. He reported that this was a detriment to the educational

process and not the group that he anticipated upon his admission to the program. The consistent pattern that developed is that those who are not a part of the majority group represented a reported a lack of diversity, while those in the dominant group viewed the program as having higher levels of diversity.

Consistent across all participants was the belief that the staff at the respective programs lacked sufficient diversity. Some participants reported that the faculty was made up of a combination of Caucasian males and females, and that the diversity of the staff was further reduced owing to the location and staffing patterns of their particular campus. When discussing the diversity of the staff, Participant #5 reinforced the theme by saying, “Diversity of the staff? That’s interesting. They’re all white. Not very diverse I guess. [I] never really thought about it.” When asked if she believed the lack of diversity she perceived had an impact on the education she had received, she reported that she felt as though more of an emphasis could have been placed on cultural differences and that it would have been beneficial.

Implications

The demographic of the counseling profession does not appear to be representative of the population in need of services. Even more, the population of those responsible for educating future counselors seems to be incongruent with the larger population as a whole and those represented in institutions of higher learning. This was certainly the case for the participants of the investigation. The reports from participants in this investigation mirror the findings of Inman et al. (2004), who conducted a study in which participants reported that racial and ethnic minorities were underrepresented at all levels of their respective counseling programs. The researchers also noted that the lack of diversity within the program might affect other aspects of the educational experience owing to the lack of diverse experiences. Cho et al. (2011) and Green

et al. (2009) found that culturally diverse students reported having more experiences in culturally diverse situations and with diverse populations. This situation has relevance for the counseling profession, which appears to not be representative of the larger population.

Theme #4. Course Format

Participants in the focus group unanimously agreed that the structure of their multicultural course was a significant barrier to their ability to learn multicultural skills and to gain the knowledge and awareness necessary to be an effective counselor with culturally diverse individuals. Participants discussed dissatisfaction with the length of the course, 8 weeks, as well as its format, which was a hybrid course with a combination of face-to-face and online sessions. Participants used phrases like “it was a whirlwind” and “it was rushed, and it kind of showed in the teaching too.” In order to complete the course successfully in the shortened format, students reported that they would “do the bare minimum, get your A or B or whatever you get, and keep it moving.” Participants described the material as being “pushed” into short periods of time and being “yanked” back on task when inquiring about areas the instructors were not currently discussing. Participants discussed having areas of interest and wanting to gain a better grasp of theories and theoretical orientations, but the duration of the course served as a limiting factor. Group members reported appreciating when instructors would post additional information and resources for the course; however, expressed that in the end it was not beneficial because they did not have time to access and review those resources.

Implications

The format of the course, as reported by the participants in the focus group, appeared to be a limiting factor. The data, consistent among all focus group participants, suggested that the shortened, hybrid course represented a perceived impediment to the learning opportunities of the

students enrolled. The format required self-directed learning in the form of assignments that were online, and reading material without discussion or interactions with classmates. Coogan (2009) asserted that a key component of the hybrid course design in counselor education programs is that students incur a greater responsibility and accountability for making connections between their “existing knowledge and working knowledge” (p. 318). The problematic assumption with this teaching strategy is that it is based on the assumption that the student has a working knowledge of diverse cultures, when research suggests that counselor education students from dominant cultures lack intercultural contact.

The more salient variable for the students was that the condensed course did not permit students to explore diverse cultural groups and experiences. Instead, the accelerated format compelled students to “just get through it.” Participants experienced an increased workload and limited ability to discuss the cultural groups they felt were relevant to the work they anticipated doing as professional counselors. While the effectiveness of online and hybrid course designs require further investigation (Renfro-Michel, O'Halloran, & Delaney, 2010) through qualitative and quantitative measures, the respondents in this investigation appeared to report greater difficulties associated with the 8-week format of the course.

Critical Pedagogy (Problem-posing Education)

Critical pedagogy, or problem-posing education, was used as part of the framework of this investigation as it relates directly to the educational components in the development of culturally responsive skills in counselor trainees. Freire (2004) identified four specific areas that he found to be present in effective educational settings. He identified an instructor, a student responsible for teaching others, course content, and techniques as the necessary components. Critical pedagogy relates directly to the research question, “What aspects of their graduate

education do counselor education trainees identify as most effective for increasing their ability to provide culturally appropriate skill-based interventions?"

Participants shared little information on the content of a multicultural course, and there was little consensus around what material should be included in such a course. Some participants wanted information on a larger group of cultures; one reported that the instructor lived in "a black-and-white world," leading to a focus in the course on African Americans and Caucasians. Other participants reported that they would like to have seen a greater focus on African American clients, while still other participants felt as though there was too great an emphasis placed on cultural groups that are not highly represented in the region, like Asian Americans.

As discussed in Theme #3, some mentioned gaining insight and knowledge from other students, primarily from the sharing of experiences and personal feelings; however, the stated importance and frequency did not warrant a separate thematic category. The remaining areas, the instructor responsible for teaching and the teaching techniques, elicited significant thematic categories.

Theme #5. Instructor role

The role of the instructor was reported to be either a significant help or a limiting factor by all of the participants in the investigation. Descriptors such as "nice," "educated," and "intelligent" were common themes when describing the instructors of the multicultural courses. Multicultural course instructors were reported as being culturally self-aware. Another attribute that was discussed and which appeared to be significant for the participants was one instructor's capacity to be perceived as open-minded. Participants in the focus group described one instructor as being a person who cared about the feelings and thoughts of the students and who was willing to explain ideas in a way that was easily understood from a variety of approaches. Participant #5

commented of the instructor, “[The Instructor] has a way of teaching the class where you can learn the theory and we always had time to practice behind it. So a teacher that’s able to somehow balance the learning piece and the actually doing it piece.” Another aspect that appeared to be significant was the instructor’s ability and willingness to be flexible and to revisit topics that were left unfinished from other courses or questions remaining from other courses. It is important to note that this particular portion of the theme was relevant to those participating in the focus group because the structure of the program and location of the campus created a situation in which one instructor was responsible for teaching the majority of the courses throughout the curriculum.

Implication

A significant part of the ability of information to be shared in a manner that is meaningful and able to be accepted falls upon the facilitator of any educational experience. The participants in the focus group for this investigation reported that the multicultural counseling course instructor’s approach to teaching created an atmosphere that was conducive to learning. Participants reported feeling as though they could ask questions, make mistakes, and receive open, authentic feedback. Dickson and Jepsen (2007) referred to a welcoming environment that fosters, encourages, and emphasizes the importance of culture from various perspectives as the program’s desirable ambiance. The concept of ambiance is also extended to the encouragement of discussions related to cultural issues. They also found that participants who rated higher program ambiance scores had scores related to multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills that were statistically significant.

Participants noted, also, that other instructors did not encourage the same type of open approach. Participants described the response of other faculty members toward the participants

as a “yank” back on task. One description given by a focus group participant implied that there was little tolerance or leeway for the students. Participant #9 described the instructor as “living in a black-and-white world.” He reported that oppression was a significant factor in the instructor’s life; consequently, he experienced the focus of the multicultural counseling course to be on African American history. This divergence from the positive ambiance experienced by the focus group participants during their multicultural counseling course can have a negative effect on the students grappling with integrated skill-based, culturally responsive interventions into their knowledge, awareness, and own personal experiences with culture. Multicultural counseling courses can be threatening for many students because of lack of knowledge, fears, and biases, both recognized and unrecognized. Tummala-Narra (2009) noted four anticipatory attitudes present in doctoral level graduate students prior to taking a graduate course related to multicultural counseling:

1. Nothing I learn in this class will be new to me. It’s just a required class and so I need to take it.
2. I think we are all going to sit around and be politically [c]orrect, and it is going to be frustrating.
3. There is so much to learn about every type of cultural group. How are we ever supposed to learn everything in one course?
4. It’s going to be hard to sit and listen to the students in the class who don’t know what it’s like to be a minority. (p. 323)

In the current investigation, comments were made that related to the third anticipatory attitude or question above, which addresses the ability of the course to cover the breadth of the dimensions of personal identity. The fact that such comments, typically deemed anticipatory prior to

enrollment in a multicultural counseling course, continued to be present in this group might suggest that the expectations of the multicultural counseling course were never fully identified or that realistic goals for the student's multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills at the completion of the course were not made implicit during the course. This lack of goal setting can be seen in Theme #2, which is related to the lack of attention placed on the Student Learning Outcomes.

Theme #6. Meaningfulness of Experiential Activities

Nearly all participants reported feeling as though the experiential activities were the most helpful as they progressed through the multicultural counseling course and through the graduate program. The experiences included attending religious services, attending functions with culturally diverse groups, and going to a bar that is frequented primarily by those who are gay and lesbian. Cultural immersion exercises gave participants the experience of "being in the field and doing it" compared to learning from a lecture-based format. One of the more significant phrases came from a participant during the focus group when she spoke of her experience attending a church different from hers as being "the first time I really got hit with multicultural." Her comment and affect while describing the experience led me to believe that there was no expectation that the experience would be different, or at least different on the magnitude that she had perceived it.

Other participants conjectured that their self-awareness and anxiety about going into a culture knowing they would be expected to follow the cultural norms might parallel the experiences of cultural and ethnic minorities. Participants described their self-awareness during these experiences as "nerve-racking," expressed fear of being "outcasts," and described their concern over doing something wrong. One participant reported that the experience raised the

awareness of other cultures and the everyday struggles that other groups encounter. Experiences were reported to be “eye opening” and “uncomfortable.”

Experiential learning took place also during the internship and practicum experiences through direct contact with clients. As described in Theme #1, there were opportunities for students to interact directly with clients who are cultural and ethnic minorities, and while the students did not appear to possess the skills necessary to manage many of the culturally related concerns, the experiences were still beneficial, primarily for gaining multicultural knowledge and awareness. Several participants discussed self-awareness of how they felt when there was a conflict or difference of opinion with clients whom they considered to be culturally similar. Participants reported conflicts over personal values, hearing racist comments from their clients, and expectations from their clients that the counselor would engaged in illicit drug use owing to the color of their skin.

Implications

Dickson and Jepsen (2007) addressed the need for counselor education programs to shift the primary educational strategies away from lecture-based models to those based on student exposure and participation as critical strategies in development. They also noted the absence of research whose primary focus is to identify the instructional strategies that are most effective in building cultural competence in counselor education trainees. Participants perceived the cultural immersion experience as being helpful to varying degrees in the development of multicultural counseling skills. One participant’s comment implied that the benefit of an immersion experience would be commensurate to the effort the student was willing to put into participating in the experience.

Immersion experiences alone may not be sufficient in extending the skill-based efficacy of counselor education students. Participant #9 did not give significant credence to the immersion experience at his university. He instead mentioned that he has engaged in interactions with African Americans in his personal life and at other times throughout his work and education. While this limited focus on African Americans is addressed by Theme #7, the concept of intercultural contact is woven throughout several thematic areas. The idea that contact has to occur during the course is understandable from an evaluative standpoint; however, instructional methods and course discussions should also incorporate the personal intercultural contacts a student has had. Chao et al. (2011) suggested that the personal experiences of racial and ethnic minority students foster a higher degree of cultural competence in relation to that of Caucasian counselor trainees.

Dimensions of Personal Identity

Theme #7. Cultural Perception Myopia

Throughout the course of the investigation, it was clear that the participants focused on a narrow scope of the various dimensions of personal identity and culture. A pattern became clear early in the focus group interview. The group's focus was primarily on the aspect of race and ethnicity. Frequently, participants made comments mentioning the words "race," "color," "ethnicity," "black," and "African American." Each of these related specifically to the "A" dimension of personal identity. Nearly 70% of all mentions of culture could be attributed to the "A" dimension of personal identity and of these, nearly 48% were related to race. The data related to other dimensions of personal identity revealed that over 41% of the discussion relating to the "B" dimension of personal identity was focused on religion. In total, only two data points were related to the "C" dimension, and it may be worthwhile to note that the data points were

from one individual, Participant #9. Table 9 represents the distribution of data related to the dimension of personal identity.

Table 9. Distribution of Data Related to Dimensions of Personal Identity

Dimension of Personal Identity		
"A" Dimension	Frequency	Percentage of "A"
Disability	1	1.06%
LGBT	8	8.51%
Sexual orientation	8	8.51%
Age	7	7.45%
Ethnicity	19	20.21%
Race	45	47.87%
Sex	6	6.38%
"A" Total	94	100.00%
"B" Dimension	Frequency	Percentage of "B"
Geographic Area	4	9.76%
Language	1	2.44%
Family	2	4.88%
Personal Values	6	14.63%
Education	4	9.76%
Religion	17	41.46%
Socioeconomic	7	17.07%
"B" Total	41	
"C" Dimension	Frequency	Percentage of "C"
History	2	100%
"C" Total	2	100%

Another area related to the theme of a myopic perception of culture concerns the content first of the focus group and then of the subsequent key informant interviews. During the focus group, participants discussed clients and topics related to the LGBT population and sexual orientation in different contexts. This distinction is relevant because there was a focus group member who identified as being a part of the LGBT population. During the focus group, topics

related to sexual orientation and identification of issues related to being a member of the LGBT population were mentioned 14 times, whereas only two mentions of the topics were made by one participant in the subsequent key informant interviews.

A final area worth noting in the theme of cultural perception myopia relates to the reported educational strategies and focus of the instructors. When describing the activities and the focus of the multicultural course, the participants of the investigation frequently described the focus of the education to be on the “A” dimension of personal counseling. Various racial and ethnic groups were discussed as the focus of counseling. Other references were made to language of the client, religion, and socioeconomic variables; however, race and ethnicity seemed to be salient throughout the focus group and in all the key informant interviews. Furthermore, one participant described the course instructor as “living in a black-and-white world.” The participant’s perception was that the instructor’s focus was purely on race and specifically on interactions between Caucasians and African Americans.

Implications

The lack of attention to the historical factors of cultural and ethnic minorities is a significant concern in the sample. Constantine (2007) found that the historical factors of clients, particularly those who are members of cultural and ethnic minority groups, have a significant impact on their expectations and feelings about a particular group. If the counselor is a member of that group, the historical factors and relationships may be recreated through enactments during the counseling sessions. This lack of recognition of historical factors could lead to colorblindness on the part of the clinician. This in turn, can lead to microaggressions, blaming the victim, and what Constantine termed “dysfunctional helping,” whereby a clinician offers clinically contraindicated help in order to avoid the perception of racism.

Dysfunctional helping demonstrated by therapists as they attempt to avoid client concerns over racism was evident during the key informant interview with Participant #9. Throughout the interview, Participant #9 referred to his feelings of anger and frustration over comments he perceived as racist made by his coworkers and also the clients. He addressed his feelings of concern that he would be perceived as racist; subsequently, he used self-deprecating remarks and “cracker” jokes as a way to bond with clients. During the interview, he appeared to come to the realization that his approach may, in fact, have been detrimental to the therapeutic alliance he was trying to create by minimizing the significance of the historical traumas that may have been endured. In fact, directly addressing the historical impact of racism and cultural oppression may have been a more appropriate intervention and more effective at building therapeutic rapport, as was noted by Vasquez (2010). In addition, Constantine (2008) noted in a study that at times, African American clients wanted to have discussions related to culturally sensitive topics as a way to assess their counselor’s willingness to engage in racial issues and their ability to do so in a knowledgeable and skillful manner. According to Chang and Berk (2009), White counselors’ fear of being thought of as prejudiced by cultural and ethnic minority clients can lead to therapists’ ignoring the relevance and importance of culture within the dyad. Conversely, it may lead therapists to have a hyper focus on cultural issues when they may, in fact, not be clinically relevant.

The myopic focus on race, ethnicity, and religion demonstrated during this investigation closely mirrored the findings of Green et al. (2009) in their investigation of the experiences of clinical psychology graduate students who were discussing their perception of diversity. Green et al. found that their sample focused primarily on race, ethnicity, and culture. The researchers also noted that the areas of focus for the participants tended to coincide with the cultural groups with

whom the respondents had the most contact. The presence of a group member identifying as belonging to the LGBT population may provide a plausible rationale for the fairly frequent mention of LGBT and sexual orientation concerns during the focus group and the relative lack of such recognition in subsequent key informant interviews. Even though the focus group acknowledged the LGBT population in their discussions, it was clear that they did not feel skilled in addressing the needs of the population. For example, when Participant #1 discussed feeling ill-prepared to work with or even address a client who is transgendered, she referred to the client as “it” as opposed to “her.” This type of microaggression can have significant negative effects on clients who are transgendered.

The focus on groups where there is increased intercultural contact also has relevance to Theme #3, program-level diversity. Green et al. (2009) noted that participant ratings of the importance of direct intercultural contact were higher than for interactions that were indirect, such as lecture or research. The literature suggests that programs that have limited diversity within their staff and student groups do not offer the same opportunities for experiential learning through direct contact. A variety of factors may be responsible for the limited contact of those in the majority population with those in cultural and ethnic minority populations, and without direct contact, those factors may be replicated and reinforced in the counseling program. Increasing the diversity on multiple program levels will increase opportunities for direct intercultural contact experiences.

Summary of Themes

The literature demonstrates the continued struggle of counselor education programs to provide a quality education to counselor trainees, particularly in the area of multicultural counselor education. Throughout the course of this investigation, which sought to explore

graduate students' perception of the aspects of a CACREP approved counseling program that will assist in the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills, seven themes related to multicultural counseling and counselor development became evident. This section summarizes the themes that emerged and discusses their interconnectedness.

Consistently throughout the investigation, participants reported not having the multicultural counseling skills necessary to work with culturally and ethnically diverse populations, despite having multicultural knowledge and awareness. This central theme is strongly supported in the current body of literature (Hill, Vereen, McNeal, & Stotesbury, 2013). Smith et al. (2006) noted in their meta-analysis that there is a “disquieting lack of evidence that the many paths taken by instructors lead directly to skillful multicultural practice in clinical settings” (p. 133). This lack of skill development can be overlooked and not recognized owing to the proliferation of multicultural counseling assessments that are based on counselor self-reports, which are often subject to social desirability (Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Dunn, Smith, & Montoya, 2006; Smith et al., 2006). Cartwright, Daniels, and Zhang (2008) found a discrepancy in the self-reported multicultural competence of counselor trainees and the observer reports of their cultural competence, with the observer ratings being significant. Each of the participants, having successfully completed the multicultural counseling course, should be able to identify and demonstrate specific skills that were learned during the course, yet were not able to do so. The absence of effective objective evaluations during or at the completion of a multicultural counseling course leaves the assumption that adequate skills have been developed.

One of the goals of CACREP accreditation is to provide consistent expectations for the education of counselor trainees across counselor education programs. CACREP developed the Student Learning Outcomes as part of the standardization process to identify specific,

competency-based outcomes for courses. Participants reported that during their multicultural counseling course experiences, there was little focus on the SLOs during the first class of the semester and no mention of them afterwards. Skill-based competencies are addressed in the SLOs, providing a roadmap for designing a course to promote the development of multicultural counseling skills. To date, there have been no standardized assessments with the expressed goal of measuring the CACREP SLOs. In essence, instructors are expected to develop and teach courses in a way that promotes attainment of the SLOs, and students are expected to learn specific skills; yet there are no assessments to measure the efficacy of the current situation, and there is no consensus on the most effective way to teach counselor education trainees to function in a culturally competent manner (Barden & Cashwell, 2013).

The instructor was seen as an important aspect of the multicultural course experience. The instructor provided a space for counselors to explore their feelings and perceptions as they participated in the multicultural counseling course. An atmosphere of openness, exploration, and reassessment of values was created. The instructor also designed a course that included experiential learning activities and subsequent exploration of those activities. The experiential learning activities were reported to be the most beneficial for the development of multicultural counseling skills by the participants, although the participants subsequently reported that few skills were actually acquired. It became apparent as the data collection continued that the participants were confusing the development of multicultural knowledge and awareness with skill development.

The participants in this investigation supported previous research indicating that counselor trainees who are not from cultural and ethnic minority groups are more likely to focus on the aspects of culture related to race and ethnicity (Green et al., 2009). Although it is not a

variable that was investigated through the course of this study, the research also suggests that cultural and ethnic minority students may have a higher level of cultural competence prior to the initiation of a multicultural counseling course. Thus, they may require a deeper, more specific type of training to have the same effect of acquiring new knowledge that Caucasian students acquire (Chao et al., 2011). Consistently, the participants focused on the “A” and “B” dimensions of personal identity, almost to the complete exclusion of the “C” dimension. Race, ethnicity, and religion were areas that received the greatest attention and yielded the most significant number of data points. Study participants failed to identify the effects of multiple minority identities, and while they expressed an understanding of the broad areas of culture, they tended to have a constricted view of cultural variables when discussing their experiences in practicum and internship.

The cultural makeup of the faculty and the student body were reported to be a significant factor in the participants. There was a general consensus that the faculty and student diversity was minimal. As noted previously, aside from the sex of the faculty, the only other descriptors that were given were related to their racial identity. In the focus group, one member was identified by sexual orientation and all others by race and gender. Chao et al. (2011) noted that cultural and ethnic minority students typically have more experience of intercultural contact and are thus able to share the information during courses. This theme is particularly problematic for the field of counselor education; as Shin, Smith, Goodrich, and LaRosa (2011) noted, “The lack of scholarship exploring levels of diversity among CACREP-accredited master’s programs goes hand in hand in with the absence of literature identifying effective recruitment and retention strategies for students from under-represented groups” (p. 114).

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative inquiry was based on the participation of nine students who were enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor education program and who were also completing the required internship program at the time of recruitment and data collection. The participants were selected from two private universities in a similar geographic area. The participants were recruited from a relatively small population. The parameters for participation in the investigation, specifically needing at least 300 hours of supervised internship, was a limiting factor for potential subjects. Participants averaged 525.6 hours of completed internship and 5.9 years of experience working in a counseling related field. Recruitment of participants was also hampered by not only the number of hours of supervised internship, but also by the proximity to the National Counselor Exam, comprehensive examinations, and the end of the semester. Candidates declined participation because they reported being too busy with the aforementioned tasks, and three students who did participate in the focus group declined a key informant interview for the same reasons.

The makeup of the focus group highlights a potential limitation of this investigation. The focus group consisted of all women, all of whom were enrolled in the same university and were members of the same cohort. The homogeneity of the population and the relatively small sample size preclude the results from being generalizable to the larger population of students enrolled in CACREP accredited counselor education programs. Another limitation of the investigation is the fact that eight of the nine participants were enrolled in the same classes throughout their educational experience and were subject to the same teaching strategies, course design, and instructors. Furthermore, the participants of the focus group had one primary instructor throughout the course of their educational experience owing to the location of their campus and

the design of the program. The information gleaned during the focus group may have been biased owing to the cohort model. Members may have discussed or avoided topics because a member of a particular cultural or ethnic group may have been represented. Participants of the focus group also shared positive feelings towards the facilitator of the multicultural course, which may have led to a positive bias concerning her perceived effectiveness.

Out of the nine participants in the investigation, eight self-identified as Caucasian. Only one male participant was represented in the investigation. The lack of diversity in the sample raised concern as a potential limitation for the investigation, however the consistency of the results across the study participants reaffirms the appropriateness of the sample demographics. The same procedures in the protocol were not used for the participant who was not a member of the focus group. He was included in the investigation after efforts to recruit enough participants for a focus group at his university were unsuccessful owing to a small population size.

I may have been a limitation in this investigation based on my presuppositions, my past experiences of taking multicultural courses, my experiences teaching multicultural courses, and potential biases during data collection and data analysis. My research has been guided by my own beliefs on the effectiveness of multicultural counseling courses, in which I have taught in a manner that is likely to result in skill development. My beliefs may have influenced the investigation; however, I actively attempted to mitigate potential researcher bias through the use of a reflexive journal. I consulted frequently with my committee chair and reviewed researcher expectations frequently. The fact that I have a minority identity may have been a limitation in this investigation. Participants may have felt the need to demonstrate to me that they are cognizant of the results of race and oppression, particularly related to the experiences of African Americans. The participants may have had concerns that I would share information with the

faculty member responsible for teaching the multicultural course or other members of the graduate counseling program. Though I stressed the importance and guarantee of confidentiality, the concern may have remained in the participants.

Recommendations for Increasing the Multicultural Skill Efficacy of Students in CACREP Accredited Counseling Programs

This qualitative investigation has sufficiently explored the perceptions of graduate students enrolled in a CACREP accredited master's counseling program related to their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. As discussed in the previous section, along with the several themes that emerged relating to their experiences in the master's program, several shortcomings in the current educational process were also unearthed. The issues elucidated in this investigation can be separated into two distinct yet related thematic content areas: multicultural educational pedagogy and outcome based assessment. This section discusses recommendations for addressing the thematic content areas present in the educational processes at the universities represented in this investigation.

Outcome-Based Assessment

The movement of counselor education preparatory programs to become accredited is frequently seen as a positive change because it sets a standard for programs, thus ensuring that counselors are properly trained to function effectively when providing counseling services. Volkwein et al. (2007) stated that whereas there is a "growing consensus that student learning outcomes are the ultimate test of the quality of academic programs, accreditors have also refocused their criteria, reducing the emphasis on quantitative measures of inputs and resources and requiring judgments of educational effectiveness from measureable outcomes" (p. 252). This shift in dynamic leaves an uneasy question for counseling programs and their faculty:

specifically, to determine an operational definition for assessments and to determine the specific indicators that demonstrate the learning that has taken place (Urofsky & Bobby, 2012). Central to the concept of assessment is identifying the constructs to be measured, which, for the scope of this investigation and discussion, are the multicultural counseling competencies. CACREP requires programs to measure competencies through the SLOs; however, it is the educational entities that determine how the SLOs are measured. I would be remiss if I did not provide the following operational definition for the term *competencies*: “Competencies are sets of skills, dispositions, and behaviors that support counselors in providing ethical and effective services to all clients” (Swank & Lambie, 2012, p. 116).

There is currently a dearth of research and few guidelines for appropriately measuring the attainment of counseling competencies, and this gap is a significant contributing factor to inaccurate assessments with poor reliability and validity (Swank & Lambie, 2012). The creation of formalized assessment procedures that are psychometrically rooted is crucial if the profession is to rectify the current state of inadequate, inconsistent, and ineffective assessment of the SLOs. To date, only one assessment has been designed to measure outcome-based efficacy. The development of accurate assessments requires an emphasis on research with the implicit goal of filling the void of multicultural outcome-based research. Swank and Lambie (2012) advocate for counselor educators to discuss explicitly the expectations for attainment of the multicultural counseling competencies followed by providing feedback that is both formative and summative as the students progress through the course. They argue that this process will give a shared responsibility for monitoring and remediation when necessary.

Many of the current assessment techniques are based on self-reports from students who have not had any direct observational reports of their ability to work with a diverse group of

individuals and demonstrate culturally appropriate and responsive counseling skills (Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Moreno, 2007). They argue that research demonstrates the lack of consistency between self-reports of multicultural counseling skills and observer reports of therapist skills. Performance based, contextualized assessments that are individual to specific settings are ideal if the counseling profession is to assess the attainment of counseling competencies in a psychometrically valid manner.

The creation of effective psychometrically based assessments for counselor education programs would begin to alleviate the issues previously discussed relating to evaluation. There must be a collective push by institutions of higher learning, counselor education departments, educators, and accrediting bodies to encourage and emphasize research related to measuring multicultural counseling competency. Collaborative research methods ensure that all parties' interests are taken into account and that the resulting research encompasses the totality of expectations across varying systemic levels. It provides a converging goal of matriculating counselor education students into the field of professional counseling who are capable of serving effectively an increasingly diverse population. In effect, it creates clear expectations and shares the responsibility of gatekeeping for the profession across all parties.

Multicultural Counselor Education Pedagogy

It is virtually impossible to discuss improving the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills in CACREP accredited counseling programs without the inclusion of significant pedagogical changes to long-held educational strategies that are less than effective, at best, in teaching master's counseling trainees multicultural skills. Current educational trends in counselor education programs are still based on lecture driven, banking education principles (Freire, 2001). Making the conscious shift from the current educational pedagogy to strategies

that employ critical pedagogy is a philosophical and educational decision that has grave implications for the profession of counseling. Demographic trends within the United States provide sufficient and compelling evidence for the profession to work fervently in closing the gap between counselor education students' proficiency in the acquisition of multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and the failure of counseling students to attain multicultural counseling skills. The pedagogical shifts required for counselor education programs to transfer effectively multicultural counseling skills can be framed under three overarching themes, the need for empirical research, increasing intercultural contact within the program, and a revising policies and practices to meet the needs of the profession.

Multicultural Counseling Competency Based Research

The rates at which graduates of counseling programs report feeling as though they are unprepared and trained to effectively work with diverse populations (Barden & Cashwell, 2013) should raise alarms for the counseling profession. There is a dearth of literature that reflects effective teaching strategies aimed at developing culturally competent counselors (Barden & Cashwell, 2013; Hanna & Cardona, 2013). Worthington, Soth-McNett, and Moreno (2007) found that research related to the multicultural counseling competencies increased over a 20-year span between 1985 and 2005, spiking between 1998 and 2001, and then dropping between 2002 and 2005. While on the surface, the increase in research during the time period studied appears to be a strength of the profession, the underlying problems are a far greater concern. During the period explored, one researcher, Madonna Constantine, is responsible for nearly 25% of all the research in the area of multicultural counseling competency development that was considered to be empirical. Worthington et al. also report that 10 researchers were responsible for 72% of the empirical research. In sum, few people are leading the field in conducting empirical research.

Further compounding the issues surrounding empirical research is the relative lack of research of the MCCs based on objective assessment. The majority of research has been based on self-reports, which have consistently been found to be influenced by social desirability.

The distinction of empirical research is critical to the discussion of research trends. A review of content from a peer reviewed counseling journal over a 10-year period yielded the finding that a paltry 17% of the empirical research conducted was related to multicultural counseling training and education (Arredondo, Rosen, Rice, Perez, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005). While not specifically related to competencies, the review of multicultural research revealed that only 47% of the publications were based in quantitative or qualitative empirically based research. The majority of the body of literature was theoretically based. This theory-research gap parallels the disparity between the multicultural knowledge and awareness acquisition of counseling students and their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills.

The counseling profession must begin to substantiate its effectiveness through legitimate empirical research. The scant empirical research available hinders the profession from demonstrating its efficacy. Arredondo et al. (2005) noted in their review of literature “the concept of multicultural competencies was often advocated without a definition for the concept” (p. 158). Parallel to the struggle that counselor education programs have encountered in measuring students’ competency related to multicultural counseling competence, researchers have struggled with identifying consistent and equivalent concepts. Comparing the scant existing outcome-based research is wrought with this error of equivalence. The counseling profession must first develop a singular operational definition of cultural competence under which research can be framed. Hanna and Cardona (2013) stated,

It would seem that the counseling field has reached the point where multicultural and diversity counseling is indispensable in establishing therapeutic working relationships with diverse clients. Perhaps the next step may be along the lines of developing appropriate and corresponding counseling techniques that, in consonance with the relationship, counter the psychological effects of oppression in the form of racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia, among other forms of intolerance. (p. 349)

It is essential for multicultural counseling research to move away from the focus on self-reports by students, faculty, and professionals. Objective measures need to be created and empirically tested. The development of observer based ratings scales and assessments that are less affected by social desirability are necessary for the accurate measurement of multicultural counseling competence. Furthermore, the counseling field as a whole must engage true multicultural competence based empirical research. The efficacy of counseling is the responsibility of all professional counselors and counselor educators, and all share the burden of legitimizing the profession.

Increasing Intercultural Contact

The concept of intercultural contact has been present in the literature since Allport's seminal work in 1979. His concepts of intercultural contact as a way to reduce racism and increase learning are widely accepted throughout multiple disciplines, including professional counseling. Norman (2012) outlines five specific measures that must be in place for intercultural contact to be effective in learning in any given context: (a) have equal status among group members, (b) create meaningful personal encounters, (c) involve interdependence and cooperation to reach common goals, (d) disconfirm prevailing stereotyped beliefs, and (e) demonstrate normative support for group equality (p. 6). Students have reported feeling as

though they are not able to integrate the knowledge acquired throughout the educational experience as a hindering factor, whereas they have identified the experiential components of their education to be the most helpful (Barden & Cashwell, 2013). Multicultural counselor education programs have the opportunity to provide multiple and varied contexts in which counselor trainees have the opportunity to engage in intercultural contact and to carry out the experiential learning activities necessary to increase their multicultural counseling skills.

A primary concern that has not thoroughly been addressed in the counselor education research and which was replicated throughout the course of this study was the absence of diversity in the counseling program. Shin et al. (2011) expressed concern that there has been a lack of focus in the literature about CACREP accredited programs' inclusion of culturally diverse students, despite the knowledge that the changing demographic within the United States suggests that cultural representation is becoming increasingly relevant. At the time of their article, the researchers were not able to find a single scholarly article related to representation data for culturally and ethnically diverse students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs. Not surprisingly, there is also a lack of data discussing the issues of recruitment, retention, and graduation. The authors describe the lack of research not only with racially diverse students, but also for those with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ populations, both of whom have been shown to encounter significant bias and prejudice. Increasing the presence of cultural and ethnically diverse populations increases the opportunity for intercultural contact within all of the courses during the program.

Recognized as an essential component in the process of counselor education, experiential activities are a central component in the practicum and internship experience woven throughout the curriculum, being present frequently in multicultural counseling courses. Cultural immersion

experiences are considered to have the capability of providing significant opportunities for personal and professional growth due to the in vivo contact with diverse cultures (Barden & Cashwell, 2013). Though contact is important, the type, duration, extent, and frequency are all critical factors in enhancing the effect. Furthermore, the level of cultural dissonance is defined as “an uncomfortable sense of discord, disharmony, confusion, or conflict experienced by people in the midst of change in their cultural environment” (p. 290). In essence, the more a person is uncomfortable in the environment with dissimilar others, the more opportunity is available for personal and professional growth.

In this investigation, it was found the students had been required to engage in a singular immersion experience. A multicultural counseling course design that includes a singular immersion experience may not be sufficient in providing the desired effect of change through intercultural contact. CACREP accredited counselor education programs may be well served by increasing the frequency and duration of immersion experiences. The processing of such experiences is also integral to any discussion of the immersion experience’s ability to create an opportunity for growth. Students should be given the opportunity to process such experiences with their class or group in order to receive feedback, have personal reflection, and challenge inaccurate assumptions and beliefs (Barden & Cashwell, 2013). The challenge for instructors is to strike a balance in providing a safe atmosphere for students to explore their experiences, and allowing classmates to provide genuine and authentic feedback that may challenge stereotypes, biases, or faulty assumptions on behalf of the student. Such implies, however, that the group facilitator or instructor has the requisite multicultural competencies to support and address cultural conflicts, which cannot be guaranteed, based on the numerous studies challenging the accuracy of self-efficacy and the paucity of research measuring multicultural skill acquisition.

The last area of concern and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of CACREP accredited counselor education programs parallel the recursive and iterative nature of this qualitative investigation. In this section, the topics of research, diversity of students, and specific course strategies to increase intercultural contact are discussed. Some of these topics have been discussed and researched at length, and have at times been used to affect course design and implementation. However, many researchers, institutions, and instructors designing courses have neglected to design and implement multicultural course content and strategies for the culturally diverse. In essence, multicultural counselor education is created predominantly for White students in the majority population to learn how to work effectively with those who are not in the White majority. The profession of counseling and counselor preparatory programs has largely neglected to meet the needs of cultural and ethnic minorities as they prepare to work with a diverse cultural group, including the White majority (Dickson, Argus-Calvo, & Tafoya, 2010; Chao et al., 2011; Seward, 2014). The counselor education programs have inadvertently marginalized cultural and ethnic minorities.

Little research has been done to create effective pedagogical strategies for increasing the multicultural counseling competency of cultural and ethnic minority clients (Chao et al, 2011; Seward, 2014). Educational strategies have been based largely on concepts of talking, sharing, and unfortunately, at times, singling out cultural and ethnic minority students “as primary objects for study rather than potential consumers of knowledge” (Seward, 2014, p. 70). Culturally and ethnically diverse students often report feeling isolated as they progress through their educational experience at predominantly White institutions. The scant research that has been done related to the experiences of the non-majority populations has demonstrated differences in the educational needs of students. Studies have demonstrated that for cultural and ethnic minority students,

didactic and experiential material was more beneficial, whereas for White students, intercultural contact was most effective (Coleman, 2006).

Research focused on the multicultural counseling educational needs of cultural and ethnic minority counselor education students must be included in the future body of literature. As the demographic within the United States changes, it is reasonable to expect that the population of students enrolled graduate counselor education programs will continue to change and reflect the larger population (Dickson et al., 2010). In order to avoid recreating the structures of institutional White privilege and the marginalization of cultural and ethnical minority students, the profession should view the needs of counselor educational students from a true multicultural perspective. Research including and specific to the training needs of cultural and ethnic minorities is the primary step. The resulting literature can be used to inform educational strategies with the purpose of creating a counselor education pedagogy that is responsive to the needs of all students. This pedagogy must include multicultural educational strategies and opportunities for intercultural contact and learning for those not representative of the majority population as well as for those in the majority. Finally, the literature must inform the creation of assessments to measure accurately the multicultural competence of students in CACREP accredited counselor education programs.

Policy Changes to Meet the Needs of the Profession

Since CACREP's beginning in 1981, the organization has influenced the counseling profession by establishing a consistent and standardized set of expectations and requirements for counseling programs across the United States. As the foremost professional organization for counselors, CACREP has the ability to influence the educational standards and therefore the manner in which counseling is conducted in successive generations of counselors.

Largely absent in this investigation, the attention paid to students and faculty in accredited programs requires attention from CACREP. While CACREP has specific requirements for recruitment and retention of culturally and ethnically diverse faculty and students, they have no such requirements for reporting that data. CACREP has the ability to elevate the importance and relevance of monitoring the diversity of the faculty and students by mandating that all accredited programs track outcomes including dropout rates, program completion time, and program completion rate. CACREP also may influence the programs by requiring all accredited programs to report specific data.

A report from CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2014) cites statistics that on the surface seem to provide supporting evidence of adequate levels of diversity within CACREP accredited counseling programs, but in fact highlight the inherent concerns expressed throughout this investigation. According to their Vital Statistic Survey, CACREP reports that 13.46% of the full time faculty members in CACREP accredited programs were African American, 74.64% were Caucasian, 4.72% were Hispanic or Latino, 3.38% were Asian American, and approximately 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan. The survey extends to report the demographics of the graduate and doctoral students that were enrolled in CACREP accredited programs as well. The survey reported that 20.74% of the students were African American, 1.79% of the students were Asian American, 60.43% of the students were Caucasian, 7.69% reported being Hispanic or Latino, and 1.80% of the respondents reported being Multiracial with no specific identifiers of cultures represented.

While the statistics cited by CACREP seem to provide evidence of consistency with the demographic makeup of the United States, it is not clear that all CACREP accredited programs keep accurate data or effectively track the demographics of the full-time faculty and students. In

the report, CACREP noted, “Some programs were unable to provide faculty racial/ethnic demographic information (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2014, p. 7).” This was consistent for the student demographics as well with over 17% of programs unable to provide data. Particularly troubling is the abysmal rate, 49.66%, of programs that were unable to provide demographic data on students with disabilities. The data that was able to be collected demonstrated a glaring lack of representation of students with disabilities with a rate of enrollment in CACREP accredited programs of 2.99%. Compared with the average rate of disability being 18.7% according to published statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), it appears that the required “systematic efforts to attract, enroll and retain a diverse student body (Council for, 2014, p. 6)” have been largely ignored or ineffective for students with disabilities.

CACREP appears to have overlooked a vital assumption that is made of doctoral students and counselor educators, the assumption that students and faculty in counselor education programs have the knowledge and skills to teach others. The CACREP Standards related to doctoral students and the area of teaching require students to know “instructional theory and methods relevant to counselor education (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009, p. 55),” yet there is no requirement for a course in basic teaching concepts or instructional design. The standards set an expectation for future counselor educators to be effective instructors, however the support and educational requirements needed to achieve the standard are not present. Without the proper knowledge and skills of instructional design, counselor educators are forced to rely on self-learning or replicating what they found to be effective in their own personal educational histories. This carbon copy approach has inherent drawbacks, the foremost being replicating instructional strategies, which may not be effective or

even worse may be counterproductive, from counselor educators having little to no training in instructional design themselves. CACREP has established core courses for master's level courses and would be well suited to replicate the process of establishing core courses for doctoral students.

Future Research Considerations

As Berg (2007) noted, through the course of discussing research findings, inadequacies or other issues may arise and warrant further discussion. Throughout the course of collecting and analyzing the data, the participants asked questions and made comments about the subject matter presented, and the results of the analysis at times prompted more questions. A distinct feature of qualitative inquiry is that it has the opportunity to describe a person's experiences; it also has the ability to identify what was missing from a person's experience. This section addresses a number of questions that emerged as a result of this qualitative investigation.

- How do the experiences of cultural and ethnic minority students differ when the multicultural counseling course facilitator is of the cultural or ethnic group?
- How do the experiences of students who are members of the majority group differ when the multicultural course facilitator is a member of a cultural or ethnic minority group?
- Is there an effect on the observed cultural competence of counselor trainees based on their cultural and ethnic identity?
- What is the optimal amount of time needed in immersion experiences to yield positive results in the acquisition of multicultural counseling skill?
- What is the most accurate and inclusive definition for multicultural counseling competence?

- To what extent has the multicultural group course changed students' perceptions of cultural and ethnic minority clients?
- How does the pedagogical imprint of long held counseling theories inform the perceptions of counselors towards the importance of race as a biological factor?

Conclusions

Berg (2007) stated that methods of qualitative inquiry are “intricately intertwined with both the substance or the issues they explore and theories grounded in these two substantive issues. If social science is to sort the noodles from the soup, it must do so in a substantively meaningful manner” (p. 364). This qualitative investigation sought to explore graduate students' perceptions of the factors within a CACREP accredited counseling program that were helpful in their acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. The findings of this investigation demonstrate the participants' recognition that, in fact, few multicultural counseling skills were acquired as a result of their enrollment in a CACREP accredited counselor education program.

Nine participants were interviewed as part of this investigation. A focus group of eight participants was conducted as well as three key informant interviews. The data were reviewed, and the absence of new data points demonstrated saturation. Analysis of the data took place using existing and accepted methods of analysis. The investigation illustrated that the focus of multicultural counselor education is on awareness and knowledge. Seven themes emerged as a result of the data generated by the participants. The results showed a consistent pattern of participants' feeling ill prepared to work with culturally diverse clients and a consistent focus of participants on race, ethnicity, and religion. A lack of diversity in the staff and also in the student body was highlighted as a significant problem for students. The participants found the course

instructor to be a significant factor in their multicultural course experience. Ineffective assessment strategies and a lack of focus on the SLOs were present across the participants.

The results of this inquiry indicate that the current methods of instruction are not meeting the needs of students enrolled in counselor programs; consequently, future counselors may not effectively be able to meet the needs of a changing demographic. The implementation of effective strategies to teach multicultural counseling skills is essential if the profession of counseling is going to be able to meet the needs of the population at large. The need for changes in the current multicultural counselor education pedagogy is apparent as the needs of the students, cultural and ethnic minorities, and members in the majority group are yet unmet.

The profession of counseling is dedicated to providing services to a diverse group of clients in a culturally responsive, ethical, and competent manner. The current state of the counseling profession, combined with the demographic changes on the horizon in the United States, represents a unique challenge for counselor educators. As the gatekeepers of the profession of counseling, counselor educators have a responsibility to ensure that students matriculating from counselor education programs are equipped and competent to provide services to diverse populations. The counseling profession has a history of responding to the needs of the population. Now that a need for more effective skill-based multicultural training has been identified, future success is contingent upon the profession's willingness to respond and address the glaring issues.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Discuss your understanding of multicultural counseling.
 - a. Discuss what factors you find to be most important in determining culture.
 - b. How were the student learning outcomes presented to you as part of the course?
 - c. Have the multicultural counseling competencies outlined by Sue et al. (1992) ever been presented to you as part of a course?
2. Discuss your comfort level with using multicultural counseling skills in actual therapy sessions with clients.
 - a. How do you define multicultural counseling skills?
 - b. Is your comfort level equal among various cultures? If not, explain.
 - i. Discuss the characteristics that are culturally similar or dissimilar that you find difficult to address.
 - c. How do you define your personal culture?
 - i. Do you find it difficult to work with other cultures?
3. Describe how important you feel multicultural counseling is to the counseling profession.
 - a. How would you describe your counseling program's attitude toward the importance of multicultural counseling?
 - b. How have the U.S. Census Bureau demographic projections for the United States over the next 40 years affected your view of multicultural counseling?

4. Describe any factors that helped you gain multicultural counseling skills during your time in the program.
 - a. Describe how important the multicultural counseling course was to your development of multicultural counseling skills
 - i. How did the course instructor assist you in gaining multicultural counseling skills?
 - ii. How would you describe your multicultural course instructor's culture?
 - iii. What activities during the course helped you gain multicultural counseling skills?
 - iv. Have you ever participated in immersion experiences? If so, explain.
 - b. Excluding the multicultural counseling course, describe how the program specifically addressed multicultural counseling skill development.
 - i. Describe how instructors applied multicultural counseling skills to other courses.
 - ii. Describe how you applied multicultural counseling skills to other courses.
5. Describe any factors you felt impeded your ability to gain multicultural counseling skills during your time in the program.
6. Explain how multicultural counseling skills were used during practicum or internship.
 - a. Did you have any clients whom you found to be culturally dissimilar?
 - b. How did your practicum or internship supervisor address cultural issues?

Appendix B



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Graduate Students' Perception of Curricular-Based
Efficacy of

Acquisition of Multicultural Counseling Skills

**INVESTIGATOR AND
ADVISOR:**

Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers
412-396-1871

Duquesne University
600 Forbes Avenue
Canevin Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR:

Demond E. Bledsoe
412-901-5083

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the department of Counseling, Psychology & Special Education at Duquesne University.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is not being funded by any outside source.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate your perceptions of counseling program attributes that assist with the development of your multicultural counseling skills. You will be asked to participate in a focus group (approximately one and one-half hours) along with other counseling students. The focus group will be audio recorded all responses will be transcribed

verbatim. In addition, you may be asked to allow me to interview you. The interviews will be taped and transcribed. The transcription will be sent to you and you will be asked to verify the accuracy of the information presented. The focus group and individual interviews will take place on the campus of Duquesne University.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There are no risks greater than those encountered in everyday life. Benefits of participating in this study include the opportunity to learn effective multicultural counseling skills and contributing to the body of professional knowledge in the field of multicultural counselor education.

COMPENSATION:

There will be no compensation for participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Participants will not be identified by name in the data or reporting of this investigation. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. Participants will each be assigned a numerical code that corresponds to the information given for identification purposes. Only the researcher will have access to the key that associates participants with the assigned number. All written materials and consent forms and keys will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. Any identifying information or content will be removed in the transcripts. Only the researcher will have access to the audio recordings. Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers, Principal Investigator, will review the final transcripts prior to submission to ensure confidentiality. Your response(s) will appear as either anonymous quotations or as aggregate data in the data analysis summary. Audio tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research; however, in accordance with the National Institute of Health Guidelines, the transcriptions will be kept for a period of up to five years prior to being destroyed.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call (Dr. Lisa Lopez Levers, Principal Investigator (412) 396-1872, Demond Bledsoe, Student Investigator (412) 901-5083, and Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412) 396-6326.

Participant's Signature _____ Date

Researcher's Signature _____ Date