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Counseling Diverse Adolescents and Adults

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Counseling Diverse Adolescents and Adults

Abstract

For many years, counseling professionals have tried to advance research in the knowledge and techniques essential to effective multicultural counseling. Despite such efforts, many counselors still have difficulty meeting the needs of ethnic minority clients (Sue & Zane, 1987). According to Stein (1997), many multicultural courses present only a broad view of multicultural concepts without adequately preparing practitioners to actually counsel diverse populations. The resulting confusion counselors experience in their relationships with minority clients may be one of the reasons that counseling is underutilized by many cultural groups. Brown (as cited in Marino, 1996) commented that African Americans generally terminate individual counseling after only one or two sessions. Sue and Zane (1987) reported a similar problem among Asian American populations. Likewise, group counseling, considered a practical and efficient treatment strategy, is either improperly conducted or poorly attended by minorities (Ho, 1992).

COUNSELING DIVERSE ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

A Research Paper

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by

Nicole Needham Wee

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For many years, counseling professionals have tried to advance research in the knowledge and techniques essential to effective multicultural counseling. Despite such efforts, many counselors still have difficulty meeting the needs of ethnic minority clients (Sue & Zane, 1987). According to Stein (1997), many multicultural courses present only a broad view of multicultural concepts without adequately preparing practitioners to actually counsel diverse populations. The resulting confusion counselors experience in their relationships with minority clients may be one of the reasons that counseling is underutilized by many cultural groups. Brown (as cited in Marino, 1996) commented that African Americans generally terminate individual counseling after only one or two sessions. Sue and Zane (1987) reported a similar problem among Asian American populations. Likewise, group counseling, considered a practical and efficient treatment strategy, is either improperly conducted or poorly attended by minorities (Ho, 1992).

It is becoming increasingly important for counselors to be able to effectively counsel minority clients. Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) reported that immigration patterns and high birth rates among minorities will contribute to a major change in the demographics of the United States. By the year 2020, the majority of the nation's youth will be of minority status (Lee, 1996). Lyles, Kayser, Lane, and Bower (cited in Marino, 1996) listed a number of reasons why non-Caucasians do not seek help from counselors. They included previous negative experiences in counseling, distrust of counselors, and the belief that they are not understood by counselors. Sue and Zane (1987) believed the main explanation for high rates of dropout among ethnic clients is the inability of counselors to provide culturally responsive treatments. It is evident the profession

needs to make great changes if such clients are to find the counseling experience beneficial.

Clearly, there is a need for counselors to improve their individual and group counseling skills for their work with diverse populations. Ethically, counselors are required to provide services to all. However, they are not to practice outside their areas of expertise. This creates a bind for many counselors faced with culturally distinct clients. Even those counselors who have received training often do not feel competent enough to work with such a wide range of diverse clients (Stein, 1997). Consequently, counselors need better methods to conceptualize multiethnic clients and treat them effectively. In this paper, the author will attempt to answer the following questions: (a) How can counselors conceptualize their multicultural clients in a way that best addresses client individuality within cultural group membership? (b) What strategies can counselors implement in individual and group counseling?

In this paper, the conceptual frameworks and techniques for individual and group counseling will be examined for adolescent and adult populations. First, many researchers seem to indicate that counselors should utilize a conceptual framework for assessing the cultural influences acting upon their clients. Second, cultural norms and values greatly affect the counseling process. Third, counselors must adapt theories and techniques if they are to effectively provide culturally congruent services to minority clients.

The author will begin by describing conceptual models for multicultural counseling followed by perspectives on individual and group counseling. First, four transcultural models and one multicultural group model will be reviewed.

Next, there will be a discussion of the experiences and recommendations of multicultural counselors. Individual and group counseling will be explored separately, followed by practical applications.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

Prior to reviewing the literature, it is necessary to agree upon some common definitions relative to multicultural counseling. Whitfield (1994) presented a clear and comprehensive definition of multicultural counseling as "the effective counseling of persons or groups of persons who differ from the counselor, culturally, socioeconomically, ethnically, racially, sexually (including sexual orientation), religiously, ecologically, and educationally. This includes persons who are physically challenged" (p. 241). Some of the goals of multicultural group counseling include building positive cultural identities, enhancing biculturalism, and developing multicultural relationships and communication skills (Hurdle, 1991).

<u>Conceptual Models</u>

As mentioned above, there is much research supporting the need for multicultural counselors to utilize a conceptual model for conducting individual and group counseling with ethnic minorities. Chau (1992) stated that "multicultural application requires a model of group work that is culturally responsive to both the concerns of the larger society and those unique to racial and ethnic groups" (p. 13). The five multicultural models to be reviewed are intended to help counselors conceptualize multiethnic clients as individuals and members of a cultural group.

Hays (1996) described the ADDRESSING model as a transcultural-specific perspective for conceptualizing and organizing client cultural differences.

Hays viewed the model as particularly practical for raising counselor awareness of biases and inexperience. In addition, the ADDRESSING model enables counselors to better consider the multiple influences of various cultural conditions. These influences are: **A**ge, **D**isability, **R**eligion, **E**thnicity, **S**ocial Status, **S**exual orientation, **I**ndigenous heritage, **N**ational origin, and **G**ender. Since the ADDRESSING model covers almost every cultural variance, it eliminates the probability of missing one of the important aspects of client culture. However, Hays indicated that the ADDRESSING model is limited because it cannot determine the importance of one cultural factor over another. Despite such a limitation, the model is certainly a clear and easy way to consider the many cultural influences acting upon clients.

Ho (1992) also supported a transcultural framework toward conceptualizing client cultural factors. Ho, however, discussed these factors in relevance to children and adolescents and therefore considered the maturational processes and developmental levels of the minority client. He applied four main conceptual models to the minority youth. He considered Erikson's (cited in Ho, 1992) theory of psychosocial development to determine the developmental factors affecting minority youth. In addition, Ho found Norton's (cited in Ho, 1992) dual-cultural perspective useful to distinguish the major differences and value conflicts minority children must negotiate between their own cultures and the majority culture. The ethnic socialization process, referred to by Greeley et al. (1992) as racial identity development, addresses the degree to which adolescents are conscious of their own ethnic identity and how this knowledge affects their interactions with the majority culture and peers. Lastly, Ho looked to the ecological perspective of

Bronfenbrenner (cited in Ho, 1992). This perspective is something of a systems approach in which problems are viewed within a variety of contexts such as the individual, family, culture, and environment. Hence, change in one of these parts affects the whole and equifinality allows for varying interventions to produce the same outcome. Ho's interpretation of these models offers counselors a complete view of minority children of all ages that can be used for assessing the appropriateness of their participation in either individual or group counseling.

Coleman (1991) advocated the culture-as-context model for counseling multiethnic adolescents in individual settings. Cultural factors are considered the social context that either promotes or prevents client change. Counselors may meet with client resistance when their interventions require clients to act in ways that conflict with their cultural upbringing. Consequently, counselors using the culture-as-context model focus on presenting problems and resolve them to the satisfaction of the client. Throughout the process, counselors and clients work together to explore cultural resistance and develop culturally appropriate interventions. Coleman, however, conceded there may be risks in employing this model. One risk resides in the fact that the problem focus may be too individualistic and place too much responsibility on the individual. As a result, counselors may ignore the need for social change in resolving the problem.

Canino and Spurlock (1994) proposed a culturally sensitive therapeutic intervention model for adolescents based on Cervantes and Castro's application (cited in Canino & Spurlock, 1994) of stress theory to Mexican Americans. There are seven stages to this model. In the first stage, counselors identify adolescents' potential stressors. These can include level of acculturation, living conditions, or

parental dysfunction. In the second phase, counselors appraise the stressors to determine their effects on individuals. Next, counselors examine the internal and external mediators of stress. Internal mediators can be described as those factors that relate directly to the individual, such as locus of control or cognitive ability. External mediators can be defined as social or family influences. The fifth element of the model is the coping pattern of the individual. Short term and long term outcomes make up the final components of the model. At these final stages, counselors and clients explore the effectiveness of the coping strategies and work together to develop plans for better living. Canino and Spurlock's version of the model is helpful to counselors because it balances the focus on environmental factors with an emphasis on individual factors.

For a conceptual model more specific to groups, Chau (cited in Chau, 1992) identified a model of culture-competent group practice. This model defines the goals and interventions of four group competencies. They are:

1. Psychosocial Adaptation helps members meet their needs and move toward acculturation in their diverse environments.

2. Ethnic Conscientization raises awareness of ethnic identity and empowers members through their own resources.

3. Interethnic Integration advances better social relations among cultures, including the mainstream culture.

4. Ethnic Rights advocacy addresses issues of equality and opportunity.

Chau (1992) claimed that these competencies are responsive to the needs and concerns of ethnic minorities and remain important throughout the duration of the group.

Each of the models discussed can contribute something to counselors'
understanding of their clients. Conceptual models, when carefully considered and
understood, can give counselors direction for their work with clients. It should be
noted, though, that even the best models may oversimplify the process. Each client
requires a somewhat different model.

Perspectives in Multicultural Individual Counseling

In this section, the findings of various multicultural counselors will be
presented. Each author offers counselors a unique approach to use with culturally
different clients. Topics include relationship types, dissimilarity confrontation,
client validation, and individual versus group approaches.

Carter and Helms (1992) examined the influence of specific combinations
of counselor and client racial identity attitudes on the counseling process. In
previous writings, Helms (cited in Carter & Helms, 1992) outlined a model of the
types of counseling relationships that emerge as a result of counselor and client
levels of racial identity development. The types of relationships can be defined as
follows:

1) Parallel relationships refer to relationships in which counselor and client
are at similar stages of racial identity development and share a smooth relationship.

2) Progressive relationships can be defined as those relationships in which
the counselor is at least one stage ahead of the client in terms of racial identity
development. The relationship is generally considered positive.

3) Regressive relationships are often conflictual. Clients are at least one
level more advanced than the counselor in racial identity development.

4) Crossed relationships occur when counselors and clients are at opposite places in racial identity development. These relationships are highly conflictual.

In this study, Carter and Helms (1992) attempted to empirically determine the accuracy of Helms' relationship types and analyze positive and negative counselor intentions. They constructed their study by using a variety of assessments and research methods. Participants were volunteers at a cross-cultural learning conference for mental health workers. Subjects were placed in culturally different pairs for the purpose of creating a cross-cultural counseling relationship. All participants' racial identity attitudes were assessed using either the Racial Identity Attitude Scale or the White Racial Identity Attitudes Inventory. Therapist intentions and client reactions were measured with a self-report questionnaire. Also used were the Session Evaluation Questionnaire and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. The counseling interactions were videotaped and reviewed by participants.

Results of the study supported Helms' (1984) assumptions about client-counselor racial identity and relationship types. Some specific patterns of interaction were evident depending on the type of relationship. In parallel relationships, for instance, counselor intentions are more influential than client reactions. Especially helpful counselor intentions were providing support, instilling hope and focusing on change. However, client perceptions of counselor intentions became more important in progressive relationships. Clients responded more positively when the counselors focused directly on them by offering hope, pointing out maladaptive coping strategies, and facilitating change. Regressive relationships, on the other hand, were described as hostile in terms of counselor intentions and

client responses. The most common problem in this type of relationship occurred when counselors attempted to control clients' hostility and treat problems individually. The last type of relationship, crossed, was not found in this study due to a lack of available participants.

Carter and Helms (1992) offered some suggestions for counselors involved in cross-cultural counseling relationships. Counselors who are aware of their own racial identities can adapt their skills appropriately to work with clients who may be differ in racial identity attitude. For instance, counselors who find themselves in progressive relationships will want to focus more directly on clients by instilling hope and discussing coping strategies. Those counselors who are involved in parallel relationships, on the other hand, will want to instill hope as well as provide information and the opportunity to explore feelings. Carter and Helms did, however, caution readers to consider some methodological limitations. Given that participants were mental health workers seeking cross-cultural training,they may have been more culturally sensitive and motivated to change than other mental health counselors. Also, performance anxiety may have been a factor during the counseling component. The study does have its merits, though, in that a fairly large sample and proven measures of racial identity and session reports were used. In general, it would seem that this study is of consequence to the counseling profession.

Poston, Craine, and Atkinson (1991) analyzed a specific aspect of the counseling process in respect to multicultural counseling. In their study, they attempted to determine the impact of counselor dissimilarity confrontation on the level of trust and self-disclosure of Black clients. All 51 participants in the study

were using services at an African-American community center. The researchers, using a correlational design, asked participants to review one of four versions of a bogus letter of application from a White counselor applying to the center. Of the four versions, two letters indicated that the counselor would confront the issue of race with clients. In the other letters, the counselor would ignore the issue. Counselor gender differences accounted for the other letters. Once participants reviewed the letters, they were asked to complete three measures: the Cultural Mistrust Inventory, the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale, and the Self-Disclosure Scale.

Poston, Craine and Atkinson (1991) found a positive correlation between dissimilarity confrontation, willingness to self-disclose, and perceived counselor credibility. However, these factors were not described as statistically significant. The authors inferred from the findings that White counselors must do more than confront racial and ethnic differences if they are to build strong relationships with Black clients. In other words, counselors must employ other strategies if they are to provide positive and culturally appropriate counseling services.

Ishiyama and Westwood (1992) provided counselors with numerous multicultural counseling strategies within the context of their previous self-validation model. The model was developed for use with relatively new immigrants to the United States. However, its principles can be applied to any cultural situation in which there is loss and transition. Using this model, counselors explore five areas with clients. They are as follows: (a) security, comfort, and support, (b) self-worth and self-acceptance, (c) competence and autonomy, (d) identity and belonging, and (e) love, fulfillment, and meaning in life.

The role of the helper, according to Ishiyama and Westwood (1992), is to enable clients to feel understood and validated while learning coping skills. They recommended using a variety of strategies to accomplish this goal. One strategy is to encourage clients to use their native language to express themselves. Even though counselors may not speak the language, they can pick up on emotions and nonverbal cues that are otherwise hidden. Nonverbal activities such as showing photos, music, art, and games give counselors a different view of clients. Counselors also validate counselees by demonstrating a willingness to be a learner. Counselors who are open to trying new foods or learning new words show clients they are equally invested in the counseling process. In addition, counselors can support clients as they grieve changes, while helping them explore new activities that may or may not be related to the home culture. Throughout this process, counselors work to recognize client skills and strengths that can be used to enhance or adjust to the new environment. Counselors also need to learn about and work with clients' religious and spiritual beliefs. Ishiyama and Westwood give readers numerous clear and simple techniques for multicultural counseling that can be readily incorporated.

All of the articles on individual counseling strategies proved useful. The findings of Carter and Helms (1992) were especially significant. They indicated that counselor racial identity development is an important factor in the counseling process. Counselors who are aware of their own development and that of their clients can select interventions that will be more effective and culturally sensitive. Likewise, Poston, Craine, and Atkinson's (1991) research demonstrated the importance of counselor dissimilarity confrontation. Counselors learn from their

findings that it is necessary to use confrontation in conjunction with other techniques. Counselors can implement many of the techniques described in both articles. Ishiyama and Westwood (1992) concluded by providing readers several strategies for multicultural counseling that can be readily incorporated into practice. The above strategies give counselors a sound place to begin multicultural counseling with adolescents and adults.

Perspectives on Multicultural Group Counseling

The following multicultural counselors provide an applied look at multicultural group counseling. Todisco and Salomone (1991) contended that group approaches such as classroom and group counseling are among the more effective strategies for African Americans. The research reviewed here supports their contention and asserts that group counseling is also appropriate for other cultural groups (Bilides, 1991; Herring & Runion, 1994; Hurdle, 1991). In this section, the author explores how several counselors conducted groups with multicultural populations. Included is an Adlerian perspective and two articles on how multicultural issues affect the group process.

Herring and Runion (1994) explained how Adlerian psychology is particularly beneficial for work with minority youth. The Adlerian emphasis on social interest, cooperation, and the value of equality are quite compatible with the values and beliefs of many ethnic groups. Consequently, these concepts can also be easily applied to group counseling and discussions. Herring and Runion recommended using the Adlerian perspective in multicultural group settings.

In more detail, Hurdle (1991) discussed the effects of cultural diversity on certain group dynamics and described intervention strategies specific to group

work. Hurdle explained how three of Yalom's (cited in Hurdle, 1991) principles of group psychotherapy differ in a multicultural context. For the first principle, recapitulation of family of origin, members interact with the group similarly to how they might have interacted with their own families. However, many ethnic clients grow up in extended family settings, which changes the way they experience the group. To counter this, the leader should strive to gain a clear understanding of the background of ethnic members through discussion of family of origin issues to avoid misinterpreting members' interactions.

Group norms present another example in which the views of ethnic minorities may differ from those of White counselors. For instance, verbalization of thoughts and feelings and confrontation of conflict are in direct contrast to the norms of some cultural groups such as Asian American. Hurdle (1991) recommended bringing such opposing behavior patterns out in group to recognize confusion and misunderstanding. In so doing, it is hoped that members will become more comfortable with group interactions.

Lastly, groups evolve into a microcosm of society. Members interact with one another as they do in their own social settings. Unfortunately, in a heterogeneous group, this may include displays of discrimination and tension. In these cases, Hurdle (1991) suggested discussing biases and prejudice that influence the group. She also recommended that leaders model appropriate behavior and acceptance in the group.

In contrast, Bilides (1991) reported on the issues of race, color, ethnicity, and class in multicultural adolescent counseling groups and offered some strategies for counselors to better deal with such topics. Counselors must be able to

effectively handle such issues if they are to build a working group. The first issue, race, refers to how clients identify themselves according to skin color and other physical characteristics. In fact, members may subgroup according to race (Bilides, 1991). Racial imbalance is often cited as a reason for nonattendance for those members who are the only representatives of their racial groups. Color is another major factor. Members frequently place themselves in a hierarchy in which lighter skinned members are considered better than darker skinned members (Bilides, 1991). As a result, darker skinned members may be ignored. Sometimes these participants overcompensate by being loud and obnoxious. Varying views of ethnicity and origin among members also create tension. For example, Black and Latino groups subdivide on the issue of origin. American Blacks consider themselves different from foreign-born Blacks, as do Latinos. Sometimes, American Blacks even subdivide themselves between Northern and Southern origins. Class distinctions are mixed in with the issues of race, color and ethnicity. In some cases, lighter skinned members are viewed as occupying a higher social status than darker skinned members. Additionally, members who are on welfare are viewed as lower class. The issues of race, color, ethnicity and class can inhibit group cohesion and prevent members from working together productively.

Obviously, such a variety of tough issues challenges even the most adept group leader. Bilides (1991) offered these guidelines to improve facilitation of groups that are deeply affected by race, color, ethnicity and class:

1. Confront the issue to avoid the possibility of the group becoming a copy of every day problems.

2. Review group rules when difficulties, like racial slurs, arise. Then, explore the nature and reasoning behind the insult. Often, members are unaware of why they even choose to say what they do.

3. Discuss stereotypes and how specific comments can be generalized to an entire population.

4. Link commonalities between members. People are often more alike than different.

5. Explore the meanings of words and language. It provides an interesting and enlightening look at how what members choose to say is not always what they mean.

6. Group leaders should be comfortable and open with their own issues about race, ethnicity, and class.

It is evident from the articles reviewed that group counseling with diverse populations creates a unique challenge to practitioners. Hurdle's (1991) article demonstrated the potential variances in Yalom's principles of psychotherapeutic groups, specifically those related to recapitulation of family of origin, group norms, and social interactions. Bilides (1991), on the other hand, imparted to the reader a number of specific examples of how minority groups see each other and suggestions on how to better facilitate the group through similar problems. From exposure to different perspectives, it is hoped that readers will gain a better understanding of this complex process.

All of the works discussed in this section allowed readers to overview some of the many approaches to multicultural counseling. Despite the differences among them, these writers all agree that counseling culturally distinct clients requires

practitioners to adapt. The specifics of these adaptations will be the focus of the next segment.

<center>Practical Applications</center>

This section contains some of the practical techniques counselors can use to develop better relationships with multiethnic clients. Individual counseling strategies will first be discussed, since they can also be adapted to group work. Finally, the specifics of conducting multicultural groups will be addressed.

Individual Counseling Considerations

Counselors working with diverse populations have much to consider. In order to assist counselors in their efforts to reach a broader client range, some strategies for beginning individual counseling with multiethnic clients will be presented. Topics include credibility, communication styles, use of empathy and authority, goal setting and parental involvement.

Barriers to establishing a strong working alliance exist before counselors speak their first words to clients. According to Sue and Zane (1987), credibility refers to the minority client's perception of the counselor as effective and helpful. Counselors are assigned an ascribed credibility by minority clients' based on such factors as age, gender, and credentials. Ho (1992) recommended that counselors who may lack ascribed status inform minority clients of their expertise in counseling to increase their standing. Assuring clients of ascribed status is the first step toward gaining achieved status, or status based on the actions of the counselor at work.

Sue and Zane (1987) suggested that counselors can make up for deficits in ascribed status by building their achieved status. This can be accomplished in three

ways. First, the counselor can accurately conceptualize client problems. Second, the counselor can seek and implement effective strategies for problem resolution. Finally, the counselor must work with the client to set mutual goals.

Understandably, however, counselors may never reach goal formation if they are unable to adequately communicate with their clients. Communication style is a major factor in the success of the counseling process. Communication style refers to the wide range of verbal and nonverbal cues that occur between counselor and client. According to Sue and Sue (1990), nonverbal cues such as proxemics, kinesics, and paralanguage can send helpful or harmful messages to clients. Proxemics refers to the use of personal space in culture. White counselors who back away from clients who do not require much personal space may appear distant and aloof. Similarly, kinesics, or bodily movements, are culturally embedded. Because facial expressions and physical movements are used by counselors to "read" clients, multicultural counselors must have a working knowledge of the kinesics of different cultures. Lastly, paralanguage refers to vocal cues that are not necessarily expressed by words. Pauses, silences, inflections, and loudness are all examples of paralanguage. In the United States, where high levels of verbal expressiveness are the norm, majority counselors must be alert to these differences if they are to be successful. For instance, in cultures in which long pauses and silences are standard, majority group counselors could easily find themselves interrupting or filling up silences with needless conversation. Nonverbal and verbal cues used improperly by counselors can communicate bias, racism, or ignorance to minority clients.

Nonverbal communication comprises only part of the work of counselors. The manner in which counselors communicate with clients is affected by their chosen theory. There is evidence that most ethnic groups prefer more directive and systems-oriented approaches to counseling (Ho, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue & Zane, 1987). Consequently, counselors may need to avoid less directive theories because they rely on clients to be highly verbal. For example, insight-oriented theories can move too slowly and and become too personal for some ethnic group members (Canino & Spurlock, 1994; Ho, 1992). Also, counselors must focus on the problem within the context of family and society rather than the individual (Canino & Spurlock, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1990). To be consistent and convey the appropriate messages, counselors must adjust verbal and nonverbal communication styles and counseling approaches to better fit culturally distinct clients.

Counselors must also carefully define their roles with culturally distinct youth. Often, minority youth are required to attend counseling by an authority figure. However, counselors must be active in their efforts to portray a sense of caring and accurate empathy to their clients. It is important that the counselor be viewed as an adult figure who is actively working with the client. This may require counselors to explain their roles and educate counselees about the process. (Canino & Spurlock, 1994; Ho, 1992)

Once roles have been defined, counselors can begin to formulate the goals. As mentioned by Sue and Zane (1987), it is critical that counselors set culturally appropriate goals. This can best be facilitated by involving the adolescent directly in the process (Paster as cited in Canino & Spurlock, 1994). It also helps if goals include the cultural trait of interdependence. Minority youth are more comfortable

if goals involve the family system. Since many minority parents distrust counselors, asking for their collaboration and informing them of counseling goals promotes positive counseling outcomes (Ho, 1992).

The individual counseling process with multicultural youth and adults requires counselors to adapt and be alert to many factors. First, counselors must establish ascribed status by informing clients of their credentials and experience. Next, counselors must counsel effectively to develop achieved status (Sue & Zane, 1987). This includes being aware of how their own culture affects communication style and how it impacts diverse clients. Additionally, counselors need to utilize counseling theories that are congruent with the values of their clients. This may mean involving the family in the process, especially as related to goal formation. Through these strategies, it is hoped that readers will be able to initiate positive counseling relationships with diverse populations.

Group Counseling Considerations

The research reviewed contained many suggestions and strategies of how to best conduct groups with special populations. It also provided insight into how to handle such problems as group composition and cohesion. This section brings together some of the more useful information from the literature review.

When forming a group for ethnic minorities, especially adolescents, there are many variables to consider. For instance, the group leader may question the value of ethnically homogeneous groups versus those that are heterogeneous. There are also concerns about techniques. Which ones are effective? Which ones are not? Here, the author attempts to give the prospective group leader some guidelines in how to conduct a multicultural group with adolescents.

In the planning stages of group, leaders may wonder about the effectiveness of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. They may even wonder about the utility of such groups at all. Ho (1992) stated that groups for ethnic minority youth are ideal for a variety of issues. Bilides (1991) conducted groups that dealt with decision making, values clarification, and cultural differences that lead to academic or social difficulties. For instance, groups for social problems enable adolescents to discuss assimilation issues or try out new behaviors that will allow them to move toward biculturalism. Group is also helpful for those who struggle with feelings of isolation.

The counselor who is considering running an ethnic cultural group for any of the above issues will want to look at the benefits of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Counselors ought to be equally familiar with the dynamics of both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups (Ho, 1992). For example, a group for enhancing racial identity would be homogeneous, while a group to combat prejudice would include members of different cultural backgrounds.

There are some benefits and limitations of homogeneous groups. Racially homogeneous groups may find it easier to negotiate ethnic identity issues (Greeley et al., 1992), but as Bilides (1991) indicated, there may still be problems related to intra-ethnic differences. However, homogeneous group members share common traditions and celebrations. Hurdle (1991) found it additive to incorporate aspects of these traditions into the group. Obviously, though, homogeneous groups will not have the opportunity to learn from other cultures.

Although heterogeneous groups may have some potential difficulties at the start, the benefits are many. Leaders may have to work harder at developing

cohesion, but members eventually learn from working with those who are different from them. Hurdle (1991) felt that members can enrich their own cultural diversity, while experiencing cultural practices different from their own. In addition, members become accustomed to interacting with others and can address their own biases. According to Ho (1991), members also benefit from the acquisition of problem-solving techniques of other members that may be new to them.

Once a counselor has decided to select either a homogeneous or heterogeneous group, careful attention must be given to the group composition. Obviously, those who will be aided by the group deserve first priority (Ho, 1991). Yet, the proportion of racial groups selected is very important. Bilides (1991) observed that sub-grouping among members is very common and that a lone member of a certain ethnic group will often drop out. According to Davis (cited in Greeley et al., 1992), Whites are more comfortable in heterogeneous groups when the proportion of Whites to African Americans is 70% to 30%. This can be potentially troubling because African Americans prefer a 50% to 50% proportion with Whites. To complicate matters, the group leader must also consider the personalities of the members. In some urban settings, there is a lot of acting out behavior, and it is necessary to make certain that the group does not contain too many of these personality types. Even if behavior of members is not boisterous, there are certain ethnic minority groups that are less verbal than others and could get easily drowned out (Ho, 1992). Asian Americans and Native Americans, for example, are generally more reserved than European Americans and African Americans. Sensitive counselors will need to provide them with opportunities to

speak if they are to be heard or place them in groups with several other members of their cultural group. Forming a heterogeneous group requires careful planning on the part of the counselor.

When designing the group, leaders should try to see that the goals and objectives appeal to minority members. Ho (1992) reported that minorities do not often seek help from mental health professionals due to a negative attitude toward mental illness. Instead, they rely on the family for support. Consequently, to gain the participation of minorities in group, it may be wise to contact the family to secure permission. Furthermore, it helps to form goals and purposes that do not imply personal failure or mental illness. These objectives should be reframed as a means to an end or something that is beyond the control of the individual. Also, goals should be brief and concrete so there will be a sense of immediate accomplishment and lack of ambiguity.

Once goals are established and members recruited, leaders must consider how their roles will be perceived by members. Minority clients often have different expectations of their leaders. In many cultures, the leader is viewed as a respected authority figure who should be fairly directive (Greeley et al., 1992; Ho, 1992). Greeley et al. stated that "the main tasks of the group leader are to increase group harmony by uniting coalitions and to create an atmosphere in which multicultural dialogue are not only tolerated, but encouraged" (p. 203-204). This may be accomplished through good communication skills, modeling, and directiveness. In addition, Ho (1992) asserted that multicultural counselors should act with confidence and let members know their qualifications and expertise. Sue and Zane

(1987) also discussed the importance of achieved and ascribed status as ways of portraying credibility to ethnic clients.

Along with understanding their roles in a multicultural group, leaders should possess the skills and knowledge necessary to adequately interpret client behavior and correctly respond to it (Hurdle, 1991). One of the first challenges for group leaders is facilitating conversation. For various reasons, distrust of the leader, language barriers, or the belief that it is rude to take center stage, minority clients may seem unwilling to participate at first (Ho, 1992). Greeley et al. (1992) suggested that the counselor implement a more structured approach with activities and exercises during the early stages to facilitate communication. Ho encouraged group leaders to invite members to speak while explaining the importance of discussion. As a last resort, the leader may want to look down which would eventually force members to speak. As a note of caution, the literature generally recommends using confrontive techniques sparingly. Outward confrontation can be taken as an insult or personal attack. Indirect or "gentle" confrontation may be more effective (Greeley et al., 1992; Ho, 1992).

Hopefully, some of these recommendations and suggestions will give the practitioner considering multicultural counseling some idea of the background and planning that go into conducting a multi-ethnic group. Although multicultural counseling is a new frontier for many practitioners, it is clear that the demand for it will increase and more counselors will need to be prepared. Obviously, knowledge of other cultures and techniques are only the first steps to effective multicultural group counseling.

Conclusion

As indicated by the evidence, a lot of planning and preparation are necessary for multicultural counseling. First, counselors should be able to apply conceptual models to their work with other cultures and groups. Second, they should have an understanding of how counseling is affected by multicultural factors. Lastly, counselors should be able to assimilate knowledge into more thoughtful work with ethnic minorities.

Counselors need training and background experience to effectively work with diverse populations. First, counselors must implement conceptual models of viewing clients that include cultural and developmental influences as well as intervention strategies (Canino & Spurlock, 1994; Chau, 1992; Coleman, 1991; Hays, 1996; Ho, 1992). In addition, counselors must have some knowledge of how relationship types and dissimilarity confrontation affect the tenor of the counseling process (Carter & Helms, 1992; Poston, Craine, & Atkinson, 1991). Also, counselors must be able to use specific strategies for validating communication and establishing relationships with diverse groups of clients (Ishiyama & Westwood, 1992; Todisco & Salomone, 1992). Awareness of the impact of credibility, communication styles, and counselor role in the relationship further enhances the effectiveness of the counselor (Ho, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue & Zane, 1987). The culmination of this knowledge gives counselors a strong base on which to build their skills in multicultural counseling.

Multicultural group counselors must also consider how culture influences every aspect of the group process and apply this to the skills and strategies they use to form and conduct groups. In planning multi-ethnic groups, leaders need to

develop goals that meet the needs of the members. This means developing group objectives that do not denote personal failure or mental illness (Ho, 1992). In matters of group composition, leaders must consider both the personalities of the individual members and the racial proportions (Davis, cited in Greeley et al, 1992; Ho, 1992). Moreover, leaders must be sensitive of their own roles and how various minority groups will perceive them even if it means adapting their own personal counseling styles (Greeley et al., 1992; Ho, 1992). Finally, leaders should be prepared at all times to deal with issues of race, color, ethnicity, and class (Bilides, 1991).

Certainly prospective multicultural counselors have much to consider and prepare before beginning counseling. Obviously, lack of experience and confidence in their own skills can present seemingly insurmountable barriers to novices working with diverse populations. However, through knowledge, preparation, and a sincere desire to improve, it is possible to facilitate positive multicultural counseling experiences.

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