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Supporting Practicing School Counselor's Skill Development: A Hip Hop and Spoken Word Professional Development Intervention

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Supporting Practicing School Counselor's Skill Development: A Hip Hop and Spoken Word Professional Development Intervention

Abstract

Given the paucity of professional development (PD) opportunities, gaps in cultural competence, and deterioration of direct counseling service opportunities for many school counselors, it is reasonable to conjecture that there is an inadvertent abandonment of skill development and related student outcomes. This mixed-methods study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of an innovative PD series for school counselors, exploring participants' self-efficacy in counseling skill use and cross-cultural competence. The researchers administered a multi-session PD to school counselors in an Urban, Northeast School District in the US. Data from pre- and post-training surveys, vignettes, and post-training focus groups indicated a significant decrease in participants' self-efficacy pre- to post-training. Further, results suggest participants learned innovative practice, practiced humanistic counseling skills, and understood new potential for student growth.

Keywords

Professional Development, Cultural Competence, School Counseling, Hip Hop

School counseling trainees experience similar instructional opportunities as their clinical mental health peers, including mostly identical coursework save for internship experiences in school settings towards the end of their training. Development of counselor identity and skill training begins to diverge after graduation given school counselors are rarely required to participate in formal clinical supervision or log counseling-specific continuing education. Given the paucity of professional development opportunities for school counselors after graduation from their master's program (Lowe et al., 2018), coupled with the deterioration of direct service opportunities and practices for many school counselors (Mau et al., 2016), it is reasonable to infer that there is an inadvertent abandonment of skill development and related student-client outcomes. This reality substantiates a need for research exploring clinical skill professional development for practicing school counselors.

When further considering the clinical skill development of practicing school counselors, Dollarhide and Lemberger-Truelove (2019) posited that the majority of school counselors deploy non-counseling theories to address the variety of non-counseling tasks they are asked to complete. Dollarhide and Lemberger-Truelove (2019) also argue that many of the classical theories that pre-service school counselors learn in graduate school are often not taught in a manner that is directly applicable to the school setting. Lastly, many of the existing approaches to clinical counseling have been critiqued as largely divorced of culture, not limited to diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds but also the cultural nuances of school systems (Wendt et al., 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of a professional development training series for practicing school counselors, specifically exploring participant's self-efficacy in using counseling skills and cross-cultural competence.

School Counselor Skill Development

Many counselor education programs engage trainees with basic counseling skills classes (Weger et al., 2010) that generally focus on the development of active listening behaviors and reflective counselor dialogue (e.g., Ivey and Ivey, 2007). Active listening skills can be used by school counselors when working with students, educators and other school stakeholders, or guardians to foster an empathetic relationship and encourage school-related outcomes such as learning, social and emotional development, and career exploration (Dollarhide et al., 2008). These same active listening and dialogical skills can be used as leadership strategies throughout the school environment, with the promise to create more cohesive and supportive school relationships between the various members of the school community (Bowers et al., 2018).

Clinical skill development is reinforced throughout the practicum and internship experiences of counselors-in-training, where they should receive on-site supervision from a practicing school counselor and group supervision from a licensed faculty member at their college or university (CACREP, 2016). Kozina et al. (2010) indicated that first-year masters students in counseling reported increases in counseling self-efficacy after their first clinical experience with clients. Unfortunately, in practice many school counselors operate under the supervisory authority of school administrators who generally lack any school counseling experience; in turn, many novice school counselors are left to “navigate complex counseling issues and student needs without clinical support and guidance” (Bledsoe et al., p. 1).

Cultural Competence Training

While there are universal benefits to the use of universal active listening skills, culturally competent counseling practice is another important common factor in counseling practices that contribute to effectual outcomes (Wampold, 2015). Empirical evidence in support of culturally

competent counseling practice is consistent with theoretical and professional identity positions within the counseling profession which suggest the importance of prizing the experiences of clients from diverse backgrounds (see Hook et al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992). Culturally competent school counseling is especially important given the diverse composition of students coupled with the social complexities implicit to large social environments such as formal school settings. In this manner, it is fair to suggest that students' orientating culture often vary greatly from their adult educators, even if only considering generational and role differences (Banks, 2015). Therefore, it follows that universal active listening skills taught in graduate programs might prove to be appropriate as a foundation but require ongoing reflection and adaptation to meet the manifold and evolving cultural positions of diverse student populations.

Concerns related to culturally appropriate counseling practices are especially important when considering the experiences of ethnic minority clients, many of whom often maintain fear, mistrust, invalidation, and discrimination from counseling professionals (Ahmed et al., 2011; Goebert, 2014). In turn, there is compelling evidence that ethnic minority youth are often cautious to seek help from mental health professionals (Lindsey et al., 2013). In the school context, given that many counselors adopt an educator or administrator identity rather than a counselor identity, it is logical to infer that many ethnic minority students might not find immediate value in school counseling service.

To promote more culturally competent practice, many counselor education programs engage trainees in one or more experiential learning experiences intended to deepen their cultural awareness, knowledge, and skill (Merrell-James et al., 2019). For example, self-reflective journaling assignments for in students in counseling graduate programs are efficacious, with research showing student's ability to identify past and present challenges, and understand areas of

growth, and a deepened understanding of group counseling process (Shuler & Keller-Dupree, 2015). Cultural immersion and service-learning opportunities within graduate program coursework can support counselors-in-training with understanding their own beliefs and attitudes surrounding their privilege, cultural worldviews, their racial identity, and racism (Merrell-James et al., 2019). Unfortunately, with limited opportunities for professional development (Lowe et al., 2018), there is still a need for increased cultural competence amongst practicing school counselors who work with youth from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Matthews et al., 2018).

Hip Hop and Spoken Word Therapy

Given the importance of school counselors honoring their student's cultural experiences, many scholars and practitioners have explored the potential of hip hop lyric writing, analysis, and discussion as culturally sensitive interventions in the counseling process (Kobin & Tyson, 2006; Travis & Deepak, 2011; Tyson, 2002; Washington, 2018). Research has demonstrated that Black and Brown youth identify as part of hip hop culture (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015). Much of this research has engendered hip hop and spoken word therapy (HHSWT), a culturally responsive counseling process whereby students engage in previously validated counseling interventions through the process of writing, recording, and performing hip hop music (Levy, 2019; Levy & Keum, 2014).

HHSWT scholars have considered as hip hop cultural practice, including the influence of the cypher as a group space where hip hop community members convene to share their expressive art (Levy, Emdin et al., 2018). Levy et al. (2018) argue that the hip hop cypher is a community-based group space utilized for catharsis, that can be intentionally infused in traditional group counseling practice. To aid youth in counseling sessions with the intentional exploration of salient emotional themes, Levy, Cook et al. (2018) recommend engaging youth in the cultural process of

planning, marketing, and disseminating emotionally themed hip hop albums, or mixtapes. Levy (2019) found a school counselors' use of HHSWT in group counseling inside of school hip hop recording studio to positively support students social and emotional development.

Purpose of the Study

This mixed-methods study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of an innovative professional development training series for practicing school counselors, specifically exploring improvements in participants' self-efficacy in counseling skill use and cross-cultural competence. The researcher administered a multi-session training series to practicing school counselors in an Urban, Northeast School District in the US. Data from pre- and post-training surveys, vignettes, and post-training focus groups were collected and used in the analysis. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. From pre-training to post-training, do participants in the HHSWT training series experience significant changes in their counseling skills? (cultural competence, counseling skill self-efficacy, hip hop lyric vignette)
2. When reflecting upon their experience in the training, what themes emerged from the focus group supportive of participant's skill development?
3. When reflecting upon their experience in the training, how do participants believe this training series impacted their practice?

Method

Participants

A total of 31 practicing school counselors representing 14 schools located in a single urban district in the northeast US region participated in the current study. A school district administrator recruited the first author to perform a series of professional development activities pertaining to

culturally responsive counseling services in schools. Although the professional development activities were offered to all school counselors in the district, 28 of the 31 school counselors consented in the empirical investigation of their experiences of the intervention.

Procedure

The lead author delivered four professional development sessions, with one session a month from February to May. Prior to the first meeting, the PI received approval from the Institutional Review Board and then distributed informed consent documents to the administrator of the partnering district. The district administrator assisted the lead author with the administering of a pre-training survey to all consenting participants prior to the first meeting.

During the first session, the participants completed a pre-training vignette. During a final June Meeting, post-training surveys were administered, and the counselors in the training-series were asked to complete a post-training Vignette and to participate in small-group focus groups with the lead author.

Professional Development Curriculum

The lead author created and delivered the professional development intervention based on a combination of standard counseling practices and Hip Hop and Spoken Word Therapy (HHSWT). The theoretical bases for each session related to culturally appropriate school counseling practices (Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2018). For example, in the first session, the content included a lecture on the premises of HHSWT model and included an interactive discussion using videos, student lyrics, and empirical data related to past HHSWT studies.

In the second training session, participants practiced identifying and reflecting affective and cognitive statements in students' lyrics. Then, participants broke up into triads to perform mock counseling sessions where they would rotate the roles of client, counselor, and observer. A

client was given sample hip hop lyric that they brought to the mock-counseling session, the counselor was told to engage in a dialogue around the client's lyrics, and the observer was asked to use an observer rubric to rate the counselors use of restatements, reflections, paraphrasing statements, summaries.

In the third session, participants engaged in a collaborative role-play exercise where with their peers they constructed a hip hop song related to a shared emotional theme. After a group discussion to identify a shared emotional theme, each group followed a process of discussing their thoughts and feelings about this emotional theme and creating a short hip hop song about their conversation. The session closed out with groups sharing their verses, including how the participants might utilize this exercise with their K-12 students.

For the final session, participants worked in groups to construct their own HHSWT group counseling lesson plan. The lead author provided a generic framework and participants were encouraged to consider how to tailor this to their particular school and students. Each group was offered an opportunity to align their lesson with the American School Counselor Association's mindsets and behaviors for student success (ASCA, 2019) to identify and capture relevant student development data.

Instruments

This mixed-methods study collected and analyzed participant's data from pre- and post-training surveys, pre and post-hip hop lyric writing vignettes, and a post-training focus group. A mixed-methods approach was chosen for this study in attempt to capture the most robust results. Given that 31 potential participants is a generally small sample, the researchers hoped qualitative findings would help illuminate the quantitative results.

Demographics

The survey contained measures designed to collect participant's demographic and background information, such as age, race/ethnicity, level of school counseling (elementary, middle, or high), and for how long they identified with hip hop culture.

Cross-Cultural Competence Inventory-Revised

A second section of the survey contained the Cross-Cultural Competence Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R) developed by LaFromboise et al. (1991) which gathered participant's self-reports on their own cross-cultural counseling skill use, socio-political awareness, and cultural sensitivity when in counseling sessions. The CCCI-R is a 20-item measure where participants rate statements on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A total score for multicultural competence is calculated by averaging the 20 items. Higher average scores on the CCCI-R equal more multicultural competence. For the current study, the CCCI-R's Cronbach's Alpha was .917, suggesting excellent internal consistency.

Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory

The Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSI) is a valid and reliable self-report measure of counseling skill self-efficacy (Larson et al., 1992). Using a 5-point reverse-scored Likert scale across 37 items, the COSI includes the following five domains: A) Performing counseling micro skills (12-items), B) Handle client process in counseling (10-items), C) Manage difficult client behaviors (7-items), D) Demonstrate cultural competence in a counseling setting (4-items), and E) Aware of personal values attending to process (4-items). The COSI items are self-rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha for the COSI was .948, suggesting excellent internal consistency.

Hip Hop Lyric Writing Vignette

A qualitative Hip Hop Lyric Writing Vignette was developed by the PI for first-time use in this study. Participants were provided with a 12-line verse of hip hop lyrics previously written by a high school student. The directions of the vignette asked participants to read the student verse for affective and cognitive content. Then, participants were asked to complete three short answer statements: “Write a Reflection”, “Write a Paraphrasing Statement” and “Write a Question”. The PI also developed a Hip Hop Lyric Writing Rubric to score each of these items on a scale from 1 (Major adjustment needed) to 5 (Highly developed), regarding how succinctly the statement was worded, and how accurately the respective skill was used. In the current study, the hip hop lyric writing vignette’s pre-training Cronbach’s Alpha was .860, suggesting good internal consistency. The hip hop lyric writing vignette’s post-training Cronbach’s Alpha was .880, suggesting good internal consistency.

Focus Groups

Following the completion of the training series, the PI assisted met with a total of 14 willing participants across three, 30-minute focus group interviews. The aim of the interviews was to explore participant experiences during the training series, as well as assess how they believed the training series might have impacted their student caseloads. Since the PI was interested in understanding participants’ experiences, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework was used for interview guide development, data collection procedures, and data analysis. A focus group interview guide was developed to prompt discussion around participant experiences, including perceptions of what they learned in the process, as well as what they identified as important to them. However, consistent with IPA standards (Smith et al., 2009), the semi-structured interview guides were flexible enough to allow

participants the opportunity to lead the discussion.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as an interpretive phenomenological analysis of participant focus groups. Specifically, the pre- and post-training survey data were analyzed using SPSS. The pre and post-training hip hop lyric writing vignettes were independently scored by both the lead author and a research assistant, who then came together to settle on an individual score for each vignette. The vignettes were then averaged to provide a total score. Paired t-tests were used to compare pre and post-training vignette scores.

Focus group data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research approach designed to facilitate understanding of the participants' world and subjective experiences, typically as they relate to a specific event or phenomenon common to all participants being interviewed (Chapman & Smith, 2002). The recorded focus-group was transcribed verbatim using InqScribe technology (Inquirium, LLC, 2013). To begin the analysis, the lead author read and re-read the focus group interview transcript to improve familiarity with the data. Once familiar with the transcript, the lead author started with micro-analysis which included making descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments in the right margin of the transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. suggest that descriptive comments are those focused on the content of the communication, and linguistic comments consider the tone and use of language throughout the transcript. Conceptual comments begin interpretation as descriptive and linguistic comments are considered together alongside the interpretation of the transcript by the researcher (2009). Once microanalysis was completed for the entire transcript, the lead author reviewed the notations that had been made to identify initial emergent themes throughout the interview, which were noted on the left margin of the document.

The initial emergent themes for each interview compared across individual participants to identify the lower-order themes, which were then combined to inform the identification of the higher-order themes (Smith et al., 2009). In the final stages of data analysis, emergent themes that represented the lived experiences of participants in the group were situated within the extant literature to offer an interpretation of the experiences through existing theoretical frameworks, a hallmark process of IPA research (Smith et al., 2009). Transcripts were then sent to the second author who had not been involved in the data collection to audit identified themes. When discrepancies existed, researchers engaged in the discussion until consensus was reached.

Trustworthiness

To safeguard the trustworthiness of the data, authors engaged in two intentional strategies identified as important for improving the credibility and reliability of the data (Morrow, 2005). First, to ensure the credibility of the data, prior to engaging in data analysis, the PI who conducted the interview engaged in a reflexive process to examine preconceptions about the data in order to bracket those ideas and focus on understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Additionally, to allow for transferability of the research process and results, the authors provided a rich description of the research processes (i.e., method) as well as the findings that emerged through data analysis (i.e., results). To improve the dependability of the results, the PI and second author sought to minimize the impact of individual bias. Therefore, the marked transcript was sent to an additional colleague who acted as an outside auditor. Due to this process, the researchers believe trustworthiness was achieved consistent with standards in qualitative inquiry (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Results

Analysis of demographic and background data details that the convenience sample of

counselors (N=28) was diverse, including approximately one third (35.7%, n = 10) identifying as Black/African American, 39.3% (n=11) as Latinx, and 25% (n=7) as White. The sample was 10.7% (n=3) male, 85.7% (n=24) female, with 1 participant indicating they preferred not to report their gender. The sample had a *mean age of 40.57 years*. A total of 25% of the counselors worked solely at the elementary level (n=7), 3.6% of counselors (n=1) worked with both elementary and middle school students, 14.3% of students (n=4) worked at the middle school level, 7.1% (n=2) at the middle and high school level, and 50% (n=14) of counselors worked with high school students. Almost half of the sample (n=13) reported identifying with hip hop for over 30 years, with 14% (n=6) over 40 years, 21% (n=6) over 20 years, 7% (n=2) over 10 years, 3.6% (n=1) over 5 years, and 7% (n=2) of counselors reported not identifying with hip hop at all.

Assessments of participants counseling skill growth were analyzed via descriptive and inferential analysis of pre and post-scores of cultural competence, counseling skill self-efficacy, and the hip hop lyric writing vignette. Data analysis suggested no significant changes in cross-cultural competence, with participants reporting high levels of cross-cultural competence at both the pre-training (M=105.35, SD= 9.27) and post-training (M=106.96, SD= 9.45) assessments.

The main quantitative finding in this study was in with regard to changes in counseling skill self- efficacy. Prior to the beginning of the HHSWT PD, participants reported a mean score of 174.92 (SD = 5.56) with regard to their counseling skill self-efficacy, indicating that participants were very confident in their ability to perform counseling skills. A decrease in counseling skill self- efficacy was observed at the post-training assessment (M= 144.85, SD = 1.52). Results of a paired t-test indicated a significant decrease in counseling skill self-esteem from pre-training to post-training, $t = 5.34$, $p < .01$. Conversely, analysis of hip hop lyric writing vignettes sought to determine school counselors practical use of counseling skills. At the pre-training assessment

participants displayed a mean score of 7.13 (SD=3.29) out of possible 15, indicating poor use of counseling skills. A slight mean increase was found at the post-training assessment (M=7.26, SD=2.03) though this change was not statistically significant. See Table 1. for additional information.

A total of 14 of 28 participants elected to participate in focus group interviews. Data analysis revealed nine emergent themes which were grouped into three higher-order themes. The first and second higher-order themes identified answered research question two, (i.e., what themes emerged from the focus group supportive of participant's skill development). The third identified higher-order themes answered the research question three (i.e., how do participants believe this training series impacted their practice). Each research question is answered below with select student quotes that illuminate each higher and lower-order theme. A numerical representation of the amount of participant quotes that support each theme is provided in Table 2.

Learned Innovative Practice

The first higher order theme indicated that participants learned innovative practice, which was composed of three lower-order themes: a) developing theoretical perspective, b) learning about practical tools, and c) engaged in personal catharsis.

Developing Theoretical Perspective

Quotes that fit within the lower-order theme of developing theoretical perspective denote a shift in participant's perceptions regarding how they might further their theoretical orientation through the integration of hip hop based interventions. For example, one participant stated:

“instead of telling the student to imagine themselves being somewhere, why don't you write me a lyric that express that. So instead of using that fake imagine, or the invisible chair, put yourself in Drake's place. I felt that I could actually merge it to my own

theories that I use as a therapist, as a counselor. So that's the part I really like, that I could actually take something that I'm very good at using, that I find works for me, and just take it and add it and mix it.”

In this particular quote, the participant discussed integrating hip hop lyrics and a hip hop artists' persona with the Gestalt technique of the invisible chair.

Learned about Practical Tools

Beyond developing their theoretical perspective, participant's focus group comments support the assertion that they learned practical tools. Comments that fell under this lower-order theme illuminate the variety of tangible school- counseling related skills that counselors gained from participating in the HHSWT professional development series. For example, a counselor stated that she developed lesson-planning skills - “Then the lesson we did the last time we were here. Just trying to create that lesson, that was brainstorming, in terms of creating it as a counselor”.

Engaged in Personal Catharsis

Data analysis also showcased that participants engaged in personal catharsis throughout the professional development series. When reflecting on engaging in a group-based lyric writing activity about a shared emotional theme, one participant said, “I felt like I was able to be vulnerable, and to have a good bonding moment with my colleagues to talk about something that probably would not talk about in any of our counselor meetings at the high school or here.”

Practiced Humanistic Counseling Skills

The second higher order theme indicated that participants practiced humanistic counseling skills which was composed of four lower-order themes: a) working to understand youth culture, b) wanting to connect with students, c) using self in practice, and d) developing new active listening skills.

Working to Understand Youth Culture

The lower-order theme of working to understand youth culture contains quotes suggestive of participants discovering how much they still needed to learn about youth and youth culture. An exemplar quote details how a participant connected an urge to learn about youth and their music to the future design of school counseling interventions, “They're saying something, and they may be saying something that could be very important for some type of intervention or something else like this, but because they're saying it in code or because you don't understand the lingo that they might be using, you're unaware of it.”

Wanting to Connect with Students

School counselors also expressed wanting to connect with students in a deeper capacity. For one counselor, hip hop practices presented a means to overcome challenges establishing connections with her students. Specifically, this counselor stated, “I feel like it's a great way to relate to some of the kids. For me, it's been, I don't want to say challenging, but it's kind of been a little challenging because my students are young.”

Using Self in Practice

Similarly, the lower-order theme of using self in practice was a collection of participant quotes signifying counselor's pathways towards congruence and/or being authentic in counseling practice. A particular school counselor participating in the professional development series admitted that she has engaged in her own lyric writing for quite some time, but never considered utilizing that skillset in practice:

“After the first time you were here, I just kind of jumped in and it bridged something for me that I used to do. With my lyrics and my poems and stuff, to kind of open up a little more to the kids and had the group with them. I created a whole group and they were

writing their own lyrics, creating their own beats. We did a talent show, where they performed some of their own original songs. So I think I kind of just ... but it's also something that I enjoy doing myself and it's something that I've done in the past.”

Having the opportunity to learn about how to use hip hop based approaches to counseling appeared to encourage participants, who already identified with hip hop, to bring aspects of themselves into their practice.

New Active Listening Skills

Similar to understanding youth culture, connecting to students, and using self in practice, school counselors spoke of developing new active listening skills. An example participant quote illuminates the empathic understanding that is developed when counselors learn to hear thoughts and feelings communicated in hip hop lyrics:

“So for me, it forced me to listen. Normally I just listen to the beats. I can dance, but I'm not really listening to the words, so it forced me to. And kids listen to the words. so to connect with them ... I need to connect better with the kids. I'm an older woman, and it's like, ‘Oh, gosh. This is all garbage.’ But it's not. You know what I'm saying? It's not all garbage. So it brought a new level of respect for it.”

Potential for Student Growth

The third and final higher-order theme, potential for student growth, speaks to how counselors believed the HHSWT professional development series would impact their practical work. This theme was composed of two lower-order themes, suggesting HHSWT would help: a) student's express thoughts and feelings easier, and b) address robust student outcomes.

Student's Express Thoughts and Feelings Easier

Quotes that fit within the lower order theme of student's express thoughts and feelings

easier pertain to how lyric writing is a safe medium for students to open up. Specifically, a school counselor suggested that “right away, I could see the usage for clients or students who were trapped in their own head and that music is their outlet.”

Address Robust Student Outcomes

School counselors theorized that the practical implementation of HHSWT would address robust student outcomes. This lower-order theme contains quotes regarding how hip hop practices can be used to address a variety of academic, personal/social, and career development outcomes. In one instance, a counselor believed hip hop could be used as a tool to assist students academic content knowledge development in each of their classes, “helping teachers, whether it's math, or science, or English, or social studies, or foreign language, it's just such an amazing tool, I just haven't figured out, like Speaker J said, how to convince the administration to allow me to do that within the confines of the school day”.

Table 2.

A Numerical Count of Each Different Participant Comment by Higher (H) & Lower-order (L) Theme

Higher and Lower-Order Themes	N
Learned to Innovate Practice {H}	14
Developing Theoretical Perspective (L)	5
Learning About Practical Tools (L)	6
Engaged in Personal Catharsis (L)	6
Practiced Humanistic Counseling Skills (H)	14
Working to Understand Youth Culture (L)	8
Connecting with Students (L)	7
Using Self in Practice (L)	5
A New Approach for Active Listening (L)	4
Potential for Student Growth (H)	14
Students expressing thoughts and feelings easier (L)	10
Addressing Robust Student Outcomes (L)	7

Discussion

Findings from the results of the current study suggest that certain culturally appropriate professional development opportunities can contribute to the refinement of counseling skills in seasoned school counselors. The main quantitative finding is perhaps the most revealing, indicating a significant decrease in participants self-reported self-efficacy from pre- to post-training. Participants reported high measures of self-efficacy at the pre-training measure while, in direct comparison, their pre-training hip hop lyrics writing vignettes suggested poor counseling skill use. These findings provide evidence to support prior research pointing to the deterioration of counseling skills as a result of a lack of direct service opportunities and practices for many school counselors (Mau et al., 2016).

Another possible interpretation of the intervention effects might pertain to the Dunning-Kruger effect, that is the cognitive bias that those who lack a skill tend to overlook their own mistakes and incorrectly conclude they have sufficient abilities (Dunning, 2011). Dunning (2011)

suggests this “meta-ignorance (or ignorance of ignorance) arises because lack of expertise and knowledge often hides in the realm of the ‘unknown unknowns’ or is disguised by erroneous beliefs and background knowledge that only appear to be sufficient to conclude a right answer” (p. 247). Returning to the results from the current study, given that hip-hop and spoken word are ever evolving cultural phenomena, it is possible that the participating counselors only became aware of their cultural and counseling skill dissonance after exposure to the HHSWT that compelled awareness and skill acquisition. This interpretation is further supported by the qualitative results which illustrated that the participants disclosed refined cultural humility and a return to reflective listening and related counseling practices.

A third interpretation of the quantitative results might be that the participants did not develop self-efficacy in their counseling skills after participations in the professional development series. However, the qualitative data suggests that the sample of participants are potentially reconsidering their cultural awareness and knowledge, which typically occurs prior to developing culturally competent counseling skills (Worthington et al., 2007). For example, participants spoke about developing a new theoretical perspective, having some new counseling tools, and realizing how hip hop based approaches might support students. Research on behavior change shows that individuals in the *precontemplation* do not think about engaging in the target behavior, while those in a *contemplation stage* consider engaging in the target behavior while still feeling ambivalent about acting (DiClemente & Velasquez, 2002).

Full behavior change is said to have occurred when an individual reaches the *maintenance stage*, which required that they have been acting and deploying the target behavior for more than 6 months (DiClemente & Velasquez, 2002). Given that the current study occurred over a brief 4-month period, coupled with the participants pre-training scores, it might be inferred that the

participants were precontemplative which is necessary to any more profound skill development that might arise in the future with additional training and reflective practice.

Conclusion

Limitations and Future Directions

Findings are limited due to the relatively small number of school counselor participants in the professional development training series. Attrition is a limitation in this study, given only 26 of the original 28 participants completed the post-training survey. In addition, only 14 participants were willing to participate in focus groups. Further, no control group was used in this study which would have helped limit threats to internal validity. The possible data analysis strategies used for the quantitative data in this study were limited to between group comparisons as a result of the researcher failing to adequately gather codes for participants at pre and post- training assessments. With these limitations in mind, future research might include a randomized controlled investigation of multiple school counselors from a diverse sample of school districts. Such a trial might consider counselors at different levels of skill development and professional development experiences.

The results of the current study offer initial support to the inclusion of professional development opportunities for practicing school counselors. Given the importance of culturally appropriate counseling skills in proffering the types of counseling interventions known to be successful with diverse populations of clients (Wampold, 2015), professional development opportunities such as HHSWT might be an important ingredient in support of school counselors who are often seen as collateral in a school and yet who are well-positioned to support diverse students and adult stakeholders.

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