Cross-Cultural Distance Dialogues in Counselor Education: Collaborative Pedagogy

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Recommended Citation

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Researchers examined the experience of participating in cross-cultural distance dialogues (CCDD) in facilitating Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competency (MSJCC) through an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). With the high need to develop curriculum in counselor education programs that intentionally incorporate cultural competencies (Ratts et al., 2016), this study was conducted to explore an innovative pedological technique that further fosters MSJCC within master's-level coursework. Study participants were counseling students engaged in a structured dialogue across university campuses during their multicultural course. After completing two rounds of interviews and a member check, the following themes were identified utilizing IPA methodology: (1) relational resistance, (2) negotiating dichotomy, (3) therapeutic space, (4) trust and, (5) cultural awakening. Findings highlight CCDD as an innovative collaborative teaching strategy that supports increased cultural awareness, competency development, and enhanced interpersonal skills and support.

Within the United States and across the globe, the longstanding history, prevalence, and pervasiveness of racial discrimination has upheld structural and institutional inequities (Delgado et al., 2017). In counselor education and supervision, the decolonization of pedagogical practices must be examined as we move forward in challenging power, hierarchy, and the dominant ways of knowing that disproportionally impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)–identifying individuals. Multicultural competence, a core training standard in counselor education, surrounds a student's ability to integrate skills and theoretical knowledge in building relationships with diverse groups of people. It is key for counselor educators to commit to providing safe and authentic spaces for critical dialogue and antiracist learning, helping students develop the ability to work within historically disenfranchised communities of color while dismantling systemic racism (Haskins & Singh, 2015). For counselor educators, incorporating opportunities in curriculum to foster multicultural and social justice counseling competency (MSJCC) is imperative for emerging counselors as they develop their advocacy identity (Nassar & Singh, 2020). Promoting virtual cross-cultural communication skills through collaborative educational MSJCC efforts allows counseling programs to creatively address the complexities of these competencies. The incorporation of increased exposure and access to curriculum experiences that foster MSJCC can be facilitated through cross-cultural distance dialogues (CCDD).

Relationship Building in Cross-Cultural Dialogues

The cross-cultural distanced dialogue pedagogical technique promotes the inclusion of collaborative relationships in supporting student learning and professional identity development. Creating a community experience among counseling students to engage in multicultural dialogue can help students form deeper relationships with their peers and provide a space for social justice–related exchanges (Keum & Miller, 2020). Providing these spaces is interregnal for students, as much of their coursework lacks opportunity for multicultural interactions (Chun et al., 2020), which impacts cultural knowledge procurement (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010).

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Currently, there is minimal empirical research conducted exploring the impact of peer interpersonal supports within or between counseling training programs (Keum & Miller, 2020), however, there are potential benefits of these collaborative efforts.

Fostering CCDD partnerships provide students an opportunity to connect with peers and form mutual systems of support. This aligns with research regarding pen pal communication, which is a common and extensively practiced educational experience for many individuals residing in the United States (Barksdale et al., 2007) and foundational in the creation of the CCDD intervention. Individuals participating in this correspondence have found that it has been impactful in supporting cross-cultural relationships (Barksdale et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2017), and it has increased their sense of connection with their peers by seeking out the similarities in their experiences (Barksdale et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2017; Thompson McMillon, 2009). In addition to aiding in cultural peer connections, individuals participating in a cross-cultural pen pal relationship also engage in critical reflection on their self-awareness and biases (Thompson McMillon, 2009). The ability to engage in this reflection is essential to social justice efforts (Keum & Miller, 2020) and is integral when developing multicultural competency (Ratts et al., 2016).

Multicultural Coursework and Curriculum

The American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) continue to respond to the growing needs of working with diverse communities with evolving counselor preparation training standards. According to CACREP (2016) standards and in alignment with the professional counseling ethical standards (ACA, 2014), multicultural competency represents a critical facet of social and cultural diversity. MSJCC is a developmental process defined as personal and professional growth in the capacity to free oneself from the unchallenged socialization of our society and profession. MSJCC

outlines developing the awareness, knowledge, skill, and action steps to work with people of diverse backgrounds effectively. MSJCC includes awareness of personal beliefs, biases, and worldviews that may impact clients with cultural experiences that differ from the counselor's own experiences (Ratts et al., 2016).

The multicultural training in counselor preparation requires educators to provide courageous spaces to acquire the awareness of self and cultural knowledge of other diverse persons while obtaining the clinical skills necessary to practice and advocate ethically and competently (Gonzalez-Voller et al., 2020). Multicultural counseling and social justice educators have highlighted the difficulty of covering the depth and breadth of the development of MSJCC. Implementing intentional curricula design in counselor education programs that serve as opportunities to deepen student understanding of the complex nature of developing the cross-cultural dialogue skills to work with clients experiencing inequity and minoritization is essential in promoting appropriate attitude and behavioral changes (Haskins & Singh, 2015). This qualitative study examines the innovative pedagogical technique of cross-cultural distance dialogue in facilitating MSJCC with students enrolled in a CACREP counseling program.

Methodology

Researchers utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore how counseling students make sense of their experience participating in CCDD as part of their multicultural course curriculum requirements. The purpose of IPA is an in-depth examination of participants' lived experiences, how they understand their experience, and the meanings made from that experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). The researchers addressed the following research question: What is the experience of master's students in CACREP counseling programs involved in cross-cultural distance dialogues during their multicultural course?

IPA methodology allows the researcher to focus on the unique meaning made from their participants' lived experiences through the foundational philosophical stances of phenomenology, ideography, and hermeneutics (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). Phenomenological philosophy centers on the idea that individuals are part of a complex environment; culture, surroundings, and interests all influence an individual's perspective and understanding of their lived experience (Smith et al., 2008). The idiographic nature of this methodology guides the researcher to examine the details of each lived experience through in-depth analysis. This principle assists the researcher when selecting their sample size, as IPA is intended for a small and purposefully selected sample to adhere to the level of detail in each participant experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2008). Hermeneutics refers to the interpretive process, while double hermeneutics highlights the researchers' interpretation of the experience from the perspective of the participant. The hermeneutic nature of interpretive analysis also underlines the importance of highlighting both research paradigm (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2008).

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm derives from the individual experiences, educational background, theoretical orientation, and positionality of the research team. Transparent discussions surrounding the research paradigm allow the reader to gain a foundational understanding of the researcher's worldview and decision-making process throughout the study's duration (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Paradigm is vital in understanding the construction of meaning from the participants' accounts of lived experience, a critical component of qualitative methodologies.

As a research team, we are both assistant professors of counseling teaching at CACREP-accredited counselor education programs within the United States. We both have previous experience teaching the multicultural counseling course material, have been involved in multicultural training dialogues, and have dedicated scholarly agendas surrounding multicultural competence and social justice advocacy. We both identify as multiethnic women of color, representing international, low income of origin, Arab, Latina, white, heterosexual, and queer cultural intersections. We are personally and professionally situated within a critical paradigm or worldview, which significantly framed our understandings of participant experience. Highlighting advocacy and social injustice through the vehicle of scholarly research sits at the foundation of our critical framework (Scotland, 2012).

As critical researchers, we acknowledge that knowledge creation and reality are subjective and influenced by individuals in positions of power (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012). The awareness of our assumptions and biases regarding counselor development, identity development, and multicultural competency strengthened scholarly exploration while allowing us to focus on illuminating participants' experience engaging in a multicultural dialogue partnership. We employed trustworthiness measures in discussing our existing bias, including reflective discussion and notetaking. For example, our shared experiences as disenfranchised counseling students and now faculty members were often noted and discussed throughout the research process, which particularly impacted how we interpreted and understood cultural competence when connecting to white-identifying participants. Another bias surrounded the high developmental expectations of our graduate students, for example, critical evaluation of self and society, self-disclosure, and openness to participation in difficult dialogue. This was often noted as we engaged in critical discussions highlighting any opportunities to foster change utilizing the participant's voice while articulating ways to address systemic oppressions (Patton, 2015).

Cross-Cultural Distance Dialogues

The innovative technique of CCDD was developed to enhance MSJCC during the multicultural course. Prior to the semester's start, both researchers met to plan course sequencing and the CCDD technique. Weekly course modules

included topics such as cultural value systems, implicit bias, privilege, racism, microaggressions, classism, sexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, intersectionality, ageism, heterosexism, religion and spiritual diversity, immigration, refugees, social justice, systemic and historical injustice, and culturally responsive counseling services. After the second week of class, students were randomly assigned a cross-cultural dialogue partner from the other institution. They met a minimum of 30 minutes, biweekly, through a secure video conference platform for the semester. Students did not upload a recording of their dialogues; instead, they submitted completion logs through a shared spreadsheet document. Additionally, students' reflections upon course content and cultural awareness were required weekly.

Research Participants

Students enrolled in the Spring 2020 multicultural course at two institutions located on the East Coast participated in a cross-cultural distance dialogue assignment. After the completion of the course, participant recruitment commenced utilizing convenience sampling. To help mitigate coercion, participants were not recruited or interviewed by the faculty member of their course. Participation was voluntary, and the study began after the final grade submission. To adhere to IPA's idiographic nature (Smith et al., 2008), 4 participants were selected that could speak to the phenomenon of CCDD.

The first participant, Sandra, identifies as an Asian/Korean cisgender, able-bodied female in her early 20s. She is a bilingual, heterosexual, first-generation school counseling student from the middle class residing in an urban area. Zoe, the second participant, identifies as Black/Caribbean American. She is a heterosexual, able-bodied cisgender female from the middle class residing in an urban/suburban area. She is a school counseling student in her mid-20s. Ava, the third participant, identifies as a white/Italian cisgender female from a middle-class background residing in an urban area. She identifies as able-bodied, heterosexual, in her early 20s, and is a second-generation American. She is also a school counseling student. The fourth

participant, Diane, is a white, cisgender female school counseling student residing in a suburban area from the middle class. She identifies as heterosexual, able-bodied, and is bilingual.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants each completed two rounds of interviews and a member check. Each interview focused on the participant's experience of CCDD. The researchers utilized semi-structured interviewing to examine the phenomenon being studied. Each interview lasted between 30–60 minutes, or until saturation of data had been reached. The researchers used a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the initial questions, and transitioned to an unstructured interview process, exploring in-depth participants' experiences relating to CCDD. The following are examples of questions from the first round of interviews:

(1) Tell us about your experience with the CCDD?

(2) How has this experience shaped your understanding of course material and cross-cultural relationships?

After the first round of data analysis, the researchers completed the following data analysis steps to maintain the integrity of IPA research: rereading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, and searching for connections across emergent themes (Smith et al., 2008). Additional questions were created to deepen emergent codes and address gaps in data collection through this data analysis. Example questions from the second round of interviews included the following:

(1) You spoke of resistance to the CCDD experience. Can you go into this more?

(2) You stated you worked hard on your identity development. What did that look like for you?

Data collection reached a point of saturation after the second round of interviews. Researchers identified superordinate themes and sent a member check to participants. It is important to note that after each completed interview, the researchers immediately memoed to capture any thoughts, ideas, or feelings. Memoing occurred throughout

the data collection and analysis process to further assist the researcher with IPA's hermeneutic nature and promote self-reflection (Maxwell, 2013; Smith et al., 2008). Researchers often engaged in team meetings guiding the development of the study, discussing biases that arose prior, during, and post research analysis and coding procedures.

Trustworthiness

To promote trustworthiness, the researchers emailed the participants an electronic copy of the identified themes. Maxwell (2013) suggested that participants read over themes and provide feedback on areas where misinterpretation may have occurred. If participants were to identify themes that did not align with their experience, the researchers would review findings and determine how they align with the data. All 4 participants responded to the member check, and they provided written confirmation that the identified superordinate themes aligned with their experience of the selected phenomenon. Additionally, researchers conducted the study as if an independent auditor might review the study at any given point (Smith et al., 2008). This process helped ensure methodological integrity because it encouraged thorough notetaking and memoing throughout the entirety of the study.

Ethical Considerations

This is an IRB-approved study. Students were not recruited or interviewed by an instructor at their institution. They were interviewed and recruited by the researcher from the other institution. Participants were asked to provide a pseudonym. If the pseudonym was close to their name, researchers provided a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality further. Additionally, all identifying information was removed from the transcription. Video and audio files were uploaded into an encrypted video software and storage platform, where it was password protected. The only individuals that had access to data files and the password were the two primary researchers.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand student-centered experiences of participating in the multicultural pedagogical technique of

CCDD. Five superordinate themes emerged from data analysis: (1) relational resistance, (2) negotiating dichotomy, (3) therapeutic space, (4) trust, and (5) cultural awakening. These themes represent participants' nonlinear experiences of establishing rapport and cultural understanding of self and other within the partnership, while exploring the deep complexity of cultural sameness and difference. The experience of increased awareness of cultural differences enhanced the participants' other orientations, which in turn impacted the participants' feelings of trust and emotional safety surrounding open and authentic multicultural dialogue. To highlight the idiographic nature of IPA, rich quotes were utilized in the next section to capture each participant's meaning-making process.

Relational Resistance

The theme *relational resistance* represents participants' described experiences of discomfort in building rapport with their CDDD partners. All participants spoke of the need to lean into feelings of discomfort and ambiguity as they adjusted their expectations of relationship roles, vulnerability, and authentic interactions that allowed for critical exploration of multicultural and personal disclosures. Diane describes this resistance as hesitancy as she prepared for the experience each week:

> I think I was more nervous that it would be awkward [with my dyad partner], especially at the beginning, because it is such a sensitive conversation and topics in general. And it was my first class in it. So, I was a little hesitant in that aspect. But I was also intrigued. I thought it was an interesting assignment. I feel like it really gave us a different way to look at the topic. (Diane, rd 2)

Diane leaned into her discomfort of forming cross-cultural connections with curiosity and engagement with the CCDD exercise. Ava's lived experiences of relational hesitance and fear were also mitigated by her engagement with the opportunity to participate in cross-cultural dialogues, as she stated: "So, I think being scared in the beginning, but then appreciating what the

outcome was and actually, meeting someone and talking to someone from a different culture and different school and things like that was really good" (Ava, rd 2). As participants developed relational rapport, their initial resistance to a collaborative cross-cultural assignment shifted into appreciation for the increase of peer support, cultural learning, and cultural exposure. Zoe highlighted this experience by stating: "in the end, we were able to get a lot out of it because we were able to learn about people that were not remotely close to us or that we would have normally had access to" (rd 1). Increased access and exposure to students outside of their cultural group, location, and school program created opportunity for exploration of both similarities and differences in lived experience.

Negotiating Dichotomy

Participants discussed the awareness of negotiating power and privilege through the dichotomy of their cultural differences and similarities. This was described as a nonlinear process throughout the semester that provided opportunities for both relationship building and rupture. For most participants, they were paired with a partner outside of their own social identity. Ava described this experience by expressing the following: "I feel like I got to understand her culture better and saw what the differences are out there, but also see her view and my view, how they were similar" (rd 2). Diane explained, "It helped me shape it [cultural awareness] because it helped me realize that it doesn't take a person to just look like you to go through the same things that you go through" (rd 2). This understanding meant engaging in relational dynamics where they became vulnerable and curious about each other's identities and negotiated spaces to dive deeper in cultural conversation. For Sandra, this meant taking control of the conversation and negotiating space to feel heard, "she was of a dominant race. I think because of that, I felt the more of a need to be like, you're not going to take control of this. I was more aware of who was controlling the conversation and I wanted to make sure that it wasn't her" (Sandra, rd 1). Engagement in CCDD supported relationship

growth as participants navigated here-and-now dynamics.

As participants continued to negotiate their relational dynamics, various roles emerged such as the peer role, educator role, and student role. Ava described this process by stating, "it's something that I'm kind of used to already because I normally take a teacher kind of leadership role in many things that I do, so it wasn't surprising to me that that happened" (rd 2). These roles allowed for accountability and deeper exploration of multicultural topics due to the structure provided by each role. Diane explained her experience taking on a student role, "I feel like she made it very apparent that anything I said, she would either explain if it was wrong or she would support my thoughts also. I feel like she really just was able to teach me things" (Diane, rd 2).

Therapeutic Spaces

A theme discussed across participants and all interviews was the importance of the weekly therapeutic space they had created during the Spring 2020 semester while participating in CCDD. "The shifts [online] allowed us to reach deeper because we were going through so much trauma individually because of the pandemic. We kind of found the space to be therapeutic…I've never expressed those feelings to my friends or to my peers" (Ava, rd 1). The COVID-19 global pandemic crisis uniquely shaped the context of participants' lives and those around them during the time of this study. This context included the shared experiences of the abrupt transition to remote coursework and learning, feelings of fear and uncertainty surrounding themselves and their loved ones' personal safety and health, and the grief and loss of many significant cultural norms. Sandra expressed,

Having the space where we literally were getting a grade to be here, but at the same time, we were all going through the same thing, even though we were in different places. I think having that space was a very critical moment for me, because it also helped me realize that this is a time for me to become more open with people. Everyone's going through the trauma, it's not just myself or it's not just you. I feel like it's important. (rd 1)

Each participant described that their uniquely situated online relationship was particularly beneficial during times of crisis and uncertainty. Due to the embedded technological nature of CCDD, participants outlined transitioning from cultural dialogues to a shared therapeutic space. This unique shared virtual space was identified as a major source of support due to social distancing restrictions within the United States. Diane expressed, "it was a strange relationship because I still don't call them my friends, but I feel like we know so much about one another more so than I know about some of my friends even. I feel like there's a deeper relationship there" (rd 1). All participants identified the creation of a therapeutic space as a key factor in the establishment of an alliance in which trust, deeper cultural understanding, and vulnerability was established. Zoe stated: "having that space was a very critical moment for me, because it also helped me realize that this is a time for me to become more open with people. Everyone's going through the trauma, it's not just myself or it's not just you. I feel like that's important" (rd 2).

Impacts of Trust

The fourth theme surrounds the impact of trust on ability to engage deeply with cross-cultural dialogues. Participants described the experience of trust as the foundation of their conversations. CCDD partnerships built this trust through accountability, which participants noted as a process that took many different shapes. Accountability was described as time management, being flexible, and coming prepared to have a multicultural and social justice-focused conversation, or "showing up." Ava discussed this process, stating "if we would get sidetracked, she would bring us back to talk about a certain topic … [and then] I would kind of take the lead a little bit …. So I guess we would say we shared an equal portion of it" (rd 1). This shared experience of remaining focused facilitated trust through a system of confidentiality. Due to this system, Diane described the ability to engage in courageous conversations:

I feel like we were both very open with each other where even if she says something that I didn't think of, she would explain it in a way that would just open my mind, and it wouldn't be something like, I'm like, "Oh, no, I don't agree with that," I'm like, "Okay, that's a good way to look at it." (rd 1)

Within the system of confidentiality, participants described the ability to self-disclose, and yet there were still moments when the participants censored their voice. Sandra explained this dynamic when she silenced her voice: "there was definitely space for me to challenge that. I think the fact that I didn't challenge it spoke to this [in] our last [meeting]. It also spoke to how much closer I thought we were, but we actually weren't" (rd 1). Although they establish a relationship which Sandra described as "deep," there was still moments when she did not feel comfortable challenging her CCDD partner. Most participants spoke of the ability to trust that their dialogue partner would keep personal stories confidential so that they could self-disclose. Zoe discussed the benefits of being able to self-disclose. She stated:

I took the opportunity with the distance dialogue to the best of my advantage, to try to get her to understand or just see things from my point of view. I think me stepping into the situation like that, and her being very receptive of it worked in our favor. (rd 1)

This willingness to trust their CCDD partner positively impacted their experiences, helping participants with the final theme of cultural awakening.

Cultural Awakening

The final theme, cultural awakening, was described by all participants. They reached a turning point in their CCDD experience where their awareness of self expanded. This increase of self-awareness was contributed to engaging in coursework and participating in conversations focused on social justice and multiculturalism. Diane described the impact this experience had on her expansion of self:

I'm just trying to learn as much as I can right now in my identity and really see where I fall and what I agree with, what I don't, and try and develop that and speak more about the things that I don't experience but witness. So, I feel like it's helping me grow my identity. (rd 2)

Participants identified salient intersections of their social identities as learning tools which they used to strengthen partnership and understanding. Increased self-awareness provided the groundwork for developing competency, as each participant explored their own biases and reflected upon their awareness of others. Sandra reflected upon her own development, stating "it kind of shaped my understanding of, well, not everybody has the same experience and not everybody feels oppressed, even though they are a minority. That was a really, really big culturally awakening moment for me" (rd 1). In hearing their partner's lived cultural experiences, participants expressed an increased understanding of both their partner's worldview and their own social and cultural positioning. This understanding fostered both awareness of self and systemic influences as they were challenged through relationship building and engagement in the uncomfortable cultural dialogue. Participants experienced building a trusting alliance with their CCDD partner, which created a safe space in discussing here-and-now relationship dynamics, multiculturally centered dialogue, cultural humility, and implications for future counselor-advocate professional experiences.

Discussion

For counselor educators, this study's findings highlight a collaborative technique that fosters MSJCC development and learning on all developmental domains (i.e., counselor self-awareness, client worldview, relationship dynamics, counseling advocacy implications) while aiding in the developmental process of critical awareness. Consistent with the limited research surrounding cultural dialogues in counselor education, this awareness can be facilitated by having authentic and emotionally stimulating dialogue with others via social justice–oriented and structured educational activities (Watt, 2007). The CCDD experience uniquely provided a space for students to form deep intentional relationships with a peer outside of their cultural group, build trust and understanding of self and others, and learn how to engage in authentic social justice and multicultural related exchanges (Barksdale et al., 2007; Thompson McMillon, 2009; Smith et al., 2017). Participants were confronted with their own biases by reflecting upon their stereotypes, cultural assumptions, and communities that encapsulate them. This study's findings align with the core aspirational competency goals of the MSJCC, including attitude and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action (Ratts et al., 2016). Participants all expressed increased understanding of multilevel, systemic, and intersectional frameworks in understanding their CCDD partner's lived experiences, thus enhancing their advocate identities.

This pedagogical technique is particularly significant for counselor education literature due to participants' experience negotiating cultural dialogue resistance, the fluidity of moving through building trust, and negotiating difference, while simultaneously holding one another accountable each week. Accountability in engagement in meaningful cultural dialogue has been described as a difficult task for counselor educators facilitating cultural competency in classroom experiences (Watt et al., 2009). This study's participants' lived experiences reflected meaningful personal and cultural growth for both students of color and white-identifying students, which is a critical component needed in research exploring cross-cultural dialogue; the voices of students of color are significantly underrepresented in the literature on multicultural pedagogy. Further, counselor education literature often outlines the emotional intensity of multicultural education (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004), highlighting unconstructive student reactions or opposition to engage in the deep exploration of racism, power, white privilege, and social justice–related opinions. Although initially met with resistance, the participants described engrossing themselves within the experience by taking on both the learner's and teacher's roles. Participating in both roles strengthened their ability

to engage in courageous conversations by expressing increased understanding of their positionality, as negotiating power, voice, and censorship were necessary for maintaining cultural dialogue each week. Understanding and positioning students to better navigate these roles in cross-cultural dialogue may strengthen experiences developing critical competency and self-understanding. Reducing the hierarchy of power within the structured cross-cultural dialogues by increasing student autonomy (i.e., no instructor present), the consistency of the assignment, and the opportunity to speak with someone outside of participants' cohorts increased students' ability to nonlinearly and authentically explore difficult realizations and insight.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice

Amid the current social and political divide within the United States, it has never been more urgent for multicultural and social justice educators to produce empirical evidence for innovative pedological curriculum design. CCDD supports collaborative pedagogy and distance learning environments while creating safe, student-led spaces for courageous cultural conversations. CCDD is a teaching strategy that social justice and multicultural educators can utilize to support cross-cultural learning, competency development, and enhanced interpersonal connection and support (Barksdale et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2017). The researchers uncovered two broader implications for counselor education program development and curricula design. First, the findings highlight the importance of interuniversity collaboration among CACREP counseling programs in facilitating competency development, fostering community and professional identity, and providing additional support systems as our students matriculate into the field of professional counseling. Second, the findings emphasize the need for continuing multicultural education and structured multicultural experiences across the counseling curriculum, including integration into the internship, prepracticum, and clinical supervision experiences and activities (Nassar & Singh, 2020). This assignment is applicable across disciplines and curriculum, as it enhances skills in multicultural

competence, individual communications skills, reflexivity and critical thinking, and self-awareness.

Assignment Considerations

As this was the first implementation, researchers outline additional considerations when implementing CCDD within the classroom. Firstly, intentionally pairing students through a questionnaire, including information such as availability and open-ended "about me" questions, may be helpful so students can provide information about themselves and what they are hoping to learn from this experience. This aids educators in pairing across cultural intersections and better supporting students' needs structurally. Due to the complexities of course enrollment and pairing students, it would be helpful to provide an option to select triad vs. dyad for CCDD as part of this questionnaire. Additionally, it is beneficial to outline how to structure time, content, and individual basic communication skills for culturally centered and courageous dialogue prior to their first dialogue meeting. Finally, having students reinforce their counseling skills as part of CCDD, such as silence, reflection, validation, exploratory questioning, summary, and bringing in resources for discussion outside of course material would strengthen this assignment. Although it is made clear that students are not counseling each other, these skills enhance the CCDD experience by bringing in techniques that foster critical thinking, empathetic listening and understanding, and here-and-now processes.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study is volunteer bias; participants in this study openly expressed positive feelings about their experiences and found value in participating in the cross-cultural distance dialogues. The authors also note this study would benefit from increased diversity within the participant pool. There was representation of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural intersecting identities, however, all study participants identified as heterosexual, cisgender, middle-class, female, and school counselor-in-training.

Future qualitative studies examining the CCDD experience through divergent lenses would be beneficial. Additionally, although all participants spoke about cultural competency and increased cultural awareness, the data collected was not connected to the actual knowledge procurement or ability to implement MSJCC. Future research should examine a significant relationship between CCDD and multicultural competency through a quantitative study. Due to qualitative research's transferability, counselor educators and supervisors can utilize these results when considering implementing CCDD to promote cultural competency across the counseling curriculum.

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