

SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCE

by

Christin Kimberly Erickson

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Investigation Advisor

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**The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751**

ABSTRACT

Erickson (Last name)	Christin (First)	K. (Initial)
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School counselors and graduate students in M.S. Guidance and Counseling programs at the annual Wisconsin School Counselors Association convention were offered the opportunity to participate in the current research study, which sought to identify school counselors' perceptions about their multicultural counseling competence.

The participants' responses to the open-ended and Likert-type survey items suggested that many of the counselor preparation programs from which the counselors had graduated failed to include specific multicultural counseling courses, the infusion of multicultural concepts into all graduate coursework, and rich experiential learning opportunities in which to practice the skills that they learn within the classroom. In addition, it was revealed that the majority of school districts by which the participants are

employed provide minimal/no opportunities to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling.

Furthermore, the results suggest that while the participants in the study perceive themselves to possess multicultural awareness, they appear to have essentially no multicultural knowledge of Wisconsin Act 31, and the findings are inconclusive as to whether or not this sample of counselors are competent in terms of multicultural counseling skills. The findings also suggest that graduation date from counselor preparation program, number of years as a school counselor, level at which one counsels, and locale of the school in which a counselor works are irrelevant factors as to who sees the need for further multicultural education and training – a vast majority of all the participants see the need for further education and training in multiculturalism and multicultural counseling.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to the United States Census (2001), the growth of minority groups within the United States of America is on the rise. From 1990 to 2000, the population of Hispanic individuals living in the United States has increased by a dramatic 58% (U.S. Census, 2001), and the population of Asian/Pacific Islanders in the United States has grown to nearly 87 million people, representing an increase of 43% (Sacbee News, 2001). Another source (Constantine et al., 2001) stated that by 2050, approximately 60% of the total United States school-aged population will be comprised of non-white students. According to Orfield and Yun (cited in Constantine et al., 2001), the current population of white students in some of America's large urban cities is already less than 20% of the total student body. With such rapid minority expansion in this country, school counselors need to be knowledgeable about and proficient in multicultural counseling. Without such competence, school counselors will be unable to truly meet the personal/social, academic, and career needs of their students.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2002) identified cultural differences among students as an issue that deserved special attention from all school personnel, and from school counselors in particular. ASCA (2002) further indicated that it is the responsibility of the school counselor to consult with school personnel and address policies and attitudes within the school that serve as obstacles to these students' educations. The American Psychological Association (APA, 1993) demonstrated a similar interest in minority clients by requiring multicultural counseling competencies of

all counselors. However, in order for school counselors to comply with these expectations, appropriate training in multiculturalism is an essential prerequisite.

Unfortunately, it cannot be generalized that all school counseling training programs have paid the warranted attention to multicultural education and counseling. In 1990, Carey and Reinat recognized that most school counselors working in the field had not experienced formal education in the area of multicultural counseling. As for school counselors who had received some sort of multicultural counseling instruction, there did not appear to be much consistency in terms of the program's objectives and/or instructional methods (Das, 1995; Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). In many cases, the lack of program organization and coherence has resulted in ineffective multicultural counseling skills and abilities among practicing professional counselors (Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994).

Newer research (Herring, 1998; Holcomb-McCoy & Meyers, 1999; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000) has acknowledged the attempts by counselor education programs to include more training in multicultural competence and counseling, but it is unclear whether these attempts represent comprehensive, quality curricula or are programs that are hastily designed to meet accreditation requirements. It appears that the most popular intervention to promote multicultural competence in counseling trainees has been the single-course approach, in which all multicultural curricula is taught through an isolated course (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Multiple studies (Constantine et al., 1996; Quintana & Bernal, 1995) have acknowledged the ineffectiveness of this approach in terms of producing culturally competent counselors. Holcomb-McCoy (2001) reported that there were no significant differences between the multicultural competence self-assessment

measures of elementary school counselors who had taken a multiculturalism class as a part of their counselor education curriculum and those who had not taken such a course. Clearly, further investigation of multiculturalism training in counselor education programs is justified.

Although a substantial number of studies focusing on multicultural counseling have been conducted, it hasn't been until recent years that researchers have acknowledged the importance of counselor self-awareness as it relates to culture (Das, 1995; Fuller, 1995; Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994). According to Fuller (1995), successful multicultural counselor-client relationships depend on the counselor's knowledge about the client's cultural background in addition to the counselor's understanding of how his/her own culture influences the perceptions and expectations that he/she has about the counseling process. Baruth and Manning (2000) echoed the importance of counselor self-awareness in their study. According to these researchers, culturally competent counselors should have "an awareness of their own cultural characteristics, an awareness of how their cultural backgrounds may affect counseling decisions, the ability to resolve differences of race and beliefs between the counselor and counselee" (Baruth & Manning, 2000, p.245). However, it is unclear whether practicing school counselors and counselors-in-training actually receive this type of education and training, or if this aspect of multicultural counseling competency represents idealistic thinking.

With so many questions left unanswered, it is critical for researchers to continue to investigate the multicultural counseling competencies of practicing school counselors. Only through engaging in additional research will the inadequacies of current counselor education programs be revealed and ultimately remedied.

Statement of the Problem

The goals of this study include the following: 1) to identify the type of multicultural preparation and training that Wisconsin school guidance counselors have received during their counselor education programs and as professional school counselors, 2) to obtain self-reports from Wisconsin school guidance counselors assessing their level of competence related to multicultural awareness, knowledge, counseling skills, 3) to determine the degree to which Wisconsin school counselors are satisfied with their multicultural preparation and training. A survey will be distributed to practicing school guidance counselors and counselors-in-training at the Wisconsin School Counselor Association (WSCA) Conference in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, during February 2003. The results of this study will help to identify Wisconsin school counselors' perceptions of the multicultural instruction and training provided by counselor education programs and Wisconsin school districts and potentially suggest areas that could benefit from further development.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of preparation/training have Wisconsin school counselors had regarding multicultural issues and multicultural counseling?
2. What sorts of opportunities do Wisconsin school districts extend to school counselors in order to increase their competence in multiculturalism and multicultural counseling?

3. How competent do Wisconsin school guidance counselors perceive themselves to be in terms of multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural counseling?

4. In what areas (if any) do Wisconsin school guidance counselors see the need for further education/training in multicultural issues and multicultural counseling?

Definition of Terms

In order to comprehend fully the nature and scope of this study, the reader must understand the following terms:

Multicultural Competence: Possessing the necessary skills to successfully interact with individuals of diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999)

Multicultural Counseling: Any counseling relationship in which the counselor and the counselee belong to different cultural groups because of socialization acquired in distinct cultural, subcultural, racioethnic or socioeconomic environments (Vontress, cited in Baruth & Manning, 2000; Das, cited in Baruth & Manning, 2000).

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher of this study assumes that because of the nature of this particular conference, at least a majority of those asked will participate in this study. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the subjects will take the necessary time to fill out the survey and respond honestly to the items. Since subjects will submit their responses anonymously and at a time that is convenient for them, it is hoped that this will become a reality. It is also assumed that the research instrument will accurately measure the participants'

cultural competence and identify the areas of multiculturalism/multicultural counseling that Wisconsin school counselors see as needing further education and training.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it would be difficult at best to survey all school guidance counselors in the state of Wisconsin. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all Wisconsin school counselors nor to all counselor programs. Additionally, even though the responses are anonymous, there may be some participants who attempt to please the researcher and/or make him/herself look more competent by answering the questions in an untruthful way. Nonetheless, it is believed that the benefits of this study will far outweigh the limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will present to the reader a synopsis of the extant research related to multicultural counseling. The chapter will begin by detailing the evolution of multicultural counseling in the United States. Next some of the multiple interpretations of multicultural counseling will be described. Finally sample methods used by counselor education programs to produce multiculturally competent counselors will be discussed.

Evolution of Multicultural Counseling

From a historical perspective, the concept of multicultural counseling is a relatively young one. According to Das (1995), the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960's and 1970's served as a catalyst for the birth of multicultural counseling. During this time period, issues of ethnic and cultural diversity gained attention in ways that they hadn't in the past. In 1965, the American Counseling Association (ACA) recognized the need for the development of multicultural counseling practices (Burn, cited in Hobson & Kanitz, 1996). In 1972, the ACA responded by establishing the *Association for Non-White Concerns in Personnel and Guidance* (AMCD, n.d.). This branch still exists today and is known as the *Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development* (AMCD).

Although the AMCD had a general vision about what multicultural counseling should encompass from the time that the branch was established, it wasn't until 1986 that the AMCD published the first set of multicultural counseling competencies (Lee & Richardson, cited in Hobson & Kanitz, 1996). According to Hobson and Kanitz (1996),

the AMCD most likely developed these competencies as a response to the stated concerns of practicing counselors and counselor educators who argued the need for better multicultural training and program standards/guidelines. The current revision of these multicultural counseling competencies involves the following dimensions: counselor awareness of own assumptions and values; understanding the worldview of the culturally diverse client; and the integration of appropriate strategies and techniques (Estes, n.d.; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). It is believed that the implementation of multicultural counseling competencies will help to foster a society of psychologically healthy people who understand and value diversity, and believe that race, ethnicity, and culture are key components for human wholeness (AMCD, n.d.).

In the early nineties, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling-Related Educational Programs (CACREP) adopted the concept of multicultural counseling competencies. In 1994, CACREP included for the first time multicultural counseling objectives in its manual (Hobson & Kanitz, 1996). In order to meet new CACREP certification requirements, counselor education programs would now have to demonstrate diversity among faculty and students and provide practicum/internship opportunities in which students could interact with culturally diverse individuals (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999).

Additionally, although the foundation for multicultural counseling has been established, it hasn't been until recently that individuals have begun to challenge the applicability of counseling theories and techniques developed by white middle-class Americans to minority populations (Hobson & Kanitz, 1996). Wohl (cited in Das, 1995) indicated that traditional counseling strategies do not seem to benefit members of

minority cultures, lower socioeconomic statuses, and/or non-western cultures in the way that they benefit members of the dominant white middle-class culture. Pedersen (cited in Baruth & Manning, 2000) acknowledged that members of diverse cultures may not even conceptualize the counseling experience in the same way that members of the dominant society do – cultural beliefs may guide them to view the counseling experience as a time to be told what to do as opposed to an opportunity for self-discovery.

Das (1995) outlined a number of the inconsistencies between popular counseling techniques and the values of culturally diverse people. First, he acknowledged that the emphasis on individualism is not congruent with the belief system of many members of the Japanese, Native American, and Hispanic cultures who attend more carefully to the impacts of their own behaviors and decisions on others. Additionally, Das (1995) recognized that the focus on changing the individual versus changing the system is neither ethical nor acceptable when working with members of some minority groups – the counselor needs to take into consideration and address the oppression that the client may have experienced from the dominant culture. Thirdly, Das (1995) indicated that counselors cannot assume that their culturally diverse clients elucidate abstract terms discussed during counseling sessions, such as *love* and *success*, in the same way that the counselors do. Oftentimes, even if a culturally diverse client speaks the counselor's language fluently, his/her interpretation of an abstract term may be dissimilar from the counselor's because of cultural influence (Das, 1995). Counselors who assume that their clients share common definitions for abstract concepts unwittingly act in a way that is culturally insensitive toward their clients.

Interpretations of Multicultural Counseling

The concept of multicultural counseling, itself, is in fact an abstract one. This section of the Literature Review will present numerous interpretations of multicultural counseling found throughout the extant research. Within the existing body of literature, a number of terms are used interchangeably to describe the act of counseling individuals belonging to a culture different from that of the counselor: “multicultural counseling,” “cross-cultural counseling,” “intercultural counseling,” etc. From a historical perspective, these terms (which will be referred to as *multicultural counseling* from this point onward) were developed in order to describe the counseling relationship occurring between white European-American counselors and American minority clients who were racially and ethnically diverse (Das, 1995). However, most researchers and practicing counselors of the current time utilize the term *multicultural counseling* in a much broader sense. Generally, this term is believed to encompass diversity issues related to gender, social class, sexual orientation, and ability, in addition to racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Baruth & Manning, 2000; Constantine, 2001).

Commonly accepted definitions for *multicultural counseling* found throughout the literature include: “A situation in which two or more people with different ways of perceiving their social environment are brought together in a helping relationship (Pedersen, cited in Das, 1995, p.45) and “Counseling in which the counselor and counselee are culturally different because of socialization acquired in distinct cultural, subcultural, racioethnic, or socioeconomic environments” (Vontress, cited in Baruth & Manning, 2000, p.243). Similarly, the literature indicates that *multicultural counseling competence* is achieved by counselors who are knowledgeable about and sensitive to their

clients' cultural differences, who possess and apply the skills that are necessary to meet the unique needs of culturally diverse clients, and who demonstrate a non-judgmental, value-free approach to counseling (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonsalves, cited in Hobson-Kanitz, 1996; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

However, while these definitions are widely accepted, the work of many experts in the field suggests that these definitions fall short of defining the complete essence of multicultural counseling. Many studies (Arredondo, cited in Estes, n.d.; Carey & Reinat, 1990; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000) identify the issue of counselor self-awareness as an integral component of multicultural counseling. According to Helms (cited in Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994), the importance of the counselor's own understanding of his/her cultural beliefs and how they affect counselor-client relationships is often overlooked. Tomlinson-Clarke (2000) recognized that only when counselor self-knowledge and self-awareness is increased will the existing understanding of multicultural counseling be extended.

Closely related, Das (1995) identified an additional way in which the accepted definitions of *multicultural counseling* are sub-comprehensive. Das (1995) contended that because the existing definitions of *multicultural counseling* are stated in such general terms, the following types of multicultural counseling relationships often go overlooked:

- a) An ethnic minority counselor/white client,
- b) Ethnic minority counselor/ethnic minority client belonging to a minority group different from that of the counselor,
- c) Any other combination in which the counselor/client differ with respect to social class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

In such a way, the concern exists that the accepted definitions of

multicultural counseling fail to identify the variety of counselor-client relationship types that are likely to occur.

While only a limited number of experts in the field challenge the existing definitions and interpretations of multicultural counseling, numerous researchers indicate the need for improved multicultural counseling instruction within counselor education programs (Das, 1995; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992; Sue & Sue, cited in Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). To begin with, the literature indicates that there are many different theoretical frameworks that govern the design and implementation of multicultural training within counselor education programs. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the theories from which multicultural counseling curricula have stemmed (cited in Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999): Pedersen's Triad Model, which emphasizes multicultural counseling skill development; Mio's approach, which accentuates the importance of practical experience with culturally diverse clients; Ivey and Nwachuku's method, which integrates an Afrocentric approach to counseling; and Carney and Kahn's model, in which multicultural counseling is a part of the ongoing process of counselor development. Das (1995) described the Transcultural Approach to multicultural counseling instruction, which focuses on recognizing the similarities and common experiences shared by members of minority cultures.

Multicultural Counseling Curricula

In addition to varying theoretical foundations, the delivery of multicultural counseling curricula is also non-uniform. While some counselor education programs infuse multicultural counseling concepts into all coursework, the majority of programs

teach the multicultural counseling curricula through a single semester-long course (Carey & Reinat, 1990; Das, 1995; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). A multicultural counseling practicum experience, in which students are provided the opportunity to integrate the learned skills with members of diverse cultures, may or may not be required of students (Das, 1995).

Herring (1998) contended that the variation between multicultural counseling education approaches is inadequate, and a comprehensive, uniform approach is needed. Other researchers have echoed Herring's opinions and have identified ways in which multicultural counseling education programs and curricula are substandard. Carey and Reinat (1990) criticized the fact that well-defined standards by which to measure multicultural competence do not exist. Pope-Davis and Otavi (1994, p.651) indicated that the following are barriers to the preparation of multiculturally competent counselors: "The lack of an organized and integrated approach to teaching skills that are appropriate for culturally diverse clients," the fact that "few instructional materials are available that address multicultural counseling training," and "the assumption that acquiring appropriate knowledge and skills is sufficient to be a culturally skilled counselor."

Another common criticism of multicultural counseling instruction within counselor education programs is that there are too few opportunities for practical experience. Multiple studies (Constantine, 2001; Heppner & O'Brien (1994); Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) emphasized the importance of experiential activities that enable counselors-in-training to apply the skills that they learn within the classroom. Unfortunately, many counseling students (those who do not complete a multicultural counseling field experience or have

the opportunity to work with people of diverse culture in other settings) never receive the opportunity to experience this type of learning (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

According to Heppner and O'Brien (1994), although multicultural awareness and knowledge can be achieved within the classroom, true multicultural counseling skill development requires real-life integration opportunities. Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) further identified the importance of multicultural practicum experiences and/or experiential activities by correlating higher counselor self-competence ratings with "in vivo" learning opportunities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will first explicate the subject selection process and provide a description of the participants. Next the instrumentation utilized within this study, in addition to procedures used for data collection and data analysis, will be described. Finally the chapter will conclude with a summary of the study's methodological limitations.

Subject Selection and Description

Potentially each of the 1425 active members of the Wisconsin School Counselor Association (WSCA) will have the opportunity to participate in this study. The researcher has intentionally chosen this population because this group is easily accessible to her, and she believes it to be representative of Wisconsin-state school guidance counselors. Practicing professional school counselors working in Wisconsin schools, in addition to counselors-in-training receiving their degrees from Wisconsin school counselor education programs, will be invited to participate in this study. This population includes both male and female counselors at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. All participation in this study will be voluntary, and participants will acknowledge their consent to participate by their actual participation in the study – no signatures will be required of the participants in order to maintain anonymity in the study. [A finalized copy of the cover letter is included in Appendix A.]

Instrumentation

The survey that will be utilized in this study is truly an eclectic one. The researcher of this study consulted published surveys on multiculturalism in order to get ideas for survey items and format (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 2002; Oyeyemi, 1993). After reviewing the existing surveys, the researcher designed a survey specific to the research questions of this study. The format of the survey consists of a demographic section, free response questions, and Likert-type items.

Because the researcher of this study and a fellow colleague will both conduct their research at the WSCA conference – each in the form of a survey – the two collaborated and developed a cover letter and demographics section that will be used for each of the studies. The choice was made to administer the surveys jointly in order to reduce the amount of repetitious work for participants and increase the potential for participation. The demographic section begins with two items that request information regarding the participants' gender and race.

Next, because this researcher assumes that practicing school counselors in addition to counselors-in-training will participate in this survey, two demographic subsections have been developed that include items specific to each of these two distinct groups. Two clearly marked headings – “If you are a practicing school counselor:” and “If you are a graduate student in a M.S. School Counseling Program:” – signal to the participants the items with which they should proceed. This was done in order to yield the most accurate representation possible of the demographic information obtained.

The first three core items of the survey follow the demographic section. These items are open-ended questions that inquire about the participants' multicultural

preparation and training during their counselor preparation programs, the opportunities that school districts offer to school counselors to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, and whether or not the participants see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Item two, which is only applicable to practicing school counselors, is clearly marked “For practicing school counselors only.” Again, this was done in order to reduce confusion among participants and produce the most accurate data possible.

Items four through seven of the survey are Likert-type items that address the participants’ level of multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural counseling skills. These items have been designed so that all participants – practicing counselors in addition to counselors-in-training – may respond. Finally, there is also substantial space provided at the end of the survey – a section labeled “Additional Comments” – where participants will have the opportunity to record any additional thoughts that they have related to the survey itself, multiculturalism in general, and/or multicultural counseling. In that this instrument was designed exclusively for this study, no measures of reliability or validity can be reported on the instrument. At best this study can be said to have face validity. [A finalized copy of the survey is included in Appendix B.]

Data Collection

The researcher of this study has already obtained authorization from the WSCA conference coordinator, John Bowen, to distribute the survey to all interested attendees at the annual WSCA Conference in Steven’s Point, Wisconsin, on February 19, 20, and 21, 2003. Prior to the WSCA conference’s first registration period, the researcher will place

a copy of the survey within each packet of registration materials, which will be picked up by all conference attendees as they check-in during registration. At both the pre-conference and regular registration periods, the researcher of this study will introduce the current study and its intent to the counselors and counselors-in-training through a brief public announcement. During this time, conference attendees will also be made aware that the survey is included within their registration packet and that they should return completed surveys to the locked box at the Stout booth, located within the conference's exhibition area. Study participants will be reminded of the survey return policies in both the study's cover letter and survey itself [See cover letter in Appendix A and survey in Appendix B].

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis will be implemented in order to analyze the data collected as a result of this study. The researcher of this study has already contacted Ms. Christine Ness, the Statistical and Research Consultant at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, who has consented to running the statistics on the data collected for this researcher using a computerized statistics program. Item analysis will be implemented to report the frequencies and percentages for the responses to each survey item. Demographic information of the participants such as gender, years of counseling experience, etc. will also play a role in the data analysis. These variables will provide a means for crosstabulations and comparisons of responses among the study participants. This researcher will also permit Ms. Ness to run any additional statistical tests that Ms. Ness believes to be appropriate to and beneficial for the outcomes of this study.

Limitations

As with essentially all research, the current study possesses limitations related to sample selection, data collection, and instrumentation. For example, the fact that the study participants were chosen in a non-random way indicates potential subjectivity on behalf of the researcher. Additionally, the data collected from the WSCA conference participants cannot be said to truly represent the attitudes and beliefs of all Wisconsin state school counselors. It can be inferred that most, if not all, of the counselors in attendance at the conference are motivated individuals who strive to maintain high professional standards – if they were not, it is likely that they would not attend the conference. For this reason, the results of this study might be disproportionately more homogeneous than they would be if the same instrument was administered to a sample of Wisconsin school counselors within their natural work environments.

Similarly, the data collection procedure for the current study possesses limitations. The fact that study participants will have to physically locate the Stout booth in order to turn in their completed surveys might deter counselors and counselors-in-training from participating in this study – some individuals might feel that participation in the study requires too much effort and is inconvenient. Also, the lack of the researcher's close proximity while participants complete the survey might also pose potential problems. Should a participant have a question about a survey item, he/she will not have the opportunity to clarify his/her question with the author of this study. As a result, the survey responses might be contaminated as a result of misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation of survey items. In addition, although the researcher hopes that the study participants will respond openly and honestly to the survey items, this cannot be

guaranteed. Even though anonymity will be maintained in this study, participants may still respond in such a way so as to please the researcher.

Finally, the survey utilized in this study is not free of criticism. Because the instrument was designed solely for the purposes of this study, the researcher cannot report measures of validity or reliability. Additionally, because the free response section of the survey requires substantially more time and reflection on behalf of the participant, the potential exists for the study participants to provide non-exhaustive responses to these items or even skip this section of the survey in its entirety. Again, this would result in incomplete data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will report the findings of this study. Demographic information will be looked at first and will be followed by a discussion of the item analysis for survey items one through three. Next the chapter will present the crosstabulations between the responses to the open-ended survey items (items one through three) and various demographic data. The chapter will continue with the item analysis for survey items four through ten (the Likert-type items), and finally conclude with the presentation of t-tests and one way analyses of variance run on survey items four through ten. Data that corresponds with the study's four research questions will be identified as such when applicable.

Demographic Information

Five hundred forty-seven surveys were distributed to Wisconsin school counselors and counselors-in-training in attendance at the WSCA conference. Of the distributed surveys, 182 surveys (33.3%) were returned. Of these, only 158 were entirely completed – 24 participants completed only the demographic section and did not respond to any of the core items included in the survey. A sample representing 28.9% of the total possible participants was yielded. The sub-section of the survey assessing the participants' multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills through Likert-type items rendered a slightly higher rate of response than did the sub-section including open-ended questions. One hundred sixty-six of the 182 participants (91.2%) responded to each of the seven Likert-type items. Therefore, the sample for this sub-section of the survey can

be said to be slightly more representative of the total possible participants (30.3%) than the 158-person sample (28.9%) utilized for the survey as a whole.

Of the 182 participants who returned surveys, 40 individuals (22.0%) were male and 141 individuals (77.5%) were female. One participant (0.5%) did not specify his/her gender. Relative to participant ethnicity, 179 (98.4%) of the participants who returned surveys were Caucasian, and one individual (0.5%) reported being Hispanic. Two individuals (1.1%) who returned surveys did not report their ethnic backgrounds.

The following frequencies and percentages represent the data collected in the “Practicing School Counselor” sub-section of the demographics section. Of the total participants, 159 (87.4%) responded to the item that asked for the name of the academic institution where they completed their counseling graduate work. One hundred thirty-six respondents (85.5%) reported that they attended one of the University of Wisconsin system schools. Of these respondents, 39 individuals (28.7%) attended UW-Stout, 25 individuals (18.4%) attended UW-Milwaukee, 22 individuals (16.2%) attended UW-Oshkosh, and 17 individuals (12.5%) attended UW-Platteville. Of the 23 respondents (14.5%) who did not identify one of the UW-system schools as their alma mater, 20 respondents (12.6%) reported attending various colleges and universities in the Midwest. Two respondents (1.3%) attended California State University at Fullerton, and one respondent (0.6%) attended Arizona State University.

Data was also collected relative to the participants’ graduation date from their counselor preparation program. Of all the participants who responded to this item, 38 (24.2%) reported graduating between the years of 2000 and 2002, 44 (28.0%) graduated

between 1993 and 1999, 45 (28.7%) graduated between 1983 and 1992, and 30 (19.1%) graduated between 1969 and 1982.

Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the number of years that they have served as a practicing school counselor. Each of the 182 participants (100%) responded to this item. Twenty-five individuals (13.7%) indicated that they have not yet been employed by a school district as a school counselor. Thirty individuals (16.5%) have practiced school counseling for one to two years, 56 individuals (30.8%) reported practicing for three to ten years, 52 individuals (28.6%) for 11 to 20 years, and 19 individuals (10.4%) have been in the field for 21 to 32 years.

Next, practicing school counselors were asked to indicate the grade level at which they are currently counseling. Of the 155 participants who responded to this item, 55 (35.5%) stated that they are elementary guidance counselors serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade, 30 (19.4%) reported being middle school counselors serving students in grades six through eight, 42 (27.1%) stated that they work with high school students in ninth through twelfth grade, and 28 (18.1%) reported that they counsel students at multiple levels.

Of the 157 participants who responded to the item addressing the type of school at which they work as a school counselor, a vast majority (148 respondents; 94.3%) stated that they were employed by a public school. Eight respondents (5.1%) reported that they worked for a private school, and one respondent (0.6%) reported working for both public and private schools.

Data collected for the next demographic item indicated that just over half of the participants who responded to this item (83 participants, 54.2%) serve as school

counselors in rural areas. Thirty-six participants (23.5%) reported working in suburban settings, and 34 (22.2%) stated that they work for schools in urban settings. When surveyed about the number of students that they serve, 39 respondents (25.5%) reported working with 60 to 350 students, 47 (30.7%) reported working with 351 to 450 students, 27 (14.8%) reported working with 451 to 550 students, 32 (20.9%) reported working with 551 to 860 students, and eight (5.2%) reported working with 1000 to 6000 students.

The following frequencies and percentages represent the data collected from participants who are currently graduate students in school guidance and counseling master's programs. Of the 22 participants who responded to the items included within this demographic sub-section, almost half (10 individuals, 45.5%) reported that they are pursuing their school counseling degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Eight individuals (36.4%) stated that they are students in other UW-system graduate programs (UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Superior, and UW-Whitewater). The remaining five respondents (22.7%) identified other Wisconsin and Minnesota schools as the academic institutions that they attend.

Of the 22 school counseling graduate students who indicated their expected graduation date, over half (13 participants, 59.1%) reported that they plan on graduating in 2003. One participant (4.5%) reported being a recent 2002 graduate who was not yet employed as a school counselor. Seven respondents (31.8%) intend to graduate in 2004, and one respondent (4.5%) plans to graduate in 2005.

Item Analysis: Survey Items One through Three

Frequency counts and percentages, in addition to crosstabulations between various demographic data and the open-ended responses to the items, were done on

survey items one through three. The responses to item one – *What types of multicultural preparation and training did you have during your counselor education program?* – provided direct answers to the first research question – *What types of preparation/training have Wisconsin school counselors had regarding multicultural issues and multicultural counseling?*.

One hundred sixty-five participants (90.7%) provided answers to item one. Of them, nearly one-third (53 individuals, 32.1%) reported that their counselor education program did not include a graduate-level course related to multiculturalism or multicultural counseling. Sixty-five respondents (39.4%) reported that they took one graduate course in multiculturalism. Fourteen individuals (8.5%) indicated that their counselor preparation coursework included a graduate course in multiculturalism in addition to a required multicultural field experience component. Thirty-three individuals (20.0%) stated that their counselor education included a specific course in multicultural counseling. Of the 165 respondents, 23 (13.9%) provided information about the degree to which multicultural issues and concepts were infused into their general graduate coursework. Eleven of the 159 respondents (6.9%) indicated that multicultural concepts and issues were infused into all of their graduate coursework. Twelve respondents (7.5%) stated that multicultural concepts and issues were integrated into some of their other counselor preparation graduate courses.

One hundred thirty-six of the 182 participants (74.7%) responded at least in part to the second survey item – *What sorts of opportunities has your school offered to you to further your knowledge about multiculturalism and multicultural counseling? Were these opportunities beneficial to you?*. The responses to this item were directly related to the

study's second research question – *What sorts of opportunities do Wisconsin school districts extend to school counselors in order to increase their competence in multiculturalism and multicultural counseling?*

Sixty-four respondents (47.1%) indicated that their school district provides them with no opportunities or minimal opportunities (zero to one inservice/conference per year) to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and/or multicultural counseling. Thirty-eight respondents (27.9%) stated that their school provides some opportunities (2-3 inservices/conferences/workshops per year) for them to further their understanding of multiculturalism and/or multicultural counseling. Twelve individuals (8.8%) indicated that their districts provide them with many opportunities (frequent inservice/conference/workshop opportunities, multicultural organizations, guest speakers, informative panels, etc.) to further their understanding of multiculturalism and/or multicultural concepts. Of the 136 respondents, 11 (8.1%) indicated that their districts will provide financial support so that the counselor may attend conferences and workshops related to multiculturalism and/or multicultural counseling. Eleven respondents (8.1%) reported that they personally seek out opportunities to further their knowledge of multicultural concepts and counseling.

A total of 155 participants (85.2%) responded to survey item number three – *Do you see the need for further education and training related to multicultural issues and multicultural counseling? If yes, how could it be improved?*. The responses to this survey item provided data related to the fourth research question – *In what areas (if any) do Wisconsin school guidance counselors see the need for further education/training in multicultural issues and multicultural counseling?*

One hundred twenty-three of the respondents (79.4%) indicated that they see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. These individuals made the following suggestions for improving the level of exposure to multicultural concepts and counseling within counselor education programs: requiring multicultural courses at the graduate level, offering and requiring specific multicultural counseling courses as part of the counselor education curriculum, infusing multicultural concepts into all graduate courses, and more hands-on learning opportunities related to multiculturalism (i.e. multicultural guest lecturers and panelists, multicultural field experience opportunities, and immersion in diverse cultures).

Recommendations were also made as to how school districts could further educate and train school counselors in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. These suggestions included: offering (more) inservice and workshop opportunities, supporting counselor attendance at out-of-district conferences and workshops, presenting multicultural guest speakers and panel members, encouraging multicultural teaming, hosting school-wide multicultural events and celebrations, hiring more diverse school teachers/counselors, and offering training related to multicultural counseling techniques.

Nineteen respondents (12.3%) indicated that they were unsure or “it depends” when asked if they saw the need for further multicultural education and training. Some of the respondents indicated that environmental factors such as the locale of the school in which one is counseling and the demographics of the school population determine whether or not the need exists for further education and training. Others indicated that although they felt competent in terms of counseling diverse populations, further

education would be beneficial. Thirteen respondents (7.1%) stated that they do not see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and/or multicultural counseling.

Crosstabulations: Survey Items One through Three

Crosstabulations reporting frequencies and percentages were also run between the first three survey items and various demographic data. Responses to the third and fourth demographic items (*institution where you completed your counseling graduate work* and *graduation date from counselor preparation program*) were crosstabulated with the first survey item – *What types of multicultural preparation and training did you have during your counselor education program?* – to further analyze the data.

Crosstabulations between the responses to the third demographic item (*institution where you completed your counseling graduate work*) and the first survey item (*what types of multicultural preparation and training did you have during your counselor preparation program?*) revealed that nine (36.0%) of the 25 individuals who reported having a specific multicultural counseling course during their counselor education program attended/attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Five respondents (20.0%) attended/attend the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Furthermore, of the 12 respondents who stated that they had taken a multiculturalism course in addition to a multicultural field experience as part of their graduate work, eight respondents (66.7%) indicated that they attended/attend the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Crosstabulations between the responses to the first survey item (*types of multicultural preparation and training*) and the fourth demographic item (*graduation date from counselor preparation program*) demonstrated that of the 50 respondents who

reported taking no graduate-level course in multiculturalism or multicultural counseling, 17 (34.0%) graduated between 1969 and 1982, 19 (38.0%) graduated between 1983 and 1992, 10 (20.0%) graduated between 1993 and 1999, and four (8.0%) graduated between 2000 and 2002. In addition, of those who reported that they had both a multicultural course and field experience as part of their counselor preparation program (n=12), almost half (n=5, 41.7%) graduated between 2000 and 2002. Of the 25 individuals who had taken a specific multicultural counseling course as part of their graduate studies, 48.0% (n=12) graduated between 1993-1999 and 36.0% (n=9) graduated between 2000 and 2002.

Regarding the level of infusion of multicultural concepts into graduate coursework, crosstabulations indicated that of the 16 respondents who reported the infusion of multicultural concepts and issues into most or all of their graduate coursework, more than one-third of these individuals (37.5%, n=6) attended/attend the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. The remaining 62.5% (n=10) were evenly split up among other UW-system schools, California State at Fullerton, Northern Illinois University, Lakeland College, and the University of Minnesota.

Crosstabulations between the responses to the first survey item and the fourth demographic item (*graduation date from counselor preparation program*) indicated that 80.0% of the respondents who reported that multicultural concepts and issues were integrated into most or all of their graduate-level coursework (n=12) graduated in 1993 or later. In addition, of the seven individuals who reported that multicultural concepts and issues were infused into all of their graduate coursework, 85.8% (n=6) graduated in 1993 or later, and one (14.3%) graduated between 1983 and 1992. None of the survey

participants who graduated between 1969 and 1982 reported having multiculturalism integrated into all of their graduate coursework, and only one 1969-1982 graduate (12.5%) reported experiencing some integration of multicultural issues into graduate coursework.

Crosstabulations were made between the responses to the second survey item – *What sorts of opportunities has your school offered to you to further your knowledge about multiculturalism and multicultural counseling?* – and the responses to the eighth and ninth demographic items (*type of school* and *locale of school*). Crosstabulations with “type of school” revealed that of the 64 respondents who stated that their school provided no opportunities at all or minimal opportunities to expand their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 90.6% (n=58) worked within public school districts.

Furthermore, of the 127 respondents who identified themselves as public school counselors, 45.7% (n=58) reported that their school offered them none/minimal multicultural opportunities, 28.3% (n=35) stated that their school offered some opportunities to learn more about multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, and 9.4% (n=12) indicated that their district afforded them many opportunities to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and/or multicultural counseling. Ten public school counselors (7.9%) indicated that although their school districts themselves do not provide multicultural learning opportunities, they support counselor attendance at external seminars, conferences, and workshops. Of the seven respondents who reported working for private schools, almost three-fourths (71.4%, n=5) indicated that their districts provided them with no/minimal opportunities that expand their multicultural knowledge.

The respondent who reported working for both a public and private school reported that the districts offered minimal or no multicultural opportunities.

“Locale of school” was also used as a means for crosstabulation with the second survey item. This crosstabulation yielded the following results: almost half of the 29 respondents who identified themselves as school counselors in suburban areas (48.3%, n=14) and over half of the 71 respondents who identified themselves as school counselors in rural areas (56.3%, n=40) indicated that their districts provide them with no/minimal opportunities to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Twenty-five percent (n=8) of the 32 urban school counselors indicated that their districts provided them with no/minimal opportunities to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Of the 133 respondents, only 9.0% (n=12) reported that their districts offer them many multicultural learning opportunities – four of the 29 participating suburban school counselors (13.8%), five of the 71 participating rural school counselors (7.0%), and three of the 32 participating urban school counselors (9.4%). In addition, of the 11 counselors who reported that they personally sought out opportunities to further their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, over nearly two-thirds (n=7, 63.6%) serve as school counselors in rural areas.

Responses to the third survey item – *Do you see the need for further education and training related to multicultural issues and multicultural counseling?* – were also crosstabulated with the responses to various demographic items including gender, graduation date from counselor preparation program, number of years as a practicing school counselor, grade level at which you are currently counseling, and locale of school. Crosstabulations between the third survey item and “gender” indicated that 66.7% (n=22)

of the male respondents and 82.8% (n=101) of the female respondents see the need for further education and training in the area of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Of the 19 individuals (12.3%) who stated that they were “not sure” about the need for further multicultural education and training or that “it depends” on where one is working as a school counselor, 31.6% (n=6) are male and 68.4% (n=13) are female. Of the 13 respondents (8.4%) who stated that they do not see the need for further education and training in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 38.5% (n=5) are male and 61.5% (n=8) are female.

“Graduation date from counselor preparation program” was also crosstabulated with the respondents’ answers to the third survey item. The results revealed that of the 108 participants who see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 26.9% (n=29) graduated between the years 2000 and 2002, 27.8% (n=30) graduated between 1993 and 1999, 27.8% (n=30) graduated between 1983 and 1992, and 17.6% (n=19) graduated between 1969 and 1982. Of the 12 respondents (8.8%) who indicated that they see no need for further multicultural education and training, 25.0% (n=3) graduated between 1969 and 1982, 25.0% (n=3) graduated between 1983 and 1992, 41.7% (n=5) graduated between 1993 and 1999, and 8.3% (n=1) graduated between 2000 and 2002. Of those who graduated between 1969 and 1982, 70.4% (n=19) see the need for further multicultural education and training, as do 79.0% (n=30) of the 1983-1992 graduates, 73.2% (n=29) of the 1993-1999 graduates, and 93.5% (n=29) of the 2000-2002 graduates.

The results of crosstabulations between the third survey item and responses to the fifth demographic item (*number of years as a practicing school counselor*) indicated that

of the 123 respondents (79.4%) who see the need for further education and training relative to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 13.0% (n=16) are students in graduate-level counselor preparation programs, 17.1% (n=21) have been school counselors for one to two years, 33.3% (n=41) have served as guidance counselors for three to ten years, 27.6% (n=34) have been practicing school counselors for 11 to 20 years, and 8.9% (n=11) have been in the field of school guidance for 21 to 32 years. More specifically, of the 18 respondents who are currently counselors-in-training, 88.9% (n=16) see the need for further multicultural education and training as do 91.3% (n=21) of the 23 counselors who have practiced for one to two years, 78.9% (n=41) of the 52 respondents who have been counselors for three to ten years, 75.6% (n=34) of the 34 respondents who have been counselors for 11 to 20 years, and 64.7% (n=11) of the 11 individuals who have practiced school guidance for 21 to 32 years.

Of the 13 respondents who do not see the need for further education and training in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, one individual (7.7%) is still in a graduate-level counselor preparation program, one (7.7%) has been in the field for one to two years, five (38.5%) have practiced school guidance for three to ten years, four (30.8%) have been in the field for 11 to 20 years, and two of the respondents (15.4) have been school counselors for 21 to 32 years.

The responses to the sixth demographic item (*grade level at which you are currently counseling*) were also crosstabulated with the responses to the third survey item. The results demonstrated that of the 106 respondents who see the need for further education and training relative to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 32.1% (n=34) counsel at the elementary level, 20.8% (n=22) work at the middle school level,

27.4% (n=29) are school counselors at the high school level, and 19.8% (n=21) serve as guidance counselors at multiple levels. Of the 12 respondents who stated that they do not see the need for further multicultural education and training, six (50.0%) work at the elementary level, one (8.3%) works at the middle school level, and five (41.7%) work at the high school level. Of the 46 respondents who work at the elementary level, 73.9% (n=34) see the need for further education and training in multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Twenty-two of the 26 middle school respondents (84.6%), 29 of the 39 high school respondents (74.4%), and 21 of the 25 multi-level respondents (84.0%) also believe that further education and training in these areas is warranted.

Finally, the responses to the ninth demographic item (*locale of school*) were also crosstabulated with the responses to the third survey item. Of the 105 respondents who indicated that they see the need for further education and training in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, 24.8% (n=26) work in suburban schools, 54.3% (n=57) work in schools in rural areas, 20.0% (n=21) work in urban schools, and 1.0% (n=1) work for schools in both rural and urban settings.

Of the 34 respondents who identified themselves as counselors in suburban schools, 76.5% (n=26) believe that further education and training is necessary, 17.6% (n=6) indicated that they do not see the need, and 5.9% (n=2) stated that they were “not sure.” Of the 70 respondents who identified themselves as counselors in rural settings, 81.4% (n=57) indicated that they see the need for further multicultural education and training, 1.4% (n=1) indicated that there is no need for further training, and 17.1% (n=12) indicated that they were “not sure.” Of the 30 respondents who serve as school counselors in urban areas, 70.0% (n=21) believe further training is warranted, 16.7%

(n=5) do not see the need, and 13.3% (n=4) are unsure as to whether or not further multicultural education and training is needed. The respondent who works in both rural and urban settings sees the need for further education and training.

Item Analysis: Survey Items Four through Ten

Frequency counts and percentages, in addition to independent groups t-tests and one-way analyses of variance, were run on survey items four through ten in order to further analyze the participants' responses. The responses to each of these survey items provide data directly related to the third research question – *How competent do Wisconsin school guidance counselors perceive themselves to be in terms of multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural counseling?*. Frequency counts and percentages will be presented first and will be followed by the results of the independent groups t-tests and one-way analyses of variance.

Of the 170 participants who responded to item four – *I understand how my cultural identity affects the ways that I think, behave, and interact with others* – 160 individuals (94.1%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Four respondents (2.4%) were uncertain, and six respondents (3.6 %) either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

One hundred sixty-eight participants responded to item five – *I believe that all members of a cultural group share similar values and traditions*. Of these respondents, 43 individuals (25.6%) strongly disagreed and 79 respondents (47.0%) disagreed with this statement. Eighteen respondents (10.7%) reported that they were uncertain, and the remaining 28 participants (16.7%) stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Of the 169 individuals that responded to item six – *I believe that “cultural diversity” refers to differences in ability, sexual preference, etc. in addition to racial and ethnic differences* – 126 respondents (74.5%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Fifteen respondents (8.9%) stated that they were uncertain, and 28 respondents (16.5%) indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

One hundred sixty-seven participants responded to item seven – *I am knowledgeable about Act 31*. Of the respondents, only five individuals (3.0%) strongly agreed with this statement. Seventeen respondents (10.2%) reported agreement, 38 (20.9%) were uncertain, and 107 (64.0%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Regarding item eight – *I believe that the counseling techniques I have learned are applicable to all cultures with little or no modification* – 119 (70.4%) of the total 169 respondents reported either strong disagreement or disagreement with this statement. Twenty-eight respondents (16.6%) expressed uncertainty, and 22 respondents (13.1%) indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

One hundred sixty-nine participants responded to item nine – *I believe that I am able to provide appropriate counseling services to students with cultural backgrounds different from my own*. Of these respondents, 20 (11.8%) reported strong agreement, 89 (52.7%) reported agreement, and 47 (27.8%) reported that they were uncertain. Thirteen respondents (7.7%) indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Of the 166 participants that responded to the tenth Likert-type item – *I believe that my counselor education program prepared me to effectively counsel culturally diverse individuals* – 64 respondents (38.6%) reported that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed. Forty-one respondents (24.7%) indicated that they were uncertain, 58 respondents (34.9%) indicated that they agree, and only 3 individuals (1.8%) indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement.

T-tests and One Way Analyses of Variance: Survey Items Four through Ten

Independent groups t-tests were also run on survey items four through ten using “gender” as the independent variable. Of them, two produced statistically significant results. At a 99.9% level of confidence ($p=.001$), females reported stronger opinions of agreement (mean=4.14) than males (mean=3.19) with the statement that *cultural diversity* refers to differences in ability, sexual preference, etc. in addition to racial and ethnic differences. In addition, there were statistically significant differences between and within groups regarding the degree to which males and females believe that counseling techniques are applicable to all cultures with little or no modification. At a 99% level of confidence ($p=.01$), females reported stronger opinions of disagreement (mean=2.15) than males (mean=2.65).

A one way analysis of variance was run on survey items four through ten, using “graduation date from counselor preparation program” as the independent variable. At a 95% level of confidence ($p=.05$), statistically significant differences were found between and within groups regarding the degree to which graduates agree that *cultural diversity* refers to differences in ability, sexual preference, etc. in addition to racial and ethnic differences. 1969-1982 graduates (mean=3.52) and 1983-1992 graduates (mean=3.60)

reported stronger levels of uncertainty with this statement than did 1993-1999 graduates (mean=4.12) and 2000-2002 graduates (mean=4.16), who indicated stronger opinions of agreement.

The one way analysis of variance using “graduation date from counselor preparation program” as the independent variable also revealed statistically significant differences at a 95% level of confidence ($p=.05$) between and within groups relative to the eighth survey item – *I believe that the counseling techniques I have learned are applicable to all cultures with little or no modification*. Respondents who graduated between 1969 and 1982 (mean=2.76) were relatively uncertain as to whether or not learned counseling techniques are applicable to all cultures with little or no modification, and those who graduated between 1983 and 1992 (mean=2.19), 1993 and 1999 (mean=2.26), and 2000 and 2002 (mean=2.06) reported stronger opinions of disagreement with this concept.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the present study's findings and relative to the extant research. In addition the conclusions of this study will be summarized. Finally recommendations for further study in this area will be provided.

Discussion

Regarding the type of education and training that counselors receive during their counselor preparation programs in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, the findings of the present study suggest that the school counselors in this sample are even more deficient than those involved in previous research endeavors. Of the participants in this study, 32% have received no graduate-level multicultural instruction and 39.4% have taken only one general multiculturalism course at the graduate level. Only 8.5% of the participants have experienced a multicultural field experience in addition to a general multiculturalism course, and only 20% have taken a specific graduate-level course related to multicultural counseling.

In such a way, the level of multicultural education experienced by this study's participants appears to be substandard. According to Carey and Reinat (1990), Das (1995), and Tomlinson-Clarke (2000), most counselor education programs teach multicultural counseling concepts through a single semester-long course. Fewer than 40% of the participants involved in the present study have taken a general multiculturalism course, let alone a specific multicultural counseling course, at the graduate level. Even still, this is the most frequently reported type of multicultural

preparation method experienced by the participants in this study, which has been identified as “ineffective” by existing research (Constantine et al., 1996; Quintana & Bernal, 1995). In addition, only 14.4% of the participants involved in this study indicated that multicultural concepts and issues were infused into some or all of their graduate coursework – the preferred method of multicultural instruction.

Furthermore, fewer than 10% of the participants in this study reported having had a multicultural field experience as part of their counselor preparation program. This supports the findings of existing research (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) that most counselors do not have the opportunity to practice the multicultural counseling skills that they have learned in a hands-on situation until they are working with diverse clients in a professional setting. In that extant research (Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Holcomb-McCoy & Meyers, 1999) indicates that true multicultural counseling skill development requires real-life integration opportunities, the instructional methods that have been implemented by counselor preparation programs are open to criticism.

As for the types and frequency of opportunities provided by school districts to school counselors to increase their competence in multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, approximately 50% of all the participants in this study indicated that their schools provide them with no opportunities or minimal opportunities. Only about 8% of the participants indicated that their school districts would fiscally support their attendance at an out-of-district conference/workshop addressing multicultural issues. Twenty-eight percent of the participants in this study indicated that their schools offer to them one or two inservice/workshop opportunities per year to further their knowledge of multiculturalism. Fewer than 10% of the participants stated that their districts provide

frequent inservice/conference/workshop opportunities or multicultural organizations, guest speakers, informative panels, etc. This implies that many counselors – of whom the majority have received inadequate or non-existent multicultural preparation through their graduate-level counselor preparation programs – will have only those opportunities that they personally seek out as a means of furthering their multicultural counseling competence.

Furthermore, the findings of this study appear to rule out demographic variables such as type of school (public vs. private) and locale of school (suburban vs. rural vs. urban) as indicators of schools that either provide or fail to provide opportunities for furthering the understanding of multicultural issues. Nearly half of the study's public school counselors indicated that their schools offered to them no/minimal opportunities to increase their multicultural knowledge and competence, as did over 70% of the study's private school counselors. In addition, just shy of 50% of the suburban counselors reported an absence of district-offered multicultural learning opportunities, as did 56% of the rural school counselors, and 25% of the urban school counselors. Within urban school settings where diversity is likely to be more prevalent, one in every four of this study's urban counselors does not receive district-sponsored opportunities to learn more about multiculturalism and multicultural training.

Regarding whether or not the school counselors in this study believe that further multicultural education and training is necessary, 80% of the respondents indicated that they see the need, many of whom indicated that it is "essential," "very necessary," "definitely needed," or "very much needed." Some even indicated their strong affirmative opinions by underlining their responses and/or capitalizing the letters in their

responses. Also, this study's findings suggest that there does not appear to be any significant relationship between the participating counselors' graduation dates, the number of years they have practiced school counseling, the level at which they serve as school counselors, and/or the locale of the school in which they are employed and their opinions as to whether or not further multicultural education and training is necessary. Even when examined individually according to various demographic variables – the counselors' graduation dates, years of experience as a school counselor, level at which they are currently counseling, and locale of the school in which they counsel – the study's findings indicate that a vast majority of counselors (at least a 70.4% majority and in some cases as much as a 91.3% majority) see the need for further training and educational opportunities in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling.

Recommendations for counselor preparation program improvements suggested by the study's participants included the addition of specific graduate-level multicultural counseling courses (or at least general multiculturalism courses by those who had not experienced even this), the infusion of multicultural concepts and issues into all graduate-level coursework, and more opportunities for hands-on application of learned multicultural counseling techniques. The suggested means for improvement seem to parallel those mentioned in the existing body of research (Constantine, 2001; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Holcomb-McCoy & Meyers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Otavi, 1994; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Study participants also acknowledged ways in which school districts could provide further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Their responses indicated the desire for more inservice/workshop

opportunities, support for their attendance at out-of-district conferences, and further instruction in multicultural counseling techniques. However, many of the respondents also acknowledged the need for school-wide multicultural education and training, for students, school staff, and administrators alike.

An additional interesting finding involves the 12.3% of the study participants who replied that “it depends” when asked if they see the need for further education and training related to multicultural issues and multicultural counseling. Many of these respondents made comments such as the following: “it depends on where you are working,” “it depends on the school,” “it depends on the district – we are predominantly white with a few Native Americans, blacks, and Hispanics,” “it depends...we are 99% Caucasian,” “it depends...I feel well-prepared considering my setting,” etc. These findings suggest two interesting implications: 1) these counselors believe that only those counselors who work directly with multicultural individuals should be culturally competent and 2) these counselors believe that cultural diversity involves only ethnic and racial differences.

This study has found that 81.4% of the counselors who identified themselves as counselors in rural areas indicated that they see the need for further education and training relative to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. Furthermore, of the participating school counselors who acknowledged that they personally seek out multicultural learning opportunities, 63.6% are counselors in rural settings. In such a way, while some may not, it appears that a majority of the counselors who participated in this study appear to value possessing an understanding of multiculturalism and

multicultural counseling (regardless of whether or not they themselves interact with culturally diverse clients).

The section of the survey that addressed the participants' self-perceived levels of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and counseling skills also rendered some interesting findings. For example, the responses to the survey items that addressed multicultural awareness indicated that the majority of school counselors believe themselves to be competent in terms of multicultural awareness. A vast majority of the participants indicated that they understand how their cultural identity affects their thought, behavior, and interaction with others; 75% of the participants demonstrated that they understand that there is diversity not only between, but also within cultural groups; and approximately 75% also identified that they believe that "cultural diversity" refers to differences in ability, sexual preference, etc. in addition to racial and ethnic differences. Similar to Heppner and O'Brien's (1994) research, these findings would suggest that multicultural awareness can be achieved through classroom-type instruction. Interestingly, the findings further indicate that the female participants possess significantly more liberal interpretations of *cultural diversity* (recognizing varying abilities and sexual preferences in addition to ethnic and racial differences) than males, and counselors who graduated in 1993 or later are also more likely to conceptualize *cultural diversity* in more of a broad-minded way than their counterparts who graduated between 1969 and 1992.

The findings of the current study, however, conflict with those of Heppner and O'Brien (1994) relative to the achievement of multicultural knowledge. The findings of this study indicated that the study participants demonstrate very little multicultural

knowledge about Act 31, a Wisconsin state law enacted in 1989 that mandates the inclusion of Wisconsin Indian tribe culture, history, sovereignty, and treaty rights in K-12 curriculum, in addition to a basic understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Indian Country Wisconsin, 2002). The results of this study revealed that only 3% of the participants are highly knowledgeable about Act 31, that 38% are uncertain as to whether or not they are knowledgeable about Act 31, and that 64% of the study's participants are unfamiliar with this state mandate. Relative to Heppner and O'Brien's (1994) study, this study has produced conflicting results – perhaps multicultural knowledge may not be easily achieved through classroom-type instruction. Furthermore, it appears that alternative methods of education and training have failed to familiarize the majority of this study's participants with this branch of multicultural knowledge.

In terms of competence in the area of multicultural counseling skills, just over 70% of the participants indicated that the counseling skills that they have learned are not easily applied to clients from diverse cultures. It is conceivable that the participants' moderate to high levels of self-perceived multicultural awareness account for their understanding that the counseling theories and techniques that they have learned through their counselor preparation programs – developed predominantly by Caucasian middle-class Americans – are not appropriate for use with some clients who possess diverse worldviews, values, and interpretations of success (Das, 1995; Hobson & Kanitz, 1996). Whether or not the participants are knowledgeable about and competent in the use of alternative counseling techniques that are suitable for use with diverse clients remains a mystery.

Regarding the participants' perceptions about the quality of their multicultural preparation and training, roughly one-third of the counselors involved with this study agree that their counselor education program prepared them to effectively counsel culturally diverse individuals, and only 1.8% indicated that they strongly agree with this statement. This means that over 60% of the participants are not convinced that their graduate program instruction relative to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling represented quality attempts, or that they simply believe that their preparation in this area was inadequate.

The following results are somewhat puzzling considering the previously mentioned findings of this study. When asked point-blank if they believe that they are able to provide appropriate counseling services to students with cultural backgrounds different from their own, 64.5% of the participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed. This comes as somewhat of a surprise in that the majority of the counselors who participated in this study indicated that they do not believe that their counselor preparation programs prepared them to effectively counsel diverse youth, that their schools provide no/minimal learning opportunities in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, and that they see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. This seems to suggest that either these school counselors participate in a tremendous amount of professional development on their own to increase their competence multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, or more likely, that they responded to this item in a way inconsistent with their previous responses as an attempt to preserve their professional dignity.

Conclusions

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that further scrutiny of counselor preparation programs' efforts to produce culturally competent counselors is warranted. The results of this study suggest that many schools' methods of multicultural instruction fail to include specific multicultural counseling courses, the infusion of multicultural concepts into all coursework, and/or rich experiential learning opportunities that permit the hands-on application of learned skills. Likewise, school districts – especially those who extend no/minimal opportunities to further educate their staff and students in the area of multiculturalism – would benefit from reexamining their curricula and the amount/quality of multicultural learning opportunities that they provide.

In terms of the participants' multicultural competence, the findings of this study suggest that many of the participants believe that they possess multicultural awareness. On the other hand, the findings indicate that a vast majority does not demonstrate multicultural knowledge relative to Wisconsin Act 31. With regard to multicultural counseling skill competence, the findings appear to be inconclusive. While the data reveals that a majority of the participants identified 1) that their counselor preparation program was ineffective in terms of preparing them to counsel diverse clients, 2) that the districts in which they currently work provide no/minimal multicultural learning opportunities, and 3) that they see the need for further education and training related to multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, about half of the participants still indicated that they believe that they are able to provide appropriate counseling services to students with culturally different backgrounds.

Finally, despite the participants' graduation dates, number of years of experience as a school counselor, level at which they serve as guidance counselors, or locale of the school by which they are employed, a vast majority of the participants sees the need for further education and training in the area of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling. This seems to imply that, for the most part, these school counselors see the benefits of and value continuing education regardless of how culturally competent they believe themselves to be, how old their clients are, or how diverse their clientele may be.

Recommendations

Although this study was able to produce some valuable findings related to school counselors' multicultural educational experiences and learning opportunities and their self-perceived competence in the areas of multiculturalism and multicultural counseling, like most research endeavors, this study is limited in scope. First, because only a sample of Wisconsin school counselors was included in this study, the results cannot be generalized to all Wisconsin school counselors, let alone *all* school guidance counselors. In addition, the sample included in this study was particularly homogeneous in that essentially no racial diversity existed between the participants. For these reasons, further investigation of school counselors' cultural competence in other geographical settings and with more culturally diverse samples is recommended.

As indicated earlier, the results of the current study are inconclusive regarding the participants' self-perceived levels of multicultural counseling skill competence. It appears that the items included in this survey that attempted to yield an accurate measure of the participants' level of multicultural counseling skill competence were not as effective as anticipated. A survey item that asked participants to comment specifically on

their comfort with, knowledge about, and/or use of multicultural counseling techniques would have been beneficial.

Furthermore, in the areas of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and counseling skills, this survey produced only self-assessment measures. A more accurate instrumentation method would have actually required participants to demonstrate competence in multicultural awareness, knowledge, and counseling skills as opposed to requiring only self-assessments from the participants. However, producing such an assessment instrument would have been difficult at best, considering the fact that well-defined standards by which to measure multicultural competence do not exist (Carey & Reinat, 1990). Nonetheless, this is certainly an area deserving of further attention.

Closely related, the item included within this survey to produce a measurement of the participants' level of multicultural knowledge (*I am knowledgeable about Act 31*) surely falls short of measuring the wide scope of multicultural knowledge. Again, the lack of pre-defined criteria to assess multicultural competence made the development of this survey section difficult (Carey & Reinat, 1990). This item was included for the reason that it is specific to Wisconsin-state law, but a refined assessment instrument would include broader coverage of topics addressing multicultural knowledge.

Finally, this study produces data that takes into consideration only the school counselor's perspective. Future research in the area of multicultural education and preparation addressing the viewpoints of counselor preparation program administrators and K-12 school district administrators would likely produce valuable findings. This would definitely constitute one of the multitudinous avenues for further research.

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APPENDIX A

Copy of Finalized Cover Letter

CAN YOU SPARE A FEW MINUTES TO HELP TWO GRADUATE STUDENTS?

First of all, thank you for not immediately discarding this! Let us introduce ourselves – our names are Christin Erickson and Elisa LaChance, and we are two graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout seeking our Master’s degrees in K-12 School Counseling. As part of our program completion, we are required to conduct research and write a graduate thesis. We have chosen to collect the data for our research here at the annual Wisconsin School Counselor Association Conference.

Out of respect for your busy conference schedules, we chose to administer our surveys jointly. Although two separate surveys are included in this packet (one on adventure education as it relates to school guidance and one on school counselors’ multicultural counseling competence), we developed a shared demographic section that applies to both studies. Hopefully this will increase our response rate and enable you to devote more time to the main concepts of these surveys. We value your knowledge and experience and hope that you are willing to share it with us.

Still with us? Your participation in these studies is voluntary, but we truly appreciate your input. All responses will remain anonymous. Simply complete and return the surveys to the drop box at the University of Wisconsin-Stout booth (located in the exhibition area). Consent is implied in the submission of your responses.

Our sincerest thanks for your contributions to our research,

Christin Erickson

&

Elisa LaChance

APPENDIX B

Copy of Finalized Survey

ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCE

- **Multicultural Preparation and Training:**

1. What types of multicultural preparation and training did you have during your counselor education program? (ex. one general multiculturalism course, one multicultural counseling course, no courses)

2. **For practicing school counselors only:** What sorts of opportunities has your school offered to you to further your knowledge about multiculturalism and multicultural counseling? (ex. In-service workshop on multiculturalism, multicultural clubs/organizations, nothing) Were these opportunities beneficial to you?

3. Do you see the need for further education and training related to multicultural issues and multicultural counseling? If yes, how could it be improved?

Please turn to the last page of the survey →

- **Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Counseling Skills:**

Please use the number scale below to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

- ___ 4. I understand how my cultural identity affects the ways that I think, behave, and interact with others.
- ___ 5. I believe that all members of a cultural group share similar values and traditions.
- ___ 6. I believe that “cultural diversity” refers to differences in ability, sexual preference, etc. in addition to racial and ethnic differences.
- ___ 7. I am knowledgeable about Act 31.
- ___ 8. I believe that the counseling techniques I have learned are applicable to all cultures with little or no modification.
- ___ 9. I believe that I am able to provide appropriate counseling services to students with cultural backgrounds different from my own.
- ___ 10. I believe that my counselor education program prepared me to effectively counsel culturally diverse individuals.

- **Additional Comments:**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We truly appreciate your contributions.