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Assessment and Evaluation of Anti-Racist, Feminist Training in Counselor

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A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Science Degree in
Counselor Education at
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College of Education
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Assessment and Evaluation of Anti-Racist, Feminist Training in Counselor

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

Kyle E. Dufek

Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695 – Capstone Project

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Abstract

Counselor education programs are preparing future counselors to be culturally competent in the field. However, research indicates that these students are not fully prepared to work with the diverse population that we have today. This paper asserts that coming from an anti-racist, feminist approach will not only increase cultural competency of the individuals, but will also slowly break down systemic oppression better assisting the client in their environments. Taking on an ecological approach to counseling looks at the interaction between the person and the environment and through a social justice lens we would be able to break down the barriers that lead to struggles in mental health. Through a literature review, counselor education programs will be assessed and analyzed to understand what is being taught in these programs. Specifically, this literature review looks at the different definitions and measurements of cultural competency. Research suggests an area of opportunity in social advocacy and I suggest an anti-racist, feminist approach will create social justice advocates in the field, increase self-awareness, and increase counselors' ability to assist and understand their diverse clientele.

Keywords: cultural competency, anti-racism, feminism, social justice

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Assessment and Evaluation of Anti-Racist, Feminist Training in Counselor Education Programs

Multiculturalism is one of the core competencies in Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) criteria in which Counselor Education Programs adhere to. The section on social and cultural diversity states it must include: “social justice, advocacy and conflict resolution, cultural self-awareness, the nature of biases, prejudices, processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination, and other culturally supported behaviors that are detrimental to the growth of the human spirit, mind, or body” (CACREP, 2001, p. 13). Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1991) proposed a need for multicultural competencies and standards as they reported counselors simply do not have enough experience working with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Diversity in the American population continues to rapidly grow and counselor must become culturally competent to meet the needs of the population (Sue et al., 1991).

Review of Literature

First, it is important to have a definition of cultural competence. A clear definition will allow for the ability to measure and assess present counselor education programs. From the literature review it appears there are areas of growth in increasing cultural competence of counselors in training (Pierterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, & Mason, 2009). This project suggests utilizing an anti-racist, feminist approach will strengthen the multicultural curriculum increasing cultural competency of counselors. Lastly, there will be specific interventions and techniques that will be discussed on how to improve cultural competency.

Defining Cultural Competency

From the reviewed literature it was evident that this term is not easy to define. For the purpose of this project it was decided to utilize a combination of a couple definitions to look

through a consistent lens. Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) have been pioneers in the multicultural movement and their working definition appears suitable for the purpose of this literature review.

According to Sue et al. (1992), cultural competency is an ongoing process of personal growth and an increased understanding of the needs of others. They further added attributes of cultural competency: attitudes/beliefs, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills. Attitudes and beliefs are associated with self-examination in relation to cultural differences. Cultural knowledge is a must for cultural competency as it is the counselor's ability to understand and share another culture's worldview. Cultural skills are the application of cultural knowledge and cultural awareness to meet the individual's specific needs. Suarez-Balcazar and Rodakowski (2007) have further added to the definition of cultural competency, breaking the definition into three components, which includes knowing, doing, and becoming. Knowing is in reference to understanding one's own cultural as well as understanding other cultures simultaneously. Doing is focused on engaging oneself into multicultural experiences. Lastly, becoming is the process of understanding cultures that are different from oneself. These two definitions help us gain a better understanding of what it means to be culturally competent.

Suarez-Balcazar and Rodakowski (2007) add this is an ongoing process and break down the growth into four dimensions: critical awareness, knowledge, skills and competencies, and practice and application. Critical awareness is to become aware of your own cultural background as well as others. Knowledge is to learn and understand factors in the present societal system and its impact on clients. Skills and competencies include seeking out training and opportunities related to developing cultural skills. Lastly, integrating these dimensions together and applying the multicultural skills in your practice. The more widely used dimensions to assess cultural

competency as indicated by Pierterse et al. (2009) are attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills. These align with Suarez-Balcazar and Rodakowski's four dimensions, and all of which may be appropriate to measure cultural competency.

Pierterse (2009) added we must understand and be aware of the nature of racism as there is a positive relationship between racism and adverse health effects. This framework is needed not only to be considered, but also must be addressed in counselor education programs to improve the quality of education as well as creating change for years to come. Merely teaching the concept of multiculturalism is not enough and we must continue to engage in self-analysis of our own systems and how they may perpetuate racism.

Current Multicultural Training

Multicultural training is now an essential component of most counselor education programs and is even a content area on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE). According to an analysis of Multicultural competence training by Pieterse et al. (2009) there has been a big strive for increasing cultural knowledge, awareness, and skills. However, there seems to be areas of improvement in increasing social justice content. There has been an increase in approaches that include self-awareness exercises, multicultural skill development, and cultural immersion experiences. Pieterse et al. (2009) found that 48% of counselor education programs utilized Sue's *Counseling the Culturally Different* (1999), however only 4% of the programs had content on historical racism, systemic racism, male privilege, and gender identity development. This study found there were relatively infrequent attention in the syllabus to skills training and counseling intervention.

Cartwright et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study targeting diversity concerns of counselor education faculty of underrepresented populations. The study found that counselors

who interviewed for positions were disappointed in the programs ability to consistently reflect multicultural principles. There appeared to be a lack of agency in creating social change at these universities. Additionally, some of the candidates felt they were required to be the diversity experts resulting in feelings of disappointment.

Collins et al. (2014) discovered two types of gaps in counselor education programs: competencies gaps and education process gaps. This study researched thirty-two participants from two counselor education programs in Canada. The gaps identified by these students were the application of multicultural competency and skills as well as a lack of acquiring information on other cultures. Sue et al. (1992) stated that it is important for counselors to have cultural competence in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Pieterse et al. (2009) found that 60% of instructors included social justice in the course content, however very few explicitly taught their students on how to apply this in the field. Singh et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study examining doctoral counseling students' perceptions of social justice training. About three quarters of the participants were looking for external opportunities to get involved in social justice through research and practica; however, it was found that only 85% of the students did not take a social justice class. Of these students, it was reported that all of them have taken a multicultural course as a part of their curriculum. Furthermore, 31% of the participants reported they were rarely trained in their coursework in the development of community, policy, programming and interventions in systems and organizations.

One of the more significant studies found in this literature review was from Dinsmore and England (1996). They surveyed 69 of the CACREP accredited programs finding that the student population consisted of 17% non-white students and faculty consisted of 15% non-white.

This displays a significant lack of representation in programs from a faculty as well as a student lens. Ninety-one percent of the programs required a multicultural counseling course and 17% offered more than one course.

Piertese et al. (2009) found that 96% of the course syllabi include some aspect of knowledge, awareness, and skills. It appears that counselor education programs are aware of the dimensions mentioned above, however as we have investigated what has been taught it is apparent there is much room for improvement in applying these into practice. Furthermore, it stated that only 48% of the syllabi included a focus on social justice concepts. Social justice, anti-racism, and feminism requires action-oriented steps to create change and is needed to be addressed in counselor education programs to meet the mission of these programs.

Luu and Inman (2015) surveyed 235 female trainees discovering that almost 40% of the participants have not had any training in social justice advocacy. Additionally, this study measured each trainee's stage of feminism using Downing and Roush's feminist identity model which includes five stages: passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness, emanation, synthesis, and active commitment. Whereas students who were in active commitment stage were positively correlated with collaborative action skills, social/political skills, client empowerment skills, and client/community action skills. They found that students who were in the revelation and the passive acceptance stage were negatively correlated with engaging in client empowerment activities and promoting social advocacy. Thus, to empower students they must move through the stages to become social justice advocates.

Measurement of Cultural Competency in Counselor Education Programs

There are difficulties when understanding what it is to be culturally competent, thus it is important to measure this out (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2009). According to Purnell (2016), many

studies of cultural competence utilize self-administered tools that are not completely valid. It is necessary to not only increase cultural knowledge and attitudes, but also the application of cultural competence in the field. Purnell (2016) reported that it is important to use psychometrically validated assessments. In addition to these assessments, which often measure attitude and knowledge, it is important to observe the skills in practice. Thus, utilizing a multimodal method of assessment is best practice.

Skills Training

Purnell (2016) stated that observing counselors working with clients of a different cultural background would increase cultural competency. It is important to see what the counselors in training are doing in the programs to increase these skills. These skills are not limited to within the counseling session, but also includes social advocacy.

Collins et al. (2015) performed a study on 32 participants in counselor education programs to assess their preparedness in multicultural counseling. They identified gaps in competencies and education process. Students reported that social justice experiences were lacking and wished to have these experiences. Teaching counselors in training on how to impact their community through class assignments can fall under this category of skills training.

Cultural Immersion

From much of the research literature on measuring cultural competency, cultural immersion appeared numerous times. Cultural immersion can be used as a valuable training tool as it allows counselors to have direct contact with persons of a different cultural background (Barden & Cashwell, 2013). According to Allport (1954) this approach is seen as one of the most effective psychological principles in reducing interracial prejudice. This project asserts cultural immersion falls within two dimensions: skills and knowledge.

Self-Awareness Exercises

Goodman et al. (2004) reported it is important for mental health providers to continuously self-examine in order to be competent multicultural counselors. It is typical for counselors to have biases of certain populations and must be acknowledged and challenged, thus it is important for counseling programs to assist counselors in training to increase this self-awareness. Self-awareness exercises has the potential to increase awareness of an individual's attitudes. With the right guidance this could lead to an understanding of their own cultural being and its implications in today's society as well as understanding others cultural backgrounds.

Diversity in The Program

Some researchers assessed students' cultural competence in counseling through different angles. For example, Pieterse et al. (2009) measured an organization's diversity efforts in the workforce. There is a need to increase diversity in counselor educators as well as incoming counselors as Cartwright et al. (2016) mentioned as of 2013, 78% of faculty identified as White. This can be problematic because such gaps could create monocultural counseling programs. Sue et. al (1992) further argued that literature in counseling training has been monocultural in nature. It is imperative to increase diversity as it would potentially increase the counselor education program's ability to have more than one worldview.

Content of Materials

As mentioned above one of the dimensions for understanding cultural competency is knowledge. Piertese et al. (2009) conducted a study assessing 54 multicultural course syllabi in counselor education programs. Although this study cannot be generalized to the entirety of counselor education programs, it can give us a better understanding of what exactly is being taught. Although CACREP standards require multiculturalism and social justice in counselor

education programs, the training is left to each individual program. This raises questions of what should be taught? Sue et al. (1992) stated it is important for counselors to possess knowledge of oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping affects. This gives counselors a better understanding of what potentially their clientele is going through and would increase their ability to empathize. Presently, content of multiculturalism courses appears to be lacking in social justice topics, even though it is promoted in the objective of these course descriptions.

Acknowledging areas of overlap between social justice and multiculturalism may be useful in promoting social advocacy.

Navigation of Cultural Conversations

The last measurement mentioned is the counselor educators' ability to facilitate dialogue of multiculturalism. King and Borders (2018) determined it should be a priority in the counseling to broach race and racism in order to give a space where clients feel comfortable in discussing such topics. Yee, Stevens, and Schullz (2016) bring up a method of engaging students in what's called "courageous conversations". These conversations entail dialogue around oppression and privilege and reaching the goal of a common understanding regarding different experiences around these concepts. Smith et al. (2017) acknowledge the obstacles counselor educators may face as these conversations can increase discomfort for both the group leaders and the students, however these uncomfortable conversations are a must if we want to increase awareness and understanding of issues that plague minorities.

Pieterse (2009) emphasized that counselors must understand and be aware of the nature of racism as there is a positive relationship between racism and adverse health effects. This framework is needed not only to be considered, but also must be addressed in counselor education programs to improve the quality of education as well as creating change for years to

come. Merely teaching the concept of multiculturalism is not enough and we must continue to engage in self-analysis of our own systems and how they may perpetuate racism.

Theoretical Perspectives

Next, this paper will introduce three theoretical perspectives: anti-racist, feminist, and social justice theory. These were chosen as they appeared suitable to enhance cultural competency training as they focus on not only learning about the history of oppression, but also dismantling systemic and community based oppression. Anti-racist and feminist were first chosen, however after further research it was found that social justice theory deemed appropriate to discuss as the former two included much of social justice theory principles.

Anti-racist Theory

Anti-racist theory challenges societal and institutional norms addressing and changing the effects of racism in these domains (Whitten & Sethna, 2014). Essentially, anti-racism is taking action to opposing racism and increasing race tolerance. The first step in promoting an anti-racist approach is to understand why racism is bad. Bonnett (2000) gave seven reasons: racism is socially disruptive, racism is foreign, racism sustains the ruling class, racism hinders the progress of 'our community', racism is an intellectual error, racism distorts and erases people's identities, and racism is anti-egalitarian and socially unjust. Then, we are able to take action steps on learning what racism is and how to combat it. Pieterse (2009) discussed there has been a past pressure for students of color to teach the class on topics of race. This is problematic as it lacks opportunities to interrogate whiteness, asserts that only students of color experience race, and denies students of color to struggle with their own understandings of race. Thus, an anti-racist approach would better facilitate these courses allowing for all students to experience race.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory intertwines with both concepts above in promoting diversity and challenging present systems. Feminist theory like anti-racist theory trains students to become self-advocates as well as social advocates (Smith-Adcock et al., 2004). Feminist teaching fosters cooperative learning between student and teacher emphasizing experiential learning (Smith-Adcock et al., 2004). Additionally, it encourages for self-reflection learning values of self as well as learning the values of others, which coincides with the awareness dimension. Ropers-Huilman (2002) asserted that feminism is not limited to recognizing gender; it also looks at how gender, race, social class, disability, and sexual orientation and the intersectionality of the individual's cultural identity. Smith-Adcock et al. (2004) suggested that feminist educators empower their students to advocate for their clients as well as empowering their clients to be agents of change themselves.

Social Justice

Both antiracism and feminism believe in the dismantling of systemic and interpersonal oppression. Social justice efforts are on the forefront in creating this change. Pierterse et al. (2009) distinguish social justice as a focus on inequalities and oppression that goes beyond just accepting multicultural acceptance. Luu and Inman (2018) further add social advocacy as a response to societal injustices. Social justice looks at all forms of oppression including sexual orientation, race, gender, ability, and any other oppression faced by a marginalized group. A social justice approach to counseling includes social advocacy and needs for counselors to not only accept people of marginalized populations, but also advocate for them. However as observed by Zalaquett et al. (2008) counselor educators face problems that include: a fear of receiving support from colleagues when discussing multiculturalism's importance, negative

repercussions for advocating, and multicultural education being seen as controversial. These debilitate counselor education programs from investing more time into social advocacy. Working through this discomfort should be expected by all counselor educators, however there is a need to create an environment where people feel capable to discuss such uncomfortable conversations.

Applying an Anti-Racist, Feminist Approach

Using this anti-racist, feminist framework will empower students. First, students must acquire knowledge about self and about others. Next, students need to be aware of their attitudes and beliefs of others and the world. Once a student has a firm understanding of self then that student is able to be an advocate for others. It is salient for the student to know social inequalities and have the motivation to create change. If this is not present the student may reject social equality, in turn be a detriment to their prospective clients and the field.

Knowledge

Which areas do we need to focus on in acquiring more knowledge? From the research it appeared that knowledge of historical oppression as well as knowledge of self were most important as these topics came up multiple times. History was categorized into the knowledge dimension as it aligns with Sue et. al. (1992) definition of knowledge which is to understand another culture's worldview, thus it is pertinent to know the history and socialization of other cultures. To understand another culture's worldview, first one must understand their own culture, and one way to do this is by taking self assessments. Both history and assessments play a role in gaining cultural knowledge.

History

One of the main concepts in anti-racist feminist framework is learning about oppression through teachings of the history of racism, sexism, and oppression in general would benefit

counselors in training to gain more knowledge and increase motivational efforts to take these action steps (Pierterse, 2009). Chan, Cor, and Band (2015) state the importance of intersectionality as a framework, addressing the interplay of multiple cultural identities. In order to acquire this knowledge it is necessary to look at historical influences.

Assessments

Cultural knowledge can be assessed in a variety of ways. Manson (2017) discusses how a hospital in New Zealand implements an annual competency assessment to continuously be aware and improve cultural competency. Goodman et al. (2004) encourage ongoing self-evaluation thus self assessments are able to bring some introspection on where are values and beliefs lie from year to year. This project advocates for annual competency and values assessments, however as indicated above these should be psychometrically sound assessments. Assessments that were found through SAMHSA that could provide guidance in examining cultural competency include: Multicultural Counseling Self Efficacy Scale-Racial Diversity Form, Ethnic-Sensitive Inventory, and Culturagram (SAMHSA, 2014).

Attitudes and Beliefs

In accordance to CACREP standard it is important for counselors to be self-aware. Attitudes and beliefs influence individual's interactions with others, thus it is important to be aware to best understand these innate responses (King & Borders, 2019). Having this self-awareness can increase the counselor's effectiveness to meet a culturally diverse client's needs. Through the literature review there appeared to be two ways to foster this self-awareness: embracing resistance and counselor educators.

Embracing Resistance

Antiracist and feminist theory are proponents in creating an environment students feel empowered to speak their minds. With this it is expected for students to have conflicting beliefs and values. Yee, Stevens, and Schulz (2016) encourage educators to create a space for what they call “courageous conversations” and “utilizing the here and now”. These techniques will help facilitate the uncomfortable conversations around social justice topics. Even self-disclosure can be used by counselor educators to navigate some of these conversations. Modeling for the students can create a more connected space allowing for students to feel more comfortable talking about emotionally charged topics. Shim (2018) stated that emotions are impossible to leave outside the classroom. She used the term “working through an emotional experience” is a necessary component in gaining a new meaning. Thus, I assert having emotionally charged conversations must be embraced to make new meaning altering beliefs and attitudes surrounding social justice issues.

Counselor Educators

Croteau (1999) stated counselors can often look from an individualistic worldview and must take on a perspective that isn't through an individualistic lens to achieve a greater sense of multicultural awareness. In order to do so it starts with the teacher in the program to understand their own biases to model behavior and teach ethically. One of the steps' counselor educators must engage in ongoing self-evaluation of the teachers (Goodman et al., 2004). Ongoing self-evaluation builds insight on one's values and how they interplay with others' values. Bussema and Nemec (2006) add increasing awareness of ignorance of the trainers will need to be at the forefront of training in culturally competent students.

Skills

First, it is necessary to have cultural knowledge and an understanding of own attitudes and beliefs prior to applying culturally appropriate interventions. If missing one or the other then it may lead to a misuse of knowledge resulting in stereotyped interventions. Skills are gained through observations and hands on training. The literature mentioned specific ways to increase cultural skills which will be mentioned below. As mentioned above, it was seen that CACREP requires social advocacy to be in multicultural training, however there appears to be a gap in this being executed. Social advocacy will be further discussed as this is a practical skill that will not only help the client in session, but also help target systemic issues that may lead to mental health issues.

Trainings

Pieterse (2009) provided pedagogical strategies to increase cultural competency. I believe these two: racial-cultural interviews and individual presentations increase students skills. Racial-cultural interview serves as an experiential experience where students engage in a 3-hour session where the focus is around their own socialization experiences. This may fall under any of the dimensions however I believe this is skills oriented as students are able to interview each other on their experiences creating a more multiculturally skilled counselor. As for individual presentations, this is a skill acquired as the student learns how to advocate for change in front of a group of people. This can be translated outside of the classroom empowering students to be creators of change in their respective communities.

Another way to develop skills through trainings is observing therapists in the field counseling individuals of another cultural background (Suarez-Balcazar & Rodakowski, 2007). This process benefits incoming counselors as they are able to observe and take notes on the process of counseling a person of a different cultural background. Application includes:

encouraging students to create a therapeutic setting that's comfortable for minorities, try out nontraditional methods to counseling, be active in cultural-specific events, use a translator if needed, and promote diversity in the workplace (Suarez-Balcazar, 2007). Information like this is useful, however encouraging or incorporating these types of applications in the curriculum would be more beneficial in positively impacting students as they then have skills to take into their practice.

Social Advocacy Skills

There needs to be more focus on action steps in Counselor Education Programs (Pieterse et al., 2009). Teaching social advocacy skills is a large component when incorporating a feminist, antiracist theoretical framework. Pieterse et al. (2009) found a serious lack of concentration in syllabi on skills, specifically social advocacy. Goodman et al. (2004) state that students should be helped by engaging them in collaborative work in the community servicing underprivileged populations. They reported it is important for counselor educators to involve their students in the community, even in rural communities as oppression is still being experienced and may even be on campus. Luu and Inman (2015) added experiences like service learning projects and community based research projects will further bolster programs ability to create competent social advocates.

Conclusion

It appears that Counselor Education Programs have taken notice to Multicultural teachings and have implemented this into their programs. There has been an increase in gaining self-awareness of counselors in training as well as an increase cultural immersion efforts. These will assist these future counselors in becoming more culturally competent, however we see there is a big need to bolster multicultural training as a whole. Counselor Education Programs would

benefit from teaching through an antiracist, feminist theoretical framework as this would empower students to not only be knowledgeable of social injustice, but become social advocates in the field. Teaching counselors in training to help break systemic limitations on their clients will reduce stigma in the field for minorities creating a safer and more welcoming environment for all.

Author's Note

This has been an important topic for me and will continue to be as there appears to be an area of opportunity to strengthen all counselors ability to provide culturally competent services. Counseling is intended to reach all persons from any background, however for many years we have utilized a monocultural worldview, thus not providing individualized treatment. Through gathering this research I found there has been an increase in teaching multiculturalism and programs have changed much of their language to match this. However, the research suggests that there are areas where we are seriously lacking. Changing the language and having the difficult conversations is a great start, however, until we dismantle societal oppression we will continue to fail the needs of our clients. Thus, I believe having an anti-racist, feminist perspective will help us think differently when we think about social issues ultimately becoming community and individual focused.

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