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## Multicultural Curriculum Designs in Counselor Education Programs: Enhancing Counselors-in-Training Openness to Diversity


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# Multicultural Curriculum Designs in Counselor Education Programs: Enhancing Counselors-in-Training Openness to Diversity

## **Abstract**

Multicultural competencies are critical elements in both counselor preparation and practice. In accordance with the standards of the Council of Accredited Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), counselor education programs must implement multicultural competencies as one of core curriculum areas. Although research evidences the positive impact of multicultural training, it remains a challenge to establish which curriculum designs and pedagogical approaches are most effective. This study compares self-reported openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations of 87 counselors-in-training across two distinct multicultural curriculum designs (i.e., single multicultural course vs. infusion through the curriculum) in a CACREP accredited counselor education program in the Midwest. Implications for counselor education programs and counselors in the field are provided.

## **Author's Notes**

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## **Keywords**

multicultural counseling training, multicultural curriculum design, diversity

Several approaches to promote the self-awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to be a multiculturally competent counselor have been established in accordance with the multicultural counseling standards and recommendations of the Council of Accredited Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009). Strong evidence exists in support of the positive impact of multicultural training within counselor education programs on increasing trainees' multicultural competencies regardless of the pedagogical approach (Brown, 2004; Castillo, Brossart, Reyes, Conoley, & Phoummarath, 2007; Cates, Schaeffle, Smaby, Maddux, & LeBeauf, 2007; Chu-Lieu Chao, Wei, Good & Flores, 2011; Malott, 2010; Pack-Brown, Thomas, & Seymour, 2008; Sammons & Speight, 2008; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). However, it remains a paramount challenge to find the curriculum designs for implementing the multicultural standards that most effectively enables counselors in the field to apply their multicultural knowledge and skills with diverse populations.

In particular, there is no evidence to indicate whether or not a single multicultural course (i.e., explicit multicultural curriculum design) is superior to the infusion of multicultural content throughout the counselor education program (i.e., implicit multicultural curriculum design). To address this gap in the multicultural literature, the current study compares the effects of these two curriculum designs (i.e., explicit-single multicultural course versus implicit-infusion throughout the curriculum) on trainees' openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations.

### **Single Multicultural Course - Explicit Curriculum Design**

Several studies support the use of one specific course dedicated solely to multicultural training as an effective curriculum design (Castillo et al., 2007; Coll, Dumas, Trotter, & Freeman, 2013; Malott, 2010; Sammons & Speight, 2008). The authors of the aforementioned studies assert that this curriculum design allows students to gain knowledge about culturally

different groups, examine cultural biases, and develop multicultural skills. The acquisition of these competencies are assumed to reduce culturally insensitive behavior and aid in the ever-growing span of multicultural competencies that counselors need in order to work with a diverse clientele.

Similarly, a study on introductory multicultural counseling courses conducted by Priester, Jones, Jackson-Bailey, Jana-Masri, Jordan, and Metz (2008) reported that the counselors-in-training in these courses augmented their multicultural knowledge base and self-awareness competencies. On the other hand, based on minimal skill development resulting from these courses, the authors urged further research on multicultural counseling training to expand its current overemphasis on philosophical conceptualizations. In a similar fashion, to assess a counseling psychology training program's capacity to increase multicultural competencies, a series of qualitative methods were used to evaluate the immediate and longer term impact of a multicultural counseling course taught within a training program (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Through a series of written evaluations completed immediately after course completion combined with various follow-up interviews approximately four months after course completion, the participants reported feeling inadequate in terms of multicultural competencies and indicated the need to extend their current professional development into new areas pertaining to multicultural competencies. In particular, the participants emphasized the need for further training initiatives and experiences under the umbrella of a supportive climate that promoted professional and personal cultural self-awareness and self-knowledge.

Extrapolating the concept of teaching multiculturalism via single course, Pieterse, Evans, Ristner-Butner, Collins, and Mason (2009) conducted a descriptive content analysis of 54 multicultural and diversity-related course syllabi from diverse counseling and counseling

psychology programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Council of Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP). They reported that the majority of the courses observe the multicultural paradigm of development of knowledge, awareness, and skills. However, they stated that there are considerable gaps in the areas of social justice and multicultural competence in terms of how these particular components are included in the curriculum and how they are delivered. This issue by itself represents one of the predominant challenges concerning the degree of efficacy of a single multicultural course design or explicit curriculum design.

Additional research by Sammons and Speight (2008) and Stadler, Suh, Cobia, Middleton, and Carney (2006) found similar results from single multicultural courses in counselor education programs, and emphasized the importance of the explicit multicultural design for an initial encounter with diverse clients and open dialogue surrounding multicultural issues. They reported that the utilization of the single multicultural course is not the end, but the beginning of a multicultural process of growth and development.

According to Bidell (2014), it is a daunting task for educators to cover multicultural theory, research, practice, and discuss multiple groups within one course. In this study, the author examined how multicultural courses impacted students' LGBT and multicultural competencies. The study showed that self-reported multicultural and LGBT competencies varied significantly depending on the number and types of diversity education reported. Specifically, multicultural courses significantly predicted students' multicultural but not LGBT competency. In essence, a single course (explicit curriculum design) seems to provide the general multicultural principles and concepts needed to be in compliance with major accrediting bodies such as the Council of Accredited Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and

professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA). However, it appears that this model lacks depth and the scope needed to fully equip counselors-in-training to become multiculturally competent practitioners.

### **Multicultural Infusion through the Program - Implicit Curriculum Design**

The research conducted by Sammons and Speight (2008) supports the infusion of multicultural curricula after finding that 70% of the total personal changes reported by students involved increased level of knowledge and self-awareness, while attitudinal and behavioral changes were reported less frequently. The authors suggest that training beyond a single multicultural counseling course may be necessary to promote change in attitudes and behavior. In support of this assertion, Cates and Schaeffle (2009) found that students who had multicultural training infused into practicum coursework had greater increases in perceived multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills throughout the duration of the course than students who did not have a multicultural component in their practicum course. Further, Stadler et al. (2006) stressed the importance of infusing multicultural training throughout counselor education curricula. Subsequently, the authors recommended that policies be designed to implement, support, and maintain an environment that promotes diversity, perhaps by engaging both students and faculty in culturally relevant experiences.

Similarly, Dickson and Jepsen's (2007) inquiry of the breadth and depth of multicultural curricula lead to a conclusion that the current conceptualization of multicultural competencies may oversimplify the complexities of actual multicultural interactions, followed by a suggestion that further examination of multicultural training implementation is needed. In a similar vein, Seward (2013) documented that ethnic minority students reported gains in their overall knowledge during the non-multicultural courses but found them unsatisfactory due to their

limitations in addressing multicultural issues. Many of these students felt as though the courses were catered to their White/Euro descent counterparts. One student was quoted as stating: "...I guess it's hard to teach multicultural students to be multicultural because it's something you grew up with and it's something that you automatically do" (Seward, 2013, p.70).

### **Outcomes of Multicultural Training: Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Domains**

Research findings are unclear as to what types of impact multicultural counseling trainings implemented throughout CACREP-accredited counselor education programs have on counselors-in-training and counselors in the field. While several studies explored the overall impact of various curriculum designs for multicultural training on trainees' multicultural competencies, there is limited research focusing on specific outcomes of multicultural training on trainees' cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains.

#### **Cognitive-Knowledge Domain**

Castillo et al. (2007) and Kiselca, Maben, and Locke (1999) reported that students who participated in a multicultural training course gained insight into cultural biases and self-awareness of their own cultural identity. Similarly, students in CACREP-accredited programs who received multicultural training in the form of either a multicultural counseling course or program-wide infusion of multicultural content increased their multicultural knowledge (Cates et al., 2007). Taken together, these studies indicate that multicultural training enhances the knowledge-base for counselors-in-training, and may subsequently increase the level of multicultural effectiveness for counselors in the field.

Chao (2013) found that multicultural training enhances school counselors' multicultural counseling competence (MCC) by assisting counselors to become more aware of their own racial/ethnic backgrounds while advancing their knowledge of color-blind racial attitudes

(CoBRA). This study stressed the importance of a 3-way interaction among race/ethnicity, training, and CoBRA in order to increase their MCC. The author argued that school counselors who attend multicultural training will gain higher racial/ethnic identity and have a greater self-understanding about their own worldview when working with culturally diverse students. With high levels of training and low levels of CoBRA, school counselors will be able to have greater MCC thus allowing them to effectively assist students of diverse backgrounds. Dickson, Jepsen, and Barbee (2008) also found that “perceptions of a culturally sensitive program ambience were the only significant predictors of positive cognitive attitudes toward issues of racial diversity” (p. 36).

### **Affective Domain**

Limited research has been conducted on the affective impact of multicultural training on counselors-in-training. Based on an analysis of the outcomes of three different courses typically offered in most CACREP programs, Coll, Dumas, Trotter and Freeman (2013) evidenced significant changes in attitudes, empathy, and willingness to adapt to a client’s cultural background as a result of multicultural counseling training. Consistently, Dickson, Jepsen, and Barbee (2008) found that participatory training strategies (e.g., role plays and processing of reactions) predicted positive affective attitudes toward racial diversity and greater comfort with interracial contact. According to Arredondo and Arciniega (2001), in order for mental health professionals to be culturally competent they must be able to understand and accept alternative worldviews. In order to do so, counselors must be aware of their own cultural values and biases as well as develop culturally appropriate intervention strategies when working in a diverse setting.



Chao (2011) surveyed a sample of school counselors in order to determine the impact of multicultural courses on their cultural identity and color-blind racial attitudes. The study found increased racial and ethnic identity and decreased color-blind attitudes in counselors who took more multicultural courses, especially in White/Euro counselors. These changes were interpreted as indicative of more open minded attitudes toward the experiences of others and are congruent with previous studies that yielded similar results (Brown, Parham, & Yonker, 1996; Castillo et al., 2007; Parker, Moore, & Neimeyer, 1998).

Collectively, the aforementioned studies suggest that students who participate in multicultural training increase self-awareness of racial identity, overall self-awareness and compassion in working with diverse clients. However, research on the affective domain changes as a result of multicultural training remains limited due to its reliance on self-report data as outcome measures. The real exposure to diverse populations in the field and observable data of these interactions by neutral observers are necessary to assess the impact of multicultural training on affective domain of multicultural competence.

### **Behavioral Domain**

The manifestation of behavioral changes as a result of exposure to knowledge and/or a clinical intervention is an important factor in the counseling field for both clients and counselors. Therefore, during a counselor's multicultural training it is imperative to become aware of one's own behavior as well as that of others. Sammons and Speight (2008) found that students' behavioral changes comprised only 13% of self-reported personal changes resulting from exposure to multicultural curricula. The multiple behavioral changes reported after multicultural training included increased activism, enhanced relationships, expanded professional competency, decreased use of biased language, and seeking further multicultural training and social

interactions. Unfortunately, there are no longitudinal studies supporting an assertion that as a result of multicultural training, counselors in the field changed their lifestyles and approaches to counseling.

## **Method**

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This study was designed to analyze the effects of the multicultural curriculum design on overall multicultural growth of counselors-in-training. Specifically, the study compares self-reported openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations of trainees exposed to two different multicultural curriculum designs: (1) the explicit design comprised of a single multicultural course (MC course) and (2) the implicit design in which multicultural content is infused into coursework designed to teach curriculum typically not associated with multicultural concepts and skills (MC infusion).

In order to compare the impact of the two curriculum designs (MC course vs. MC infusion) on the trainees' openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations, the following research questions are addressed: Does the level of openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations differ between trainees enrolled in MC course design and trainees enrolled in MC infusion design at the beginning of the courses? Does the level of openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations differ between trainees enrolled in MC course design and trainees enrolled in MC infusion design at the conclusion of the courses?

### **Study Design**

All courses across the two curriculum designs (MC course and MC infusion) were required for a master's degree and licensure in the counseling field and were delivered in the traditional on-campus, face-to-face formats. The instructors were two faculty members of the

same program who taught in both curriculum designs (MC infusion and MC course), with one instructor teaching exclusively on the suburban campus and the other on the urban campus. To control for a possible impact of the instructor's characteristics, the two instructors selected were male and full time, tenured professors with a record of multi-year experience in teaching multicultural courses, published research in the area of human diversity/multiculturalism, and active commitment to the multicultural/diversity agenda. In addition, the instructors followed the program-approved syllabi for all courses. Each syllabus outlined the program-approved course objectives, relevant CACREP standards, and activities and assignments in accordance with the program's accreditation framework.

The curriculum of MC course entailed both in-class and out-of-class activities and assignments designed to facilitate the acquisition of cultural self-awareness, understanding of others, and foundational multicultural concepts and skills. Among a variety of in-class learning activities, the most substantial included extensive instructor-led interactive lectures and discussions and student presentations on a variety of multicultural topics (e.g., characteristics of minority groups and cultural biases). In addition, panel presentations by individuals representing diverse backgrounds (e.g., LGBT, Muslim, African American, Latinos/as, and Asian) were arranged using the interactive exchange format. The MC course assignments were designed to enhance multicultural understandings and skills and guide reflections on personal multicultural growth. Further, students were required to engage in service learning activities focusing on active engagement within communities with underserved populations (e.g., homeless shelters). Throughout the course, students wrote entries in their reaction journal that utilizes an open-ended response format for students to communicate to the instructor their reactions toward the content

of class and personal struggles to incorporate new knowledge into personal lives and clinical experiences.

The students were required to write a minimum of one entry per class and submit their journals at the course's conclusion. While assessing the quality of the journal entries, the instructors analyzed cognitive, affective, and behavioral multicultural growth, extrapolation of newly acquired multicultural knowledge to novel cultural contexts, and commitment to multicultural agenda, diversity and social justice. As the course's cumulative assignment, students visited an unfamiliar cultural setting and wrote a reflective paper in which they represented the worldview of an unfamiliar culture in an unbiased manner, analyzed the discrepancies between this culture and their own culture, and concluded on how they would work with a member of the visited cultural group. In assessing the paper, the instructors analyzed personal multicultural growth, ability to take on multiple perspectives in addition to own preconceptions, engagement in exploring unfamiliar cultures, and connecting class concepts to field experiences.

The MC infusion curriculum design spanned a wide range of courses that focused on the following areas of counselor education: foundations of counseling, counseling theory and practice, theories and dynamics of group counseling, career and lifestyle development, and ethical, legal and professional issues in counseling. These courses aimed at achieving a variety of CACREP standards through a wide range of activities (e.g., lectures, group projects, field observations, and service learning) and assignments (e.g., research papers, reflections, and diagnostic and treatment plans and reports). Multicultural content and interpretative frameworks were embedded in the course content on the incidental basis per the instructor's judgment and

interests. Neither of the courses in this curriculum design included activities or assignments that were exclusively designed to develop multicultural competencies.

### **Participants**

The participants were 87 graduate students in a counseling training program who attended urban and/or suburban campus of a private university located in a Midwest metropolitan region of the United States. The participants represented diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. Seventy nine percent of the participants were females and 21 percent were males. The age of the participants ranged from 23 to 56 years, with the cumulative 84% of the participants younger than 35 years old. The participants represented a variety of ethnicities as follows: 58% White/Euro descend, 24% Asian, 12% African-American, and 6% Multiracial or Other. Forty-three of the students who attended the suburban campus were females of predominantly White/Euro descent from middle-class suburban communities, whereas 44 students who were enrolled on the urban campus reflected ethnically diverse urban population.

Following the study's IRB-approved protocol, all participants were recruited on a voluntary basis from students enrolled in graduate counseling courses taught by the two instructors and all responses to the study instrument (see below) were anonymous. The students were introduced to the study's purpose and procedures by the first author who had no affiliation with potential participants (i.e., a faculty member in a separate program). The students who opted to participate in the study signed the consent form (approved by the IRB) and responded to the study instrument (see below).

### **Procedure and Measure**

The participants were asked to respond to the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS) at the beginning (pre-test) and the end (post-test) of a course. The first author,

a faculty member not affiliated with the program, administered the scale to all participants with a prior explanation of the study purpose and consent procedures. The Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS) involves 45 items, 6-point Likert self-report rating scale that purports to measure general openness and comfort level in interactions with persons from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Fuertes, Miville, Mohr, Sedlacek & Gretchen, 2000; Krentzman & Townsend, 2008). The scale's theoretical model postulates that the process of acquiring intercultural awareness and skills necessary for effective intercultural endeavors is critically dependent on the ability to tolerate similarities and differences between oneself and another. Thus, a counselor's level of tolerance of human differences is assumed to be one of the foundational components of his/her multicultural competency. In support of this assertion, Constantine, Arorash, Barakett, Blackmon, Donnelly and Edles (2001) showed that the universal-diverse orientation, as measured by the M-GUDS, was a significant factor in predicting counselors' multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, along with multicultural self-efficacy.

The M-GUDS was designed as a reflection of the Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO) concept defined as "an attitude toward all other persons which is inclusive yet differentiating in that similarities and differences are both recognized and accepted" (Miville, Gelso, Pannu, Liu, Touradji, Holloway & Fuertes, 1999, p. 292). The UDO encompasses an overarching awareness and appreciation of human similarities and differences comprised of the interrelated cognitive, affective and behavioral components. These components are represented in the M-GUDS's three scales: (1) Diversity of Contact that reflects the extent to which the respondent seeks diversity in contact with others, (2) Relativistic Appreciation that represents the respondent's sense of connection with larger society or humanity, and (3) Comfort with Differences that shows the

respondent's appreciation of self and others. However, studies of the internal structure of the UDO indicated that it is best conceptualized as a single construct reflective of intersecting cognitive, affective and behavioral layers (Miville et al., 1999).

The results of the studies on the psychometric properties of the M-GUDS evidenced acceptable levels of the scale's reliability and validity (Miville et al., 1999; Krentzman & Townsend, 2008). The test-retest reliability of the M-GUDS ( $r=.93$ ) was established using a heterogeneous sample of college students. The scale's convergent and discriminant validities were supported by theory-congruent significant relations with measures of racial identity, homophobia, dogmatism, feminism, and androgyny. Further, the UDO was established to be an important factor accounting for the openness and comfort level reported by college students in counseling. The scores on the M-GUDS have also been found to relate to self-efficacy and effective coping skills. Importantly, in a review of measures of cultural competence (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008), the M-GUDS was one of the few measures that met the highest standards on at least 7 out of 10 rating scale quality criteria, with the particular strengths in the areas of overall validity (content, construct, or criterion-related), validity with diverse respondents, and reliability (test-retest reliability and internal consistency).

## **Results**

The total of 169 responses to the M-GUDS were collected, 87 at pre-test and 82 at post-test. The responses were collected across three consecutive years as follows: 44 in first year, 39 in second year, and 86 in third year. Across the three years, responses were collected during both fall and spring semesters, resulting in 93 responses in fall semesters and 76 in spring semesters. Table 1 outlines the distribution of responses across the two curriculum designs (MC course and MC infusion) and two instructors (Instructor 1 and Instructor 2). Overall, 75 (44%) responses

were obtained in the multicultural courses (MC course=Group 1) and 94 (66%) in other five program courses (MC infusion=Group 2). Responses were almost equally distributed across two instructors, with 83 and 86 responses for Instructor 1 and Instructor 2, respectively.

Table 1. Pre- and post-test response distribution across the curriculum designs (MC course and MC infusion) and instructors (Instructor 1 and Instructor 2).

MC course (Group 1)				MC infusion (Group 2)			
Pre-test/Instructor #		Post-test/Instructor #		Pre-test/Instructor #		Post-test/Instructor #	
#1	#2	#1	#2	#1	#2	#1	#2
19	19	19	18	24	25	21	24
Total 38		Total 37		Total 49		Total 45	
Total MC course = 75				Total MC infusion = 94			
Grand total = 169 responses							

ANOVAs were conducted to compare the groups (MC course=Group 1 and MC infusion=Group 2) on the total M-GUDS score, separately for pre-test and post-test (see Table 2). At pre-test, there was no significant difference [ $F(1,85)=.907, p=.344$ ] between Group 1 (mean=215.21, SD=21.40, n=38) and Group 2 (mean=219.66, SD=21.58, n=49). Thus, the students enrolled in courses across the two multicultural curriculum designs (MC course and MC infusion) reported similar levels of their overall openness towards diverse populations at the beginning of courses. In contrast, at post-test, Group 1 (mean=225.03, SD=17.75, n=37) obtained significantly higher score [ $F(1,81)=10.18, p=.002$ ] than Group 2 (mean=211.36, SD=18.89, n=45). Thus, at the



conclusion of the courses, students in multicultural courses (MC course) self-reported significantly higher level of their overall openness towards diverse populations than their counterparts in other program courses (MC infusion). These results suggest that the explicit multicultural curriculum design (MC course) is more effective, compared to the implicit curriculum design (MC infusion), in terms of increasing student openness and comfort with diverse populations.

Table 2. The results of ANOVAs on the M-GUDS total score across the curriculum designs (MC course and MC infusion) at the pre-test and post-test.

	MC course (Group 1)			MC infusion (Group 2)			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
Pre-test	38	215.21	21.40	49	219.66	21.58	(1, 85)=.097	.344
Post-test	37	225.03	17.75	45	211.36	18.89	(1, 81)=10.18	.002

### **Implications for the Counselor Education and Counseling Disciplines**

The following is a series of recommendations based on the current study's results consistent with the existing literature, which have implications for counselor education programs, counselors-in-training, and practitioners in the field of counseling.

Counselors-in-training in the current study who were taught multicultural competencies in the form of a single multicultural course (explicit curriculum design) self-report significantly higher levels of openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations than their peers taught through infusion of multicultural concepts and skills into other counseling courses (implicit curriculum design). Consequently, counselor education programs should implement

and/or continue teaching multicultural competencies via a single multicultural course that exclusively focuses on these competencies without the interference of other content areas.

Importantly, from a chronological curricular standpoint, the multicultural course should be inserted during the initial phase of the counselor education training rather than at the end of the trainees' preparation. The multicultural counseling course must set the diversity/multicultural compass that will shape the academic lenses from which the students see the content areas taught in other courses throughout the program. Isolation of a single multicultural course to cover the "quota" established by the accrediting and licensing bodies is not only insufficient but also professionally irresponsible.

It remains unclear whether the advantage of the explicit curriculum design (i.e., a single multicultural course) in increasing student openness and comfort towards diverse populations is evident in the current study and is related to any factors associated with the instructors. The instructors in this study possessed more extensive expertise, experience, and interest in the multicultural content compared to other counseling faculty members whose areas of expertise are not multiculturalism. Several previous studies indicated that the instructor's competence in terms of his/her multicultural awareness, identity development, and skill level may have an impact on student multicultural outcomes. Further, Fier and Ramsey (2005) and Henriksen (2006) established the importance for counselor educators to maintain an ongoing self-awareness of their own multicultural issues that must be aligned with the course's content and the changes in the field of multiculturalism. In congruence with this imperative, Seward (2013) reported that students were more satisfied with an instructor who had more multicultural experience compared to others who lacked authentic multicultural experience. The levels of passion, commitment, and

lifestyle aligned with the multicultural agenda can potentially affect the way students learn about diversity and multiculturalism.

The difference between an inspiring and motivating instructor versus an uncommitted counterpart may shed some additional light in the way diversity and multiculturalism are viewed by counselors-in-training. This can be summarized by a quote from Lang (2013, p.2): “I would love to be able to tell you that the research literature on teaching and learning in higher education—or at any educational level—provides a clear demonstration that teachers' enthusiasm and passion for their subject matter translate into greater student learning. It seems like such an intuitive conclusion: Our enthusiasm for the subject matter will motivate our students to work harder, which will then translate into deeper learning and longer retention of course material. Unfortunately, as even the most superficial of searches in the literature will reveal to you, no real evidence exists for that connection.”

This study utilized a measure of openness and comfort in interacting with diverse populations that integrates the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of multicultural competence. Consequently, it remains unclear which of the trainee's domains, cognitive, affective and/or behavioral, were influenced by the multicultural curriculum. Furthermore, this study's results do not offer an insight into the impact of multicultural curricula on trainees' long-term multicultural personal and professional changes. Clearly, the manifestation of long term changes in counselors' cognitions, emotions, and behaviors necessitates the use of multiple research methodologies and longitudinal studies. In particular, longitudinal studies stressing permanent and consistent changes in multicultural behaviors while in training and in the field are needed to expand the scope of evidence of the effectiveness of the multicultural curriculum designs.

Perhaps in the absence of extrinsic training factors such as course lectures, activities, assignments, readings and the influence of a professor in the classroom, counselors may be capable of maintaining their level of openness to diversity and transcend the daily challenges posed by their multicultural encounters with ethnically and racially diverse clientele. Yet, it will remain uncertain whether the phenomenon of transcendence, longevity, and permanency of knowledge as evidenced by their daily professional interactions and behavior result from exposure to multicultural counseling course (i.e., explicit multicultural curriculum design) or courses containing information about diversity in the curriculum (i.e., implicit multicultural curriculum).

The proposed recommendations must be considered with caution given several methodological limitations of the study. Importantly, the results were obtained from a single graduate counseling program at a Midwest metropolitan private higher education institution. Consequently, the size of the study sample and the demographic characteristics of the participants were limited. In this context, the generalizability of the results may be compromised and the results may not be applicable to counseling programs that serve different student populations.

### **Conclusion**

The effectiveness of multicultural curriculum design is critical to ensure that counselors-in-training acquire a minimal skill set to work with an increasingly multicultural population of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consequently, counselor education programs must evaluate the existing assumptions and pedagogies that traditionally are assumed to promote multicultural learning. With multicultural training established as an integral part of all counselor education programs, multiple pedagogical strategies and curricular designs supporting the acquisition of multicultural

competencies shape the way multicultural training is delivered. While both explicit and implicit curriculum designs for multicultural training seem to be beneficial to counselors-in-training, the explicit design appears to lead to more impactful multicultural learning outcomes.

The current study evidenced that explicit multicultural curriculum design (i.e., a stand-alone multicultural course) is an effective approach to facilitate trainees' overall multicultural development reflected in their openness and comfort in interactions with diverse populations. However, further research is needed to explore the impact of the multicultural curriculum designs on trainees' domain-specific changes (i.e., cognitive, affective and behavioral) in order to effectively facilitate comprehensive, multi-dimensional multicultural learning. Furthermore, a variety of assessment methods (i.e., tests, quizzes, reports, presentations, reflection journals, service learning activities) should be used to demonstrate that counselors-in-training will become multiculturally skilled professionals when working with diverse populations. This premise needs to be further investigated via longitudinal studies in the field after the completion of trainees' degrees in order to explore the long-term impact of different types of multicultural curriculum designs.

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