

## **Applying the Tripartite Model of Multicultural Counseling Competency to the Internship Training Program**

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University and college counseling centers serve a major function in providing mental health care to their increasingly diverse student bodies. In addition, these counseling centers provide valuable clinical training experiences for graduate students pursuing degrees in professional psychology. One long-standing and predominate form of training that many university and college counseling centers provide is the predoctoral internship. The predoctoral internship serves as the culminating clinical practice experience for doctoral candidates in counseling, clinical, and school psychology programs. Most counseling centers that provide internship programs include multiculturalism to varying degrees in their training curricula (Murphy, Wright, & Bellamy, 1995). In the most comprehensive sense, multiculturalism refers to a complex array of cultural variables such as racial/ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual orientation, disability, and other defining cultural characteristics of one's identity. Unfortunately, there is little research examining the role of multicultural training in university and college counseling centers. Despite this dearth of research, the American Psychological Association (APA; 2002) requires that internship programs provide culturally relevant training (i.e., knowledge and practical experience) in its criteria for accreditation. This article presents a description of the implications for those providing training for pre-doctoral students, reflects on one theory of multicultural competencies, the Tripartite Model, and describes how one training approach addresses these issues.

The predoctoral internship has been referred to as a gatekeeping experience: the internship training program has the responsibility to determine a candidate's competency to practice independently as a professional psychologist (Holloway & Roehlke, 1987). Most counseling centers expect their interns to "hit the ground running" in that they are expected to provide an array of services as an integral member of the counseling center staff while at the same time being active participants in their professional training. The training and support interns receive should serve as supplements to their established level of competence with general counseling skills. Counseling competency is a multidimensional construct of which multicultural competency is an aspect (Coleman, 1998; Constantine, 2002) and counseling centers can serve a distinct purpose in providing appropriate multicultural training to their interns. Indeed, Holloway and Roehlke (1987) in their seminal article on the predoctoral internship for counseling psychology trainees asserted that the need for quality training of interns to work effectively with racially/ethnically diverse clients would be of particular concern as the number of racially/ethnically diverse clientele increases. Additionally, effective multicultural training should attempt to inform and train interns to work in a culturally-competent manner with a broad range of cultural variables given that multiple cultural variables may be simultaneously relevant in clients' lives, and likely their presenting concerns.

As the field of counseling psychology has embraced the importance and value of multicultural counseling, several theories defining and measuring multicultural competency have evolved. However, the most widely used theory has been the Tripartite Model of Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC; see Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pedersen, Smith, & Vasquez-Nuttal, 1982). This theory includes three aspects of multicultural competency: knowledge, awareness, and skills. Despite criticisms about the limitations of this model, (see Constantine and Ladany, 2001; Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000) the basic tenets of the Tripartite Model may provide a valuable resource for university and college counseling centers' development of appropriate multicultural training programs for interns, other graduate trainees, and staff alike.

Despite the diversity of multicultural coursework, previous practica with culturally diverse clients, and other cross-cultural experiences that the intern brings to bear on his or her graduate training, the predoctoral internship experience may have the greatest direct impact on the development of the skills component of the Tripartite Model of MCC, (e.g., Coleman, submitted manuscript; Constantine, Ladany, Inman, & Ponterotto, 1996; Ponterotto, 1997). It is safe to assume that when a cadre of interns begin their year of internship each of them is in a different place in terms of their development of multicultural competencies (Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000; Sevig, 2001); this has best been documented for MCC specifically in the area of working with racial/ethnic minority clients. One can only extrapolate to the development of competency with other forms of cultural diversity given the status of the research. Therefore, an

internship training approach which is able to flexibly address the needs of a wide variety of interns may be most useful.

In a recent article by Todd Sevig (2001) of the University of Michigan Counseling and Psychological Services, a model of a year-long seminar for counseling center interns is presented that while primarily focusing on the cultural variable of race/ethnicity, is able to speak to the development of interns with differing levels of multicultural competencies. Using the research established by Murphy et al. (1995) on multicultural training in counseling centers, Sevig presents a multi-format model of training that includes didactic presentations, guest speakers, case presentations, discussion and experiential exercises. Sevig's model is flexible and comprehensive enough for any internship program to adapt to their specific services and clientele.

In addition, the basic components of the Tripartite Model; knowledge, awareness, and skills; are easily incorporated into the underlying objectives of Sevig's model (2001). The two main objectives of the training model: (a) to use multiple learning approaches to accommodate and respect the different learning styles represented in the trainee group and (b) to assist trainees in using personal awareness as a learning tool for their development as practitioners (Sevig) serve to build all trainees' multicultural counseling skills. Most importantly, this seminar model can meet each intern at his or her own level of MCC development. The seminar meets weekly for one and a half hours for 30 weeks over the course of the year. Clinical supervisors provide feedback to interns, as is common practice for counseling center internships, on their progress throughout the year. The feedback includes commentary on their performance (i.e., multicultural skills) and adherence to the training provided in the seminars (i.e., multicultural knowledge and awareness). In addition, interns are provided with an opportunity to demonstrate their evolving multicultural knowledge formally through written feedback on their professional development communicated to the training program twice during the year and informally through weekly journal entries communicated to the seminar facilitators.

APA (2002) states for accreditation purposes, the internship program, "engages in positive efforts designed to ensure that interns will have opportunities to learn about cultural and individual diversity as they relate to the practice of psychology. The avenues by which these goals are achieved are to be developed by the program" (p. 20).

Consequently, training directors have the responsibility to determine both the needs of their trainees and the avenues through which trainees can meet the demands of the counseling center. Despite the varying levels of established multicultural competence each intern brings to the internship experience, training directors can incorporate education, training, and opportunities for developing personal awareness into the multi-method seminar proposed by Sevig. This can be done in a manner that is not additionally burdensome to the training program itself or the intern by incorporating culturally relevant material into established training seminars, supervision, and the intern's clientele. Indeed the growing practice of incorporating more formalized, multi-method multicultural training approaches into the internship experience may be the best way to meet the diverse needs of both trainees and the clientele at college and university counseling centers.

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#### Author's Note

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