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ABSTRACT

Multicultural counseling competence is of paramount importance. For counselors to be able to better meet the needs of their clients, and for counselor education programs to better prepare their students to meet the needs of a diverse population, it is necessary to uncover and learn to effectively manipulate all the pieces of the puzzle of multicultural counseling competence. This study examined the relation of master's level counselors' (N=36) multicultural counseling competence, conscientiousness, and openness to experience on the Multicultural Counseling Inventory, the NEO-FFI, and the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale. Correlational analysis was used. Multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence were found to be significantly correlated. However, only a moderate portion of the variance in multicultural counseling competence can be associated with the variance in general counseling competence. The overlap of these variables appears to be modest enough to suggest that multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are distinct but overlapping constructs. In addition, a significant correlation was found between openness to experience and multicultural counseling awareness. These data seem to support the inclusion of multicultural counseling competencies and activities that increase counselor trainees' openness to new experiences in counselor preparatory programs. (EMK)

Master's Level Counselors' Self-Perceived Multicultural Competence: Relation to General Counseling Competence, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience

by

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ABSTRACT

Title of Research Competency:	Master's Level Counselors Self-Perceived Multicultural Competence: Relation to General Counseling Competence, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience
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Multicultural counseling competence among counselors is paramount. Not only does the growing minority client population deserve it, but the ethical obligation of the mental health profession demands it. For counselors to be able to better meet the needs of their clients, and for counselor education programs to better prepare their students to meet the needs of a diverse population, it is necessary to uncover and learn to effectively manipulate all the pieces of the puzzle of multicultural counseling competence. This study examined the relation of master's level counselors' multicultural counseling competence, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Thirty-six students attending a university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States were surveyed using the Multicultural Counseling Inventory, the NEO-FFI, and the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale. Analysis of Pearson product moment correlation coefficients revealed that multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are significantly correlated. However, only a moderate portion of the variance in multicultural counseling competence can be associated with the variance in general counseling competence. The overlap of these variables appears to be modest enough to suggest that multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are distinct, but overlapping constructs. Additionally, a significant correlation was found between openness to experience and multicultural counseling awareness. These data seem to support the inclusion of multicultural counseling competencies and activities that increase counselor trainees' openness to new experiences in counselor preparatory programs.

Introduction

The United States census bureau's projections for the next half century indicate dramatic increases in the nation's minority population (Whitfield, 1994). Mental health professionals, however, need not consult census reports to become cognizant of the minority populations' growth. A cursory look at the surrounding world confirms this projection. In response to the resulting "heavy demands for some type of effective professional intervention for . . culturally diverse groups" (Whitfield, 1994, p. 240), countless studies and scholarly journal articles have echoed the need for counselors to become "culturally aware, knowledgeable and skilled in working with culturally diverse populations" (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995, p. 287). In addition, recent years have brought about the adoption of specific multicultural counseling goals and competencies by the American Counseling Association and the American Psychological Association (Engels & Damien , 1990) . This level of awareness has brought to light the importance of individual counselors' multicultural competence. There is the need for counselor growth and development, specifically in the area of multicultural counseling. Individual counselors must evolve from professionals who "provide service without regard to their own, or their clients' race or ethnicity ---believing that they should provide equal treatment to all regardless of cultural variables", to professionals who regard "counselor and client differences and similarities as important to the counseling process" (Sowdowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994, p. 137). The Sowdowsky et al. description of multicultural competence implies a high degree of self-awareness, comfort with self, and self assurance on the part of the counselor.

The present research study grew out of this recognition expressed by Sowdowsky et al., and the recognition of the continuing need for highly competent multicultural

counselors expressed by professional counseling and psychological organizations. The problem investigated in this study is whether or not there is a relationship between master's level counselors' multicultural competence and their general counseling competence, conscientiousness, and their openness to experience. If multicultural counseling competence were found to be strongly related to general counseling competence and the specific personality traits of conscientiousness and openness to experience, this might have implications for counselor education programs, counselor educators, counselors, and minority clients who ultimately utilize their services.

Statement Of The Problem

Multicultural counseling competence among all mental health professionals, and counselors in particular, is paramount. Not only does the growing minority population deserve it, but the ethical obligation of the mental health profession demands it. The research has addressed the issue of multicultural competence in master's level counselors, but it has failed to investigate the relation of general counseling competence, conscientiousness, and openness to experience to the self-perceived level of multicultural competence of counselors. The purpose of this study is to begin to fill this void by investigating the possible interrelationship of these variables. For counselors to be able to better meet the needs of their clients, and for counselor education programs to better prepare their students to meet the needs of a diverse population, it is necessary to uncover and learn to effectively manipulate all the pieces of the puzzle of multicultural counseling competence. In this study measures of general counseling competence, conscientiousness, and openness to experience will be examined for patterns and correlation with master's level counselors' self perceived multicultural competence.

Research Questions.

The research questions for this study, along with their presuppositions supported by the research reviewed in the second section of this paper, are as follows:

1. Are self perceived multicultural counseling competence and self perceived general counseling competence two distinct constructs?

2. Is master's level counselors' self perceived multicultural counseling competence positively correlated with their level of conscientiousness?

3. Is master's level counselors' self perceived multicultural counseling competence positively correlated with their level of openness to experience?

Presuppositions.

1. The personality trait of conscientiousness affects one's sense of obligation to learn and utilize knowledge and skills.

2. The personality trait of openness to experience affects one's willingness to view issues and individuals from different perspectives.

Rationale

The presuppositions which serve as a foundation for this study have been supported by years of research comprised of theoretical models and empirical data, gathered by leaders in the areas of multicultural competence and personality development. As of yet, however, research has failed to investigate the interrelationship of these variables, specifically in the roles and work of counselors. Information on the relationship of these variables may provide much needed insight for practicing counselors and those preparing to be counselors. It may enable counselors to determine, first and foremost, exactly what variables are being measured by multicultural counseling competence assessments, and the extent to which the variables do or do not overlap. Secondly, it may enable counselors to look at key personality traits in order to enhance their multicultural counseling competence. For counselor education programs, this information may begin to provide insight on programmatic and curriculum changes that will increase multicultural counseling competence in its students.

Growing minority populations demand that counselors strengthen and expand their multicultural competence. Irrespective of this growth, the ethical obligation of the

counseling profession to be "committed to the welfare of others" (Engels, 1990, p. 2) alone demands a high level of counseling competence. Multicultural counseling competence is not exempt.

Scope Of The Study

This study was conducted at a state university. Master's level counseling students at the University of Maryland served as subjects. Conclusions are based only on the findings from the tested sample, though these findings may have implications for the body of knowledge on counselors' multicultural competence beyond the University of Maryland.

Theoretical Overview

The research questions of this study involve several variables. Of concern in this study is not only master's level counselors' self-perceived multicultural counseling competence, but how that competence is related to general counseling competence and the specific personality traits, conscientiousness and openness to experience. Each of these variables must therefore be considered in its theoretical context for fuller understanding and insight on possible relationships and connections between the variables.

The area of multicultural counseling competence, although relatively new, has commanded much attention. Recent years have produced many theories, competency lists, and assessment tools. Specific research on master's level counselors comprises a large part of the knowledge base on multicultural counseling competence. General counselor competence has long been recognized as important. From the foundational work of the 1960's, various models have resulted for counselor self, peer, supervisor, and client evaluation. The Big Five-Factor Personality Model is the relative newcomer to this list of variables. Developed by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1985), this theory has yet to be examined for specific applications to master's level counselors.

Summary

This section discussed the need to investigate specific personality factors and their relation to master's level counselors' self-perceived multicultural counseling competence. The rationale for conducting research on this topic was also discussed in light of a brief overview of the theoretical bases of multicultural counseling competence, general counseling competence, and the Big Five-Factor Personality Model.

The next section of this paper will review these constructs in depth and review the research questions investigated in this study.

Review Of The Literature

Multicultural Competence

The issue of multicultural counseling competence has been of concern for many years. Initially, researchers and educators looked at multicultural competence in terms of learning as much as possible about individual minority groups. Studies focusing on the counseling issues of various groups like those of Atkinson, Mariyama, and Matsui (1978); and Cheng and Jepsen (1988) dominate the early literature. Heightened awareness and sensitivity in the 1990's brought forth the realization that there are far too many culturally and racially distinct groups for a single individual to adequately grasp characteristics and trends found in specified knowledge bases of each group (Burn, 1992). This kind of thinking steered the study of multicultural counseling competence away from mere memorization of a specific knowledge base to literacy " . . . in different cultures understanding how cultures create, send, store and process information" and " . . . familiarity with patterns of living, behavioral norms, values and beliefs" (Whitfield, 1994, p. 241). The emphasis switched from merely "knowing that cultural differences exist to knowing how to conduct sessions with clients from diverse cultures" (McRae & Johnson, 1991, p.133). The shift in emphasis requires counselors to explore their

personal racial attitudes and beliefs in order to enhance their skills and ability to see beyond their own culture and perspectives into that of their client (Kerka, 1992; Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 1994).

As this shift began to take root, the concept of multicultural competence took on a more defined structure delineated by specific goals and competencies. Sue et al. (1982) defined multicultural counseling as consisting of three components: beliefs/attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Their description of a multiculturally competent counselor is detailed in the following table.

Table 1

Sue et al. (1982) Description of Multicultural Counseling

Component	Description
Beliefs/Attitudes	1. culturally aware and sensitive to their own cultural heritage and value, and respecting differences
	2. aware of values and biases, and possible effect on clients
	3. comfortable with differences in race and beliefs
	4. sensitive to circumstances that may dictate referral of client to member of own race or culture
Knowledge	1. sociopolitical system and treatment of minorities in the United States
	2. specific groups
	3. generic characteristics of counseling and therapy
	4. institutional barriers
Skills	1. variety of verbal and nonverbal responses

Component	Description
	2. send and receive verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and appropriately 3. exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of the client

Note. From " Position Paper: Cross-Cultural Counseling Competencies by Sue et al., 1982, The Counseling Psychologist, 10.

Sowdowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994) similarly define multicultural competence along three dimensions. Their three dimensions of multicultural competence are outlined below:

Table 2

Sowdowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994) Multicultural Competence

Component	Dimension
Skills	ability to match interventions with client expectations, awareness of caution when utilizing assessment instruments with minorities

Component	Dimension
Cultural Self-Awareness and Other Awareness	introspection and reflection; awareness of own sociopolitical characteristics, gender, and social economic status; ability to look at own culture from outsiders' perspective; work with minority clients; participation in workshops
Knowledge	culture specific information on interventions, racial, and cultural variables

Note. From "Development of the Multicultural Counseling Inventory: A Self-Report Measurement of Multicultural Counseling Competencies, by G. Sowdowsky, R. Taffe, T. Gutkin, and S. Wise, 1994, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41.

Even in recent times, researchers have been struggling to define and refine the concept of multicultural competence. Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, and Nielson (1995) echo the imperatives of Ridley (1985) for multicultural competence of mental health professionals and their educational programs to not only be a state of knowing, but a state of being, adequately addressing issues of professional participation, ethicality, cultural context, scholarship, and legality.

Much attention has been given not only to defining what multicultural competence is, but to designing assessment tools that adequately measure this complex construct. The three self report measures of multicultural competence that are

predominately used in the literature will be reviewed in the following section of this paper.

Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge Skills Survey (MAKSS)

The three most used self report instruments designed to assess multicultural counseling competence address multicultural competence as defined by Sue et al. in 1982. The oldest of these three tools is the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey (MAKSS) developed by D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991). This sixty item assessment tool contains items focused on three scales: knowledge, awareness, and skills. Sample items include, " At present how would you rate your own understanding of the term 'racism' ?" and " How well would you rate your ability to analyze a culture into its component parts?" (D' Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). Each item is rated with a four point response scale ranging from very limited or strongly disagree to very good or strongly agree (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

Questions of reliability and validity have been addressed in detail. Pope-Davis and Dings (1995) cited the internal consistency reliabilities to be .75 for the awareness scale of the MAKSS, .90 for the knowledge scale, and .96 for the skills scale. The instrument's criterion validity and construct validity are statistically weak partly due to the small sample sizes used in most of the studies utilizing the MAKSS. Another issue of concern imbedded in the validity question is that the complexity of the concepts may not be fully understood by the multiculturally inexperienced counselor and therefore not marked as conservatively as they would be by a counselor who more fully sees the entire picture of the issue being addressed (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995). This phenomenon could significantly impact a MAKSS score. To date, neither this issue nor the degree to which the MAKSS is subject to socially desirable responses has been fully addressed in the literature (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

The Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI)

In 1993, Sowdowsky et al. developed The Multicultural Counseling Inventory in light of theoretical models and training competency lists. The resulting forty item inventory, which during construction was administered and refined using the feedback from a study involving counseling psychology students (N=604), and a second study involving 445 subjects, consists of four dimensions. The dimensions include multicultural counseling skills, multicultural awareness, multicultural counseling knowledge, and multicultural counseling relationship (Sowdowsky et al., 1994). Sample assessment items include: "When working with minority clients, I am able to quickly recognize and recover from cultural mistakes or misunderstandings", "When working with all clients , I am able to be concise and to the point reflecting , clarifying and probing" (Skills scale); "When working with minority clients, I keep in mind research findings about minority clients' preferences in counseling", "When working with multicultural clients I apply sociopolitical history of the client's respective minority groups to understand them better" (Knowledge scale); and " I am involved in advocacy efforts against institutional barriers in mental health sources for minority clients" (Awareness scale), (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995). The extensive studies yielded internal consistency reliabilities as follows: Multicultural Counseling Skill, .81; Multicultural Awareness, .80; Multicultural Counseling Knowledge, .80; Multicultural Relationship, .67 (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1994, p. 298). In terms of criterion referenced validity, Pope-Davis and Dings raise some important questions. The Multicultural Counseling Inventory rating scale ranges from very accurate (4.0) to very inaccurate (1.0). "Given the nature of counseling, if the behaviors referenced in the item stem are ones that the counselors have experienced in a multicultural situation, a rating lower than three seems relatively unlikely. A rating lower than two seems very unlikely unless the item describes a practice or approach to which the respondent is philosophically or pragmatically opposed, or that is genuinely unknown to the respondent (and the

respondent is entirely honest in this self-evaluation)" (p. 299). Interpretation is therefore based on the meaningful distinction individual counselors place on the ratings rather than their answer to the question.

Construct validity as evidenced in the original studies, however, appears to be good. Item analysis shows that items focus more explicitly on behaviors than attitudes. In addition, The Multicultural Counseling Inventory scores appear to be influenced very little, if at all, by social desirability. This, too, may be due to the MCI's explicit focus on behaviors rather than attitudes (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995). Although the MCI does assess both attitudes and behaviors, its assessment is primarily behaviorally based.

The Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale Form B: Revised Self-Assessment (MCAS-B)

The Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale Form B: Revised Self-Assessment (Ponterotto, Reiger, Barret & Sparks, 1994; Ponterotto, Sanchez & Magids, 1991) consists of 42 items representing the categories of knowledge/skills and awareness. In addition, it contains a social desirability cluster consisting of three items. Scoring is based on a seven point rating scale with descriptors ranging from not at all true (1) to totally true (7). Knowledge/skills scale items include questions such as, "I am familiar with the research and writing of Paul B. Pedersen and I can discuss his work at length," and "I am aware of certain counseling skills techniques or approaches that are more likely to transcend culture and be effective with any client." " I feel that different socioeconomic status backgrounds of counselor and client may serve as an initial barrier to effective cross cultural counseling," and "I believe all clients should maintain direct eye contact during counseling" are representative of awareness scale items (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1994).

Coefficient alpha reliabilities are .78 for the MCAS-B awareness scale, .93 for the knowledge/skills scale, and .92 for the total instrument (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

Questions of validity are still largely unanswered for the MCAS-B. Pope-Davis and Dings suggest that such information may become available after future revisions and replications of the original studies. This also holds true for the MCAS-B social desirability section. In general, more study is needed before the scale's best use and validity can be determined (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

There is little debate of the importance of multicultural counseling competence. The sheer emergence of goals and assessment tools designed by some of the prominent researchers in the field speaks to its value. A fundamental question still surfaces, however. "Is self-report the best way to measure this construct?" The answer appears to be yes. Self-report measures undoubtedly coincide with a factor evidenced in almost every set of multicultural counseling competencies: self understanding (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995). Competencies set forth by Sue et al. (1982), Sowdowsky et al. (1994) , and the American Counseling Association (Engels, 1990) all speak to the importance of self-understanding in achieving multicultural counseling competence. Pope-Davis and Dings (1995) state " . . . self-understanding, particularly with regard to sensitive issues such as prejudice and racism, is a fundamental component of every counselor's personal and professional development. Self-report seems a natural measure of self-understanding" (p. 308).

Multicultural Counseling Competence Literature and Research Findings

The next step then is to continue to aggressively investigate and gather sound data to support or give rise to alternative views of the construct of multicultural counseling competence, its practices, and its assessment tools. The counseling profession, if courageous enough to stand up to its mission of providing "effective professional intervention" (Whitfield, 1994, p. 240) to members of all cultural groups, can afford to do no less.

In answer to this call, multicultural counseling competence research has begun to utilize the theory, principles, and assessment tools, previously discussed in this paper, to

suggest counseling practices and strategies that speak to multicultural counseling competence. With theorists and researchers reaching a fair degree of consensus regarding the definition of multicultural counseling and multicultural counseling competence, multicultural counseling literature and research studies now appear to fall into three main categories: students' development of multicultural counseling competence, programming and training for multicultural counseling competence, and the impact of multicultural competence in the counseling setting.

Students' Development of Multicultural Counseling Competence.

The development of multicultural counseling competence has been widely discussed in the literature. Pope-Davis and Ottavi (1994) suggest that multiculturally competent counselors move beyond "knowing that" to "knowing how" (p. 654). This transition in level of competence seems to develop with long term commitment, increased knowledge, and awareness. Specifically, however, using the tools of multicultural counseling, several theoretical articles and studies have begun to look at the factors that influence the development of multicultural counseling competence in the individual counselor.

Kiselica (1998), based on his fourteen years of experience as a counselor trainer, suggests that counselors must first become aware of their own issues of racial identity development before being able to develop multicultural competence. Richardson and Molinaro (1996) support this theory in their review of the literature on White counselor self-awareness and multicultural counseling competence.

Ottavi, Pope-Davis, and Dings (1994) in a study entitled "Relationship Between White Racial Identity Attitudes and Self Reported Multicultural Counseling Competencies" surveyed 128 White counseling graduate students attending counseling psychology programs in the Mid-west. The students were given the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale, the Multicultural Counseling Inventory, and a personal data sheet. The data suggest that stages of racial identity explained variation in self-reported levels of

multicultural counseling competence beyond that accounted for by demographic, educational and clinical (i.e. number of clinical hours, number of supervision hours) variables. Data also suggests that the stages of White racial identity development significantly relate to counselors' perceived ability or difficulty with culturally diverse worldview, reasoning, decision making, manner of dress, and socioeconomic status. Each of these areas is an important component of multiculturalism.

Building on the work of Ottavi, Pope-Davis, and Dings (1994), Steward, Boatwright, Sauer, Baden, and Jackson (1995) studied 92 White counseling students to find the degree to which sex, self-reported multicultural counseling competence and cognitive complexity contribute to the variance in each level of White racial identity. Using the White Racial Attitude scale, the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills survey, and the Scale of Intellectual Development, the researchers found that White racial identity attitudes are related to students' multicultural training, sex, and the complexity of their cognitive schema.

In a study of other possible factors influencing multicultural counseling, Pope-Davis and Ottavi (1994) found that for a national sample of 220 counselors, ethnicity was the only demographic variable significantly associated with differences in self-reported multicultural counseling competence. In this study, African American, Asian Americans, and Hispanic counselors reported more multicultural awareness and relationships than did their White colleagues.

Multicultural Counseling Training.

A second theme that has emerged in the multicultural counseling competence literature is programming or counselor training. Theoretical literature suggests that effective counseling is dependent upon counselors' mastery of multicultural beliefs/attitudes and knowledge competencies by developing appreciation of cultural and ethnic differences and familiarity with themselves, with between group, and with in-group characteristics of cultures and ethnicities different from their own (Herring, 1997a;

Locke & Parker, 1994; Lopez, Lopez, & Fong, 1991; Ottavi et al., 1994). This being so, it is not surprising that many studies have explored various components of counselors' multicultural training.

An early study by Ponterotto and Casas (1987) examined the characteristics of counseling programs identified as having developed strength in multiculturalism. In order to accomplish this task, a consensus list of multicultural counseling specialists was developed. These 20 specialists who publish, practice, train, and participate in professional organizations promoting multicultural counseling competence, nominated 35 counseling programs that "relative to the traditional counseling program could be said to have a multicultural strength" (p. 431). Ponterotto and Casas (1987) found the 35 nominated programs each have a faculty member who is committed to cultural issues, require students to take at least one course on multicultural issues, and infuse multicultural issues into all program curricula. Although the exploratory nature of the study prevented definitive conclusions about characteristics of counselor programs that promote multicultural counseling competence, the study did lay the groundwork for future studies of training programs.

Steward (1992) examined ways in which counselor educators may more effectively accommodate students' multicultural counseling training needs by surveying 84 master's and doctoral level graduate students enrolled in a cross cultural counseling course at a predominately White mid-western university. The participants took the Culture Shock Inventory, which is an assessment tool designed to highlight potential troublespots for those planning to work with clients outside of their own cultural group. The data suggest students find it most difficult to remain open to new ideas, beliefs and perspectives; to identify specific cultural behaviors and beliefs that differ from the predominant American worldview; and to maintain interaction with individuals whose interpersonal styles differ from their own. Data also suggest students are most comfortable in recognizing the importance of multicultural study, and in gaining an

understanding of behavioral and cognitive cultural differences discussed in training. The study found no statistically significant difference between the responses of master's level and doctoral level students. These findings seem to support training programs' inclusion of experiential multicultural counseling learning activities for graduate students of all levels.

It is important to note not only what training programs include in order to promote multicultural counseling competence, but also what effect those components have on students. This consideration represents the most current direction of research in multicultural counseling competence.

Herring (1998) surveyed 85 master's level students who were in the internship phase of their school counseling program. These students completed an open-ended questionnaire regarding their conceptions of multicultural counseling. The data yielded much variability in the discussion of the outcomes and implementation of multiculturalism in school counseling, and little knowledge of the concept of multiculturalism. This lack of consensus seems to suggest the need for curriculum uniformity for school counselor training programs (Herring, 1998).

Taking a closer look at students' responses to multicultural training, Steward, Morales, Bartell, Miller and Weeks (1998) surveyed 48 master's and doctoral level counseling psychology students about their experiences after taking four multicultural counseling courses. Statistical analysis of the data suggests the following: multicultural coursework does not result in the same level of sensitivity for all students, students can pass coursework and graduate while still rejecting the concepts of multiculturalism, and trainees who do not accept the concepts of multiculturalism are just as likely to be perceived by their peers as being competent in service delivery as those who accept the concepts. The exploratory nature of this study prohibits generalization, but the findings do suggest interesting areas of future study and possible considerations for multicultural counseling training programs, including a review of student assessment policies and

more purposeful inclusion of affective education components.

Multicultural Competence in Counseling.

The ultimate goal of multicultural counseling competence is effective professional intervention. Emerging studies, which examine the impact of multiculturally sensitive strategies on client comfort and counseling outcomes, are therefore extremely important to the multicultural counseling literature.

A large body of research in this area examines clients' preferences for counselors. Ponterotto, Alexander, and Hinkston (1988) found that when seeking a counselor, African American college students prefer a counselor with perceived attitudes and values similar to their own. Similar results were found by Thompson, Worthington, and Atkinson (1994) in their study of African American women; Johnson and Lashley (1989) in their study of Native American college students; and in the Lopez, Lopez, and Fong (1991) study of Mexican American college students. These data suggest being aware, sensitive and respectful of the beliefs and attitudes of minority clients, a multicultural counseling competence component, is critical to the counseling process.

D'Andrea and Daniels (1995) conducted a study that takes a look at the impact of multicultural counseling competence in a different context. The study, which is significant because of its quasi-experimental design, examined the impact of multicultural awareness, sensitivity, and counseling on third grade students' behavior. One hundred seventeen third grade students in a Honolulu public school participated in the study. The student sample was very diverse. It included Hawaiian (35%), Filipino (25%), Korean (15%), African American (12%), Caucasian (10%), and Pacific Island (3%) students. The participating students were given the Social Skills Rating Inventory. The students' teachers were given the teacher form of the inventory. After administration of these assessments, two graduate students trained in multicultural

counseling led ten weekly student sessions. These sessions, entitled Multicultural Guidance Program, were designed using the Omizo and D'Andrea framework (1995, as cited in D'Andrea and Daniels, 1995). The sessions focused on increasing students' awareness and sensitivity to cultural issues, ethnicity, stereotyping, and prejudice using a group counseling/group guidance format. After the ten-week intervention, the inventories were re-administered. Analysis of the data showed a significant increase in the teachers' and students' ratings of the students' social skills, and a significant decrease in the students' total behavior score. In addition to this statistical data, all the participating teachers reported that their students appeared to be more tolerant of cultural differences and generally get along better.

Although this study has some weakness in design (i.e. lack of a control group), it does highlight the potential "real world" benefit of the work of multiculturally competent counselors. D'Andrea and Daniels (1995) suggest that counselors access intervention models and strategies that have multicultural relevance. These strategies and models will only become available, however, through more research focused on issues of multicultural counseling competence.

General Counseling Competence

Psychoanalytic, client-centered, and behavioristic theories have each added specific elements to the profile of an effective counselor. Common threads that run through all of these theories, however, describe the effective counselor as genuine in therapeutic encounters, warm in regard to clients, and empathic (Traux & Carkhuff, 1967). Traux and Carkhuff (1967) note, " . . . these central ingredients of empathy, warmth, and genuineness do not merely represent 'techniques' of psychotherapy or counseling, but are interpersonal skills that the counselor or therapist employs in applying 'techniques' or 'expert knowledge' . . ." (p.31). This explanation seems to indicate that effective counseling is about something distinctly different from knowledge, skills and attitudes. This explanation appears to distinguish general counseling

competence from multicultural counseling competence. While multicultural counseling competence is focused on specific skills, knowledge, and awareness that promote effective general counseling within a cultural context, effective general counseling centers on the interpersonal relationship.

Traux and Carkhuff (1967) developed scales to measure the central ingredients of effective counseling: empathy, genuineness, and warmth. Twenty-eight studies, ranging in sample size from 28 to 384, were conducted. In each study, therapists and counselors were rated for their demonstration of the three central ingredients in individual and group counseling sessions. Serving as an example of the assessment, the empathy scale rates subjects based on their level of reflected empathy. Scores range from 1, which indicates inaccurate responses to obvious client feelings, to 9, which indicates consistently accurate toward obvious client feelings, and accurate and unhesitant toward deep client feelings with regard to both content and intensity (Traux & Carkhuff, 1967). Intraclass reliabilities were in the moderate to high range (.40 - .95) for the scales. Criterion validity for the Traux and Carkhuff scales is evidenced by the scales' significant relationship to therapeutic outcomes.

Myrick and Kelly (1971) note that the Traux and Carkhuff (1967) scales " . . . may be used by an observer to evaluate a counselor in terms of facilitative conditions presented during counseling. These scales, however, are limited to the process dimensions of empathy, respect, and genuineness. They do not describe some of the behaviors which contribute to these dimensions . . ." (p.331). Recognizing the need to assess a counselor's total experience, Myrick and Kelly (1971) developed the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale (CERS).

The CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) is an assessment used to rate counselors' performance in counseling and supervision. The assessment evolved from a list of evaluative criteria distributed to faculty and students in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida, and further analyzed and assessed in terms of face

validity during a 12 week counseling practicum. The resulting 27 items evaluate counselors' understanding of a counseling rationale, practice with clients, and exploration of self and counseling relationships (Myrick & Kelly, 1971).

The CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) is unique in that it can be self administered or used by a rater. It uses a likert-type rating scale ranging from -3 to +3, with scaled scores ranging from 1 to 7. Scores are totaled for each of the assessment's two sections, counseling and supervision, and combined for a overall score. Sample items include, "Is sensitive to the dynamics of self in counseling relationships; Lacks basic knowledge of fundamental counseling principles and methodology; Is indifferent to personal development and professional growth" (Myrick & Kelly, 1971).

Forty-five counselors and their supervisors were involved in the CERS' (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) reliability testing. Internal consistency testing yielded a correlation coefficient of .95 using a split- half reliability procedure, and a .86 correlation coefficient when comparing the 13 supervisory items and the 13 counseling items on the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971). Loesch and Rucker (1977) found strong empirical support for the CERS' construct validity, suggesting that the composite supervisory and counseling score seemed to have the greatest validity (as cited in Benshoff & Thomas, 1992).

Although validity and reliability testing was based on relatively small sample sizes, the authors note several possible uses of the CERS, including as a tool to enhance insight and communication between counselors and their supervisors, and as a descriptive research instrument that quantifies levels of perceived counselor effectiveness (Myrick & Kelly, 1971). A study examining self perceived counselor effectiveness using the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) is the Fuqua, Newman, Scott, and Gade study (1986). In that study the researchers found the self ratings of counselors-in training to be significantly higher than those of their supervisors. Benshoff and Thomas(1992), again examining the effectiveness of the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) as a self rated assessment, indicate that when counselors in training rate themselves, different factors

emerge than when experienced supervisors use the instrument for supervisee evaluation. With careful interpretation of its results in terms of only the overall perceived counseling performance, the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) may prove useful as a self rated assessment. The CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971) allows for counselor self evaluation or evaluation by a supervisor. It does not allow for evaluation by a client. The Counselor Rating Form (CRF) (Barak & LaCrossse, 1975), and its revised version, the Counselor Rating Form Short Version (CRFS-S) (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983) do allow for such evaluation.

The CRF and the CRF-S contain paired adjectives items which are exemplars of counselor expertness, attractiveness, or trustworthiness. Evaluation of both assessments show good reliability on the three subscales ranging from .85 to .91, and evidence of construct validity through factor analysis. The CRF's data seem to show that ratings of counselors are heavily influenced by the "cooperative subject" response bias (Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985, pp.601), and has yet to show that expert counselors obtain significantly higher ratings than do novice counselors (Barak & Dell, 1977; LaCrosse, 1980; Zamostny et al., 1981 as cited in Ponterotto & Furolng, 1985). The CRF-S in many ways is comparable to the CRF, although there is some evidence that the two assessments may be measuring slightly different constructs (Epperson & Pecnik, 1985 as cited in Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985). More validation data must be gathered on the CRF-S before its findings can be accepted.

The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory(BLRI) (Barrett & Lennard, 1962) is a 6-point bipolar scale containing items such as, " He respects me." These items are based on the thesis that a client's experience of his or her counselor's response is the primary determinant of therapeutic influence. The assessment shows adequate reliability ranging from .78 to .93 on the empathic understanding, level of regard, congruence, unconditionality, and willingness to be known subscales; and evidence of content validity based on expert ratings (Gurman, 1977 as cited in Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985).

The great advantage of the BLRI is that it has been used more extensively in actual clinical and field settings than any of the other assessments discussed. Findings seem to suggest that clients using the BLRI to rate counselors are heavily influenced by a single evaluative component rather than the individual concepts proposed by the BLRI's subscales.

The Counselor Effectiveness Scale (CES) (Ivey & Authier, 1978), is a 25 item, 7-point semantic differential assessment ranging from "not very" to "very". A sample item includes, "Expert" (Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985). The CES shows parallel form test reliability of .98. The CES has limited validity data (e.g., it was used only nine times between 1974 and 1984) (Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985). Available data does seem to suggest, however, that the CES measures clients' global perception of counselor effectiveness. Continued study may further substantiate this finding.

Finally, the CERS (Atkinson & Carskaddon, 1975) is a 10 item, 7-point bipolar semantic differential scale developed to measure counselor credibility. Sample items on the subscales of expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness include, "good—bad, valuable—worthless, and meaningful—meaningless" (Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985). The CERS (Atkinson & Carskaddon, 1975) has reliability ranging from .75 to .90 and shows concurrent validity with the CRF ($r = .80$). Limited research using the CERS (Atkinson & Carkaddon, 1975) seems to suggest that client's perception of a counselor's degree of expertness relates to the client's willingness to self refer.

The major counselor competence rating scales discussed each address the concept of general counseling competence slightly differently, with occasional overlap in assessed subscales. Of the seven scales reviewed, only the CERS (Myrick & Kelly,

1971) is used as a self rated assessment of general counselor competence, which is a major consideration of the present study.

Conscientiousness and Openness To Experience

Old models of personality theory rely heavily on the concept of "type." The 1990's, however, has brought to light a new personality model: one that is five dimensional, places emphasis on individual traits rather than types, bases score strength on preferences, and yields a normal distribution of scores on its dimensions (Howard & Howard, 1995). This personality model was developed and refined by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae. Costa and McCrae's Big Five-Factor model of personality identifies five dimensions. Each dimension or domain is characterized by descriptive facets. The Big Five-Factor model's domains are outlined below.

Table 3

Big Five Factor Domains, Facets, and High and Low Scorer Traits

		Scorer Traits	
Domain	Facets	Low	High
Neuroticism			
	anxiety	calm, relaxed	worried, tense apprehensive
	hostility	fearless, even tempered	hot tempered
	depression	seldom sad, feels worthwhile	hopeless, downhearted
	self-consciousness	poised, secure,	guilty, feels inferior

		Scorer Traits	
Domain	Facets	Low	High
		self-controlled	
	impulsivity	resists temptation	unable to resist cravings
Neuroticism			
	vulnerability	resilient	unable to deal with stress
Extroversion			
	warmth	cold, distant	outgoing, talkative
	gregariousness	formal, solitary	seeks social contact
			convivial
	assertiveness	unassuming, retiring	dominant
	activity	unhurried, cautious	
energetic			
	excitement seeking	staid, unenthusiastic	flashy, vigorous
	positive emotions	serious	seek stimulation
			cheerful, high spirited

		Scorer Traits	
Domain	Facets	Low	High
Openness to Experience			
	fantasy	practical	imaginative
Openness to Experience	aesthetics	avoids daydreaming	elaborates
	feelings	insensitive to beauty	fantasizes
	actions	narrow range of emotions	moved by art and beauty
	ideas	routine, pragmatic	emotionally responsive
	values	factually oriented	seeks novelty and variety
Agreeableness			
	trust		
	straightforwardness		
	altruism	challenger	adapter
	compliance		
	modesty		
	tender mindedness		

Domain	Facets	Scorer Traits: Low	Scorer Traits: High
Conscientiousness			
	competence		
	order		
	dutifulness	flexible	
	focused		
	achievement		
	self-discipline		
	deliberation		

Note. Adapted from "The Big Five Quickstart: An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model of Personality for Human Resource Professionals," by P. Howard and J. Howard, 1995, Charlotte, NC: Center for Applied Cognitive Studies. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 384 754), and "The Neo Personality Inventory: Using the Five Factor Model in Counseling," by R. McCrae and P. Costa, 1991, Journal of Counseling and Development, 69, p. 368 .

The NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) consists of 241 items written on the sixth grade reading level (McCrae & Costa, 1991). A 60 item short version, NEO-FFI, is also available. Test reliability is .80 for the short version of the personality inventory, and .90 for the 241 item version (Howard & Howard, 1995). The Costa and McCrae study

(as cited in Tokar & Swanson, 1995) found evidence of construct validity in the NEO Personality Inventory's correlation with self report adjective factors of the five factor model. Convergent validity correlations for items with respect to other items in the same domain ranged from .56 to .62. Additional psychometric properties of the domains of interest in this study, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness, are detailed below.

Table 4

Correlations of NEO-FFI with Validity Criteria

	NEO-FFI Form S scales	
Criterion	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness
Adjective Factors (N=375)		
Neuroticism	.03	.16**
Extraversion	.02	.20***
Openness	**.56*** **	-.05
Agreeableness	.04	-.03
Conscientiousness	-.08	**.61*** **
NEO-PI-R domains, spouse ratings (N=84)		
Neuroticism	-.06	-.29**
Extraversion	.43***	.20
Openness	**.65*** **	-.03
Agreeableness	.24*	.15
Conscientiousness	.07	**.44*** **
NEO-PI-R domains, single peer ratings (N=250)		
Neuroticism	.01	-.07

Extraversion	.17**	.00
Openness	**.48*** **	-.12
Agreeableness	-.02	-.14*
Conscientiousness	-.02	**.33*** **

Note. Adapted from NEO PI-R Professional Manual, by P. Costa and R. McCrae, 1992, Odessa, Florida: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. Convergent correlations are shown in boldface. * p< .05; **p< .01; ***p<.001.

Originally, the NEO Personality Inventory was normed on subjects 20-90 years old. Initial results and results from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging conducted by the test's authors show little change in individual's scores after the age of 30. Between the ages of twenty and thirty however, agreeableness and conscientiousness scores tend to increase while extroversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience scores decrease (Howard & Howard, 1995).

Due to the relative newness of the Big Five-Factor Personality model and assessment inventory, much ground is still yet to be covered. One concern noted and studied by Goldberg (1992) is the need to develop a common language or common vocabulary bank to use when talking about the Big Five factors. Despite this deficit, there are several advantages of the Big Five-Factor Personality model. A primary advantage is that the NEO Personality Inventory enables counselors to have an almost immediate understanding of their clients based on the client's self disclosed preferences. This may prove particularly helpful concerning clients' issues of openness to the counseling experience. Secondly, this model and assessment have many parallels to Holland's Self-Directed Search including, a similar vocabulary base, opportunities for career counseling, and selections based on client preferences. Finally, the model facilitates matches between counselor and client that are based on personality traits rather

than types. This may prove beneficial to both the client and counselor during the counseling process (McCrae & Costa, 1991).

As previously mentioned, the relative newness of the Big Five-Factor Personality model has prohibited the development of an extensive research base on results and specific applications of the model. Questions of its value in assessing master's level counselors, or its relationship to multicultural competence, still deserve consideration.

Of specific interest are the Big Five-Factor Personality domains, openness to experience and conscientiousness. These two domains appear to hold promise in their relationship to multicultural counseling competence.

The domain, openness to experience, appears to be evident in cultural self-awareness and other awareness components and dimensions of multicultural counseling competence. These components include the ability to look at one's own culture from outsiders' perspectives as defined by Sowdowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994). The trait openness to experience also appears to have been examined on an exploratory level in studies on multicultural responsiveness, multicultural competence training, and awareness of one's own cultural issues (Kiselica, 1998; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Steward, Morales, Bartell, Miller, & Weeks, 1998; Octavi., Pope Davis, & Dings, 1994).

The domain, conscientiousness, appears to be of significant importance to multicultural counseling competence, too. Conscientiousness may be behaviorally visible in manifestations of multicultural counseling competence. This important "knowing how", or demonstration of multicultural counseling skill was noted by Pope-Davis and Dings (1995).

Methodology

Sample

Participants for this study were 36 students attending a university in the mid Atlantic region of the United States. In the sample, 77% of the subjects were European American, 17% were African American, 3% were Asian American, and 3% were Native

American. The students were solicited through a mailing sent to all 79 master's level students in the university's counseling program. Of the 36 volunteer participants (response rate = 46%), 15 students reported a major in school counseling, 11 reported a rehabilitation counseling major, and 10 are majoring in career/community counseling. The students' average reported time in their program was 1.89 years. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 51 years, with a mean age of 28.33 years (SD = 7.02). The sample consisted of 3 men and 33 women. None of the students received remuneration for participation in the study.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were used in this study: The Multicultural Counseling Inventory, The Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale, The NEO-FFI Form S, and a demographic sheet constructed for this study.

The Multicultural Counseling Inventory (Sowdowsky, 1994) was designed to measure the competence of any counselor working with minority or culturally diverse clients. The inventory's four subscales (Skills, Knowledge, Awareness, and Relationship) are based on Sue's (1982) proposed cross cultural competency list. The inventory consists of 40 items to which subjects respond using a four point Likert scale (1= very inaccurate, 2 = somewhat inaccurate, 3 = somewhat accurate, 4 = very accurate). Items are worded so that a score of 4 indicates high multicultural counseling competence, and a score of 1 indicates low multicultural counseling competence. Seven items are reverse keyed. Scores for each subscale were obtained by summing responses to the appropriately keyed items. Pope-Davis and Dings (1994) report internal consistency reliabilities as follows: Multicultural Counseling Skill , .81; Multicultural Awareness, .80; Multicultural Counseling Knowledge, .80; Multicultural Relationship, .67 .

The Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale (Myrick and Kelly, 1971) was designed to measure counselors' performance in counseling and supervision. The scale has two

subscales: counseling and supervision. When used as a self-rated assessment, the CERS supervision subscale measures counselors' receptivity to supervision, while the counseling subscale measures counselors' perceived level of counseling competence. The CERS consists of a total of 27 items to which subjects respond using a seven point Likert scale (-3 = I strongly disagree, -2 = I disagree, -1 = I slightly disagree, 0 = uncertain or not able to judge, 1 = I slightly agree, 2 = I agree, and 3 = I strongly agree). Scores for each subscale were obtained by summing responses to the appropriately keyed items. A total score was obtained by summing the two subscale scores. Internal consistency testing yielded a correlation coefficient of .95 using a split- half reliability procedure, and a .86 correlation coefficient when comparing the 13 supervisory items and the 13 counseling items on the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971).

The NEO-FFI Form S (Costa & McCrae, 1992) was designed to assess global personality information on adults. It consists of 60 items, yielding 12 items per domain. Subjects responded using a 5 point scale (SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral, A = agree, SA = strongly agree). Scores were obtained for two of the five domains, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness, by summing responses to the appropriately keyed items. Internal consistency testing for the NEO-FFI scales yielded coefficients of .86 for Neuroticism, .77 for Extroversion, .73 for Openness to Experience, .68 for Agreeableness, and .81 for Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The demographic sheet was used to investigate personal characteristics including gender, age, racial/ ethnic background, counseling experience, and academic major. Subjects reported this information by responding to open ended questions or circling appropriate responses.

Procedure

Subjects were invited to participate via a mailing. Included in the mailed envelope was a cover letter introducing the researchers, the study, procedures, and the manner in which subject anonymity will be assured; the Multicultural Counseling Inventory; the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale; the NEO-FFI; a demographic sheet; and a return envelope. The cover letter invited the students to participate in the study by completing the enclosed inventories and mailing them back to the researchers in ten days time. All students received a reminder card five days after the initial mailing. After ten days, all students received a card thanking them for considering participation in the study.

Research Design

The data of this study were analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Pair-wise deletion was used for missing data (Norusis, 1991). The SPSS/ PC+ Studentware Plus software package was used to complete the described statistical analysis.

Results

To investigate the relationship between multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. The results of the correlation analyses for multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are presented in Table 5. Eight significant relationships were found between the MCI scales and the CERS scales with correlations ranging between .25 and .47. The correlations between the MCI-Total and CERS-Total scores was .40.

These results suggest that multicultural and general counseling competence are overlapping, yet distinct constructs, with 16% common variance.

Table 5

Correlations of Multicultural Counseling Inventory Scales (MCI) with Counselor Evaluation Rating Scales (CERS)

Participants (n=36)	MCI-Awareness	MCI-Knowledge	MCI-Relationship	MCI-Skills	MCI-Total
CERS-Counseling	.25	.31	.32	.44**	.33
CERS-Supervision	.45**	.40*	.25	.28	.42**
CERS-Total	.31	.40*	.40*	.47**	.40*

*p< .05, **p< .01

To investigate the relationships between multicultural counseling competence and the NEO domains, openness to experience and conscientiousness, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. The results of the correlation analyses for multicultural counseling competence and these two domains are presented in Table 6. A correlation of .34, which is statistically significant at the .05 level, was found between openness to experience and the MCI awareness scale. None of the correlations involving conscientiousness reached significance.

Table 6

Correlations of Multicultural Counseling Inventory Scales (MCI) with NEO Domains, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness

Participants (n=36)	MCI-Awareness	MCI-Knowledge	MCI-Relationship	MCI-Skills	MCI-Total
Openness to Experience	.34*	.13	-.20	-.03	.15
Conscientiousness	-.18	.16	.05	.11	.25

*p< .05

Discussion

This study examined the relation of master's level counselor's multicultural counseling competence, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Analysis of Pearson product moment correlation coefficients revealed that multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are significantly correlated. However, only a moderate portion of the variance in multicultural counseling competence can be associated with the variance in general counseling competence. The overlap of these variables appears to be modest enough to suggest that multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence are distinct, but overlapping constructs. This modest pattern of relationships was also evident in the correlations among the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) and the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS) subscale scores.

The theoretical conceptualization of multicultural counseling competence as a construct separate and different than general counseling competence (Sue et al., 1982; Sowdowsky et al., 1994) seems to be supported by these findings. In this study, counselors perceived their multicultural counseling competence to be substantively different than their general counseling competence. This focus on multicultural counseling competence is absent from conceptualizations of general counseling competence (Myrick & Kelly, 1971; Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985; Traux & Carkhuff, 1967), further highlighting the distinction between the two constructs.

The analysis of the relationship between multicultural counseling competence and openness to experience and conscientiousness suggests all but one of the correlations between these variables are small and non-significant. However, multicultural counseling awareness and openness to experiences were moderately correlated. The data do indicate that as the counselor's level of openness to experience increases, so too does the counselor's multicultural counseling competence awareness.

The research findings of studies on counselors' racial identity development and multicultural counseling competence (Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 1994; Steward et al., 1995) were supported by these results. As prior studies have shown, multicultural counseling competence seems to be related to counselors' flexibility and ability to expand worldview in a way that allows appreciation of differing perspectives. This widening of perspective and increased awareness is embodied in the McCrae and Costa (1991) model of openness to experience examined in this study.

Contributions To Multicultural Counseling Research

This study contributes to the multicultural counseling competence literature in two ways. The first of these ways is the contribution to the body of empirical data. Most

importantly, the statistical data of this study supports the theoretical conceptualization of multicultural counseling competence as a construct distinct and separate from general counseling competence. Although limited by concerns for generalizability and a small sample size, the findings of this study hold promise for future, similar research that may statistically, significantly impact the field of counseling. A closely related way in which the present research data adds to the multicultural counseling literature is that it provides statistical support for the inclusion of multicultural counseling competence in counselor training programs. As a distinct counseling construct, multicultural counseling competence warrants special consideration in counseling training programs. The data seem to suggest that to fail to include multicultural counseling competencies in counselor preparatory programs would be to omit a significant component of counselor competence training. A third statistical contribution of this study to the multicultural counseling literature is that it adds to the growing body of statistical data utilizing the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (Sowdowsky, 1994) as an assessment instrument. This study represents another research-based use of the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (Sowdowsky, 1994). As a result, it provides data that may help to further familiarize researchers, counselors, and counselor educators with the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (Sowdowsky, 1994) and its components.

The second way in which this research contributes to the multicultural counseling competence literature is by suggesting a research agenda. The field of multicultural counseling although fairly new, has established a large body of theoretical writing exploring the conceptualization of multicultural counseling competence. As a result, thoroughly developed models and descriptions of multicultural counseling competence

have emerged (Sowdowsky et al., 1994; Sue et al., 1982). With these models and descriptions in place, the field is ready for examination of the models of cultural counseling competence in relation to other variables of interest, and exploration of the practical implications of the resulting data. This study begins that work by examining the relation of multicultural counseling competence to two previously unstudied personality variables: openness to experience and conscientiousness.

Implications For Multicultural Counseling

The significant, but modest correlation found between multicultural counseling competence and general counseling competence seems to suggest that the two constructs are distinct. This data may support the inclusion of multicultural counseling courses and multicultural counseling issues in counselor training programs. As previously discussed in this paper, to fail to include multicultural counseling competencies in counselor preparatory programs would be to omit a significant component of counselor competence training.

The significant correlation found between multicultural counseling awareness and openness to experience seems to suggest the importance of counselors' openness to ideas, values, actions, and feelings to their level of multicultural counseling awareness. With this demonstrated correlation, it is imperative that counselor training programs work to foster openness in their students. Specifically, counselor trainers may widen the perspective of their trainees and thus increase their level of multicultural counseling awareness. This may be done by insuring that multicultural counseling issues are integrated into each course/content area in addition to thorough investigation of multicultural counseling competencies in one or more required multicultural counseling

courses; exposing students to culturally diverse texts; fully utilizing technology to bring a variety of cultural experiences into the classroom; and requiring students to complete at least one culturally diverse practicum placement.

Additionally, providing counseling students with several opportunities to self-reflect, self-evaluate, and then share their reflections and evaluations may provide them with increased opportunity to develop and enhance the ability to be open to ideas, values, actions, and feelings, which is so crucial to multicultural counseling competence awareness.

Limitations

Although the data of this study seem to suggest important practical implications for counselors and counselor training programs, limitations to this study should be noted. The study's primary limitation is sample size. In particular, the small sample size of 36 participants limited the statistical significance of the obtained relationships. The generalizability of the findings is also limited by the fact that most participants in this study were White females, and all participants were enrolled at a single university. Finally, although the CERS is a valid instrument of self perceived general counseling competence (Myrick & Kelly, 1971), research has shown that it yields somewhat higher counselor ratings than supervisor ratings (Fuqua et al., 1986).

Recommendations For Future Research

Consideration of these limitations suggests several recommendations for future research on multicultural counseling competence. First, future research investigations addressing this topic should include a larger, more diverse sample. This study included a small, localized, majority European American, female sample. This sample issue greatly

reduces the generalizability of the study's results. Repeating this study with a larger sample, more representative of the general counselor population in gender, race, ethnicity, age, and geographic region, would increase the generalizability of the findings, and therefore possibly suggest significant implications for counselors and counselor educators. A study such as this would also allow for the examination of the statistical impact of these demographic variables on multicultural counseling competence.

Second, further study of the relationships among CERS-Counseling scores, CERS-Supervision scores, and counselors' self perceived multicultural counseling competence is needed. This study's data seem to suggest differences between the various components of counselors' multicultural counseling competence (i.e. awareness, knowledge, relationship, and skills), and supervision and counseling; the two components of general counseling competence defined by the CERS (Myrick & Kelly, 1971). Specifically, future researchers may ask, "Do components of general counseling supervision and general counseling competence impact counselors' level of multicultural counseling competence differently?" The resulting statistical data of this kind of in-depth study may have significant implications for counselors, counselor educators, and counselor supervisors.

Third, the results of this study seem to support further investigation of the relationship between openness to experience and multicultural counseling competence. Additional research that is experimental in design could add clarity to the understanding of the relationship between the two variables. Results from an experiment in which counselors' level of multicultural counseling competence is measured before and after

exposure to learning activities that enhance or foster the personality trait, openness to experience, may have significant, far reaching implications for counselors.

Finally, future research of multicultural counseling competence must expand to include the investigation of not only self report measures of counselor competence as studied in this investigation, but those of supervisor and client report. Evaluations of multicultural counseling competence as measured by counselor supervisors and those individuals who utilize counseling services, will add a rich dimension to the understanding of multicultural counseling competence and most certainly provide much needed data for counselor training programs charged with developing multiculturally competent counselors.

Appendix A

September 22, 1997

Dear CAPS Student,

Under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Lent, I am conducting a study on masters' level counselors' self perceived counseling competence.

In order to conduct this study, I am collecting data from master's level counselors in the CAPS department at The University of Maryland. I am inviting each master's level student in school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and career/ community counseling to participate via the mail. In order to consent to participate, willing students must fill out four inventories, and mail them back to me using a self addressed, stamped envelop within 10 days. The entire procedure will involve a one time 30-45 minute time commitment.

Often, students are reluctant to participate in studies because of the fear of being identified or penalized. My advisor and I understand that anxiety, and have therefore designed this study so that all information gathered is anonymous. We are not using any system to track who chooses to respond or not to respond, or who responds in which manner. In addition, those who decide to participate will in no way be penalized for their responses or decision regarding participation.

Although this study is not designed to help individual participants, it is my hope as a researcher that the data gathered will in part help those educating and training counselors. It is for this reason that I hope you choose to participate in this study. If you do chose to participate, please indicate your consent by answering all four inventories enclosed with this letter. When you have completed them, please mail all four inventories to me using the enclosed envelop. If you choose not to participate, please return the inventories to my mailbox in the CAPS lounge.

I greatly appreciate your considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Moore-Thomas, Doctoral Student
Counselor Education Program

Additional Mailings

Sent five days after the initial mailing:

Reminder:

If you wish to participate in the study on masters' level counselors' counseling competence, please complete and mail the studies' inventories within the next five days.

Thank you,

Cheryl Moore-Thomas, Doctoral Student
Counselor Education Program

Sent ten days after the initial mailing:

Thank You!

I appreciate your considering participating in the study on masters' level counselors' counseling competence.

Cheryl Moore-Thomas, Doctoral Student
Counselor Education Program

Information Sheet

Please answer the following questions by filling in the blank or circling the appropriate response.

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: M F

3. Race/Ethnicity: African American Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic
Native American White Other _____

4. Counseling Program: Career/Community Rehabilitation School

5. Year in Program : 1 2 3 4 4+

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