

# Effective Multicultural Supervision for a Culturally Diverse Country

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## Abstract

Living in a country based on the “salad bowl” of cultures philosophy, it is necessary for mental health professionals to be competent in providing effective counseling to heterogeneous clientele. Multicultural counseling ensures that professional counselors will deliver services matching the clients’ needs, resulting in valuable treatment. Individuals wishing to become a counselor need guidance in multicultural counseling beyond the instruction given in a classroom. This can be accomplished during supervision from a multiculturally competent supervisor.

## Effective Multicultural Supervision for a Culturally Diverse Country

As the population of the United States of America becomes increasingly diverse with more individuals immigrating to this country than ever before, the mental health field must be prepared to provide optimal services to this diverse population. According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), the estimated race of the population for 2014 was as follows: 62.1% would be identified as White, 17.4% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 13.2% identified as Black or African American, 5.4% identified as Asian, and the remaining 1.9% would be identified as Native Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, or being of two or more races. The Census Bureau

(2016) also estimated that in 2014, females would comprise 50.8% of the population, whereas males would comprise 49.2%. Approximately 23.1% of the 2014 population was estimated to be aged eighteen or younger, and 76.9% would be aged over nineteen (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Finally, the Census Bureau (2016) estimated that in 2014, 14.8% of the population would be considered to be living in poverty, with the medium household income to be \$53,482. This exemplifies the salad bowl analogy often used to describe the United States because there is not a single type of American, but rather the country prides itself on a variety of individuals from diverse backgrounds (different races, ethnicities, religions, genders, education, ages, language, socioeconomic statuses, and sexual orientation) coming together to form the larger community.

Therefore, mental health professionals in this country must be well-versed in the various aspects of providing exceptional counseling to an assorted clientele. There is not a “one-size-fits-all” counseling approach, and it is imperative that professional counselors adequately prepare to assist clients from heterogeneous backgrounds. This process, commonly referred to as multicultural counseling, occurs when two or more individuals from different cultures to come together during

the helping relationship (Torres-Rivera, Pham, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett, 2001). To be effective, Torres-Rivera et al. (2001) states that

- (a) a counselor must modify his or her technique to reflect the cultural differences of the client;
- (b) a counselor must be prepared to deal with difficulties that may arise because of the cultural differences between the client and the counselor; and
- (c) how a problem is conceptualized and how the problem is solved is bound in cultural patterns. (p. 28)

Multicultural counseling has gained importance as the population shifts in the country, as well as the drive for implementing evidence-based interventions for effective psychotherapy (Inman & Kreider, 2013). Consequently, researchers have empirically explored various methods for counselors to acquire multicultural competence.

Ancis and Marshall (2010) defined cultural competence (interchangeable with multicultural competence) as being aware of “one’s own cultural assumptions and biases, understanding the worldviews of culturally diverse clients, and being committed to developing ways of appropriately working with diverse clients” (p. 277). With this definition in mind, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016) developed standards for training those wishing to enter the mental health counseling discipline, including standards for multicultural competence. CACREP graduate programs are required to offer at least one course focused on cultural knowledge (2016). According to CACREP (2016), the curriculum must objectively address social and cultural diversity

through the introduction of

- a. multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally
- b. theories and models of multicultural counseling, cultural identity development, and social justice and advocacy
- c. multicultural counseling competencies
- d. the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual’s view of others
- e. the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients
- f. help-seeking behaviors of diverse clients
- g. the impact of spiritual beliefs on clients’ and counselors’ worldviews
- h. strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (Section II, para. 4)

Additionally, CACREP graduate programs require students to complete practicum and internship experiences under the observation of a capable supervisor, as well as participate in weekly group supervision provided by the counselor educator (2016). As a result, a combination of educational courses adhering to the social and cultural diversity CACREP standards and supervision from a multicultural competent supervisor should provide an appropriate avenue for counselors in training to develop multicultural competence. Because multicultural educational courses naturally increase cultural knowledge, this paper will focus instead on analyzing the effectiveness of supervision to promote multiculturally competent counselors.

## Multicultural Competency and Supervision Frameworks

Before assessing the effectiveness of supervision in fostering multiculturally competent counselors, it is necessary to mention the foundational models and frameworks. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) identify Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis' conceptualization as a starting point for understanding multicultural competence. In 1992, they developed a 3 by 3 dimensional model in which characteristics (therapist's self-awareness, comprehension of the client's worldview, and appropriate treatment based on culture) interact with dimensions (therapist's attitudes and beliefs, his/her knowledge, and his/her skill set; Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Bernard and Goodyear (2014) expanded on this to adopt a model using four interacting dimensions. One dimension, known as Intrapersonal: Identity, refers to an individual's identities (for example, gender, race, age, etc.) that influence his/her self-concept and interactions with others (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). The Interpersonal: Biases and Prejudice dimension involves an individual's expectations and biases regarding another individual based on that individual's group membership (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Interpersonal: Cultural Identity and Behavior is another dimension in Bernard and Goodyear's (2014) model in which social behaviors are determined by cultural considerations. The final dimension in the Bernard and Goodyear (2014) model is known as Social/Political, and it addresses how an individual experiences privilege or oppression based on his/her group membership. Not only is it imperative that counselors understand each dimension and their interactions with one another for multicultural competence, but it is also imperative to understand this models'

influence on the supervisory relationship.

There are essentially three individuals involved in the supervision process: the client, the supervisee, and the supervisor. Using Bernard and Goodyear's (2014) Multicultural Supervision Model, each member of the supervision process has a personal identity involving gender, race, age, etc. (intrapersonal dimension). The identity of the client may influence how he/she interacts with the supervisee during a counseling session, and vice versa; likewise, the identity of the supervisee may influence how he/she interacts with the supervisor, and vice versa. If there is any kind of expectation or bias (interpersonal: biases and prejudice dimension) on the part of the client, supervisee, or supervisor, it will certainly affect the relationship with the other individuals involved in the supervisory process. Normative behaviors of each of their cultures (interpersonal: cultural identity and behavior dimension) surface and are best recognized by knowing their cultural backgrounds. And finally, identifying and working through oppression or privilege (social/political dimension) experienced by the client, supervisee, or supervisor can help during supervision. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2014), it is the responsibility of the supervisor to be self-aware with respect to each dimension and devise an appropriate method to work through any multicultural issues that may arise as a result.

Ancis and Ladnay (as cited in Ancis & Marshall, 2010) also developed a framework for understanding multicultural supervision competencies. The first of five domains, personal development, is derived from the supervisor's personal growth from exploring values, beliefs, biases,

limitations, and current cultural knowledge, as well as the supervisee's personal growth during the supervision process (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Conceptualization, the second domain, involves "understanding the impact of individual contextual factors on clients' lives, understanding the impact of stereotyping and oppression on clients' presenting concerns, and encouraging alternative explanations for events as they occur in a cultural context" (Ancis & Marshall, 2010, p. 278). Intervention is the third domain, and it refers to the use of culturally appropriate psychotherapy strategies (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Process, the fourth domain, concerns the supervisory relationship as a whole and whether or not the supervisor has created a supportive climate for open communication regarding cultural issues (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). The fifth and final domain is evaluation, and it encompasses the feedback and potential recommendations for remediation to the supervisee to increase counseling competence (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Like Bernard and Goodyear's (2014) Multicultural Supervision Model, this model also relies on the overlap and interaction of each domain.

The last model to be discussed is the Critical Events Model in which the supervisee's growth is emphasized, occurs during a series of phases, and is dependent on the supervisory working alliance (Inman & Kreider, 2013). This model suggests that the emotional bond between the supervisee and supervisor, agreed upon supervisory goals, and agreed upon supervision tasks constitutes the supervisory working alliance (Inman & Kreider, 2013). Whether it occurs during one supervision session or extends across several, the supervisee undergoes a beginning, middle, and end phase while discussing client conceptualization (Inman

& Kreider, 2013). The Marker (beginning) is indicative of the supervisee seeking assistance from the supervisor (Inman & Kreider, 2013). The Task Environment (middle) involves intervention methods endorsed by the supervisor, and the resulting performance of the supervisee (Inman & Kreider, 2013). The Resolution (end) is the conclusion of the critical event, marked by the supervisee's increase in knowledge, skills, or self-awareness (Inman & Kreider, 2013). The supervisee's successful achievement of the final phase of the Critical Events Model is only possible with a strong supervisory working alliance.

## Interventions

While each model previously mentioned explains multicultural supervision differently, they all emphasize that the supervisor must be multiculturally competent so that the counselor in training can not only develop the knowledge, but also develop the skills and self-awareness imperative in becoming a multiculturally competent counselor. A supervisory relationship that best promotes a multiculturally competent supervisee is one in which the supervisee believes that the supervisor is competent, as demonstrated through modeling, conversation, and interventions implemented by the supervisor (Inman, 2006).

When Inman (2006) studied the influence of the supervisory relationship on the supervisee's multicultural competence, it was discovered that a positive relationship exists between the supervisor multicultural competence and the supervision working alliance and supervision satisfaction. This means that when the supervisor is more knowledgeable, self-aware, and skilled regarding cultural issues, the supervisory relationship improves and the more the

supervisee rates the overall experience as a positive one. In addition, Inman (2006) found that the “supervisors’ openness and attention to cultural factors and guidance on culture-specific issues have been deemed important to a culturally responsive supervisory relationship” (p. 80-81). This demonstrates the need for the supervisor to create a climate open to multicultural discussions, exploration of cultural issues, previous knowledge about a culture, and the use of interventions that are appropriate based on the client’s or supervisee’s culture. When all of these factors exist, the supervisee is more likely to gain the experience needed towards becoming a multiculturally competent counselor. Therefore, the supervisee’s level of multicultural competence is greatly influenced by the supervisory relationship.

Ancis and Marshall (2010) found similar results when assessing the supervisory relationship. When the supervisor is open and authentic about his/her own cultural background, biases, and relevant experiences, the supervisee feels more comfortable discussing and exploring cultural issues (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). A dialogue is often the result, which increases the supervisee’s self-awareness, and as previously mentioned, self-awareness is a key factor in becoming multiculturally competent (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Moreover, Ancis and Marshall (2010) found that when the supervision relationship is unrestricted with genuine conversation regarding multicultural issues, the supervisee tends to report better outcomes with his/her diverse clients because the supervisee feels more comfortable exploring the clients’ issues with a multicultural lens. In such instances, the supervisor encourages the supervisee to use the

client’s perspective and multicultural background during therapy, which also encourages a collaborative relationship between the supervisee and the client (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Both Ancis’ and Marshall’s (2010) and Inman’s (2006) studies identify the need for the supervisor to create a climate that encourages nonjudgmental self-exploration, as well as cultural issues exploration for effective training.

To expand on this idea, Dressel, Consoli, Kim, and Atkinson (2007) studied successful and unsuccessful multicultural supervisory behaviors. The results indicate that supervisees believe that the supervisor’s “openness, genuineness, empathy, warmth, and nonjudgmental stance” (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007, p. 61) helps create a safe place for supervisees to discuss cultural issues, resulting in successful multicultural learning, and mirroring effective psychotherapy. Dressel, Consoli, Kim, and Atkinson (2007) identified the need to actually address cultural issues as they arise as necessary for promoting effective multicultural supervision, and supervisors must provide a culturally diverse clientele for the supervisee to work with for the experiential aspect. When the supervisor tends to the “‘feelings of discomfort experienced by trainees concerning multicultural issues,’ being nondefensive while ‘tolerating [supervisee’s] anger, rage and fear around multicultural issues,’ and by ‘attending to racial/ethnic cultural differences reflected in parallel process issues’” (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007, p. 61), professional and personal growth on the part of the supervisee occurs. Thus, successful supervision behaviors include being proactive and supportive of self-exploration and

multicultural knowledge attainment.

There are also unsuccessful behaviors during the supervision process that leads to a multiculturally incompetent counselor and dissatisfaction with the supervision experience. The biggest factor contributing to unsuccessful multicultural development is when the supervisor is unaware of his/her own cultural identity and biases (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007). Closely aligned with this lack of self-awareness are misguided intentions about multicultural issues (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007). A combination of these often results in a supervisor meaning well, but his/her actions lack sensitivity to real cultural issues, follow rigid guidelines, and lead to ineffective interventions (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007). For example, when a supervisor ignores the existence of specific multicultural issues, like White-privilege, and maintains that the problem does not exist, his/her supervisee will refrain from self-disclosure, feel anger or disappointment towards the supervisor, view the supervision negatively, and be unable to grow in the counseling field (Ladany, 2014). Consequently, the supervisor must have the proper multicultural self-awareness, knowledge, and skills before the supervisee can develop them through the supervision experience.

### **Specific Intervention Methods**

In addition to the supervisor's self-awareness, knowledge, and skills; encouragement of the supervisee's increased self-awareness, knowledge, and skills; creation of a climate open to multicultural issue exploration; and promotion of a positive supervisory working alliance, other specific interventions have been proposed to increase multicultural

competence in the supervision process. Experiential activities, such as interactive games, can be used in supervision (whether individual or group) to promote multicultural competence (Kim & Lyon, 2003). Kim and Lyon (2003) suggest that interactive games can assist a supervisee's self-awareness by creating a safe situation in which they can openly explore personal cultural values, confront multicultural counseling limitations, and learn from mistakes without harming a client. Interactive games can provide an enjoyable way to learn explicit information about different cultures when built into the game, thus increasing a supervisee's knowledge (Kim & Lyon, 2003). Skills pertaining to multicultural counseling can be simulated during interactive games, which also helps develop a supervisee's multicultural competence (Kim & Lyon, 2003). Particular interactive games suggested by Kim and Lyon (2003) are Bafa Bafa, Step Forward Step Backward, Multicultural Jeopardy, Cultural Bingo, How May I Help You?, and Actions Speak Louder Than Words. They describe the rules for each game and go into detail about how they support multicultural competence development in a safe environment.

There are other methods to assist a supervisee develop multicultural competence during the supervision process. Smith (2009) recommends that the supervisor and supervisee contact members of a local cultural group when discussing case conceptualizations and intervention techniques (without sharing confidential information). The wisdom provided by the community members about what could truly work for the client would ensure culturally appropriate and effective psychotherapeutic techniques. It would also naturally increase the supervisee's

ability to work with diverse cultures, as well as gain new knowledge and skills.

Along similar lines, Alexander, Kruczek, and Ponterotto (2005) suggest cultural immersion during supervision as a way to truly promote multicultural competence. They worked with the Ministry of Education in Trinidad to support the school counselors in training in the United States, as well as the guidance officers (school counselors) at schools in Trinidad (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005). Before traveling overseas, the school counseling students had to prepare for not only the experience of interning as a school counselor, but also learn about the history and cultural norms of Trinidad so that they may provide adequate services to students in that particular country (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005). Once overseas, the counselors in training worked with their supervisor (the Trinidad guidance officers) to implement relevant guidance lessons, group counseling session, and individual counseling (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005). Cultural immersion and working with culturally different supervisors easily facilitates multicultural competence development.

Finally, it has been recommended by Ceballos, Parikh, and Post (2012) to consider social justice and advocacy efforts during supervision. Because supervision allows for both the supervisor and supervisee to develop an understanding of various cultures through direct communication with individuals from other cultures, formal education, and immersion opportunities, the supervisor and supervisee are also consequently in a position to identify social justice issues, such as the existence of prejudice or oppression. As licensed counselors or

counselors-in-training, supervisors and supervisees are trained to identify when situations and policies directly or indirectly prevent equal access to certain services or opportunities by examining process, perception, and results data (Ceballos, Parikh, & Post, 2012). Additionally, clients can share their experience with prejudice or oppression during a counseling session that further distinguishes the presence of social injustice issues (Ceballos, Parikh, & Post, 2012). Ceballos, Parikh, and Post (2012) believe that when injustices are recognized, supervisors, supervisees, and the client can work together to advocate for the removal of the barriers impeding on equality. When social justice and advocacy are part of the supervision process, the quality of supervision increases, supervisees report higher levels of satisfaction with their experience, and the supervisee is exposed to novel advocacy efforts (Ceballos, Parikh, & Post, 2012). Addressing multicultural issues further increases multicultural competence for both the supervisor and supervisee.

### **Anecdotal Evidence**

My graduate school programs for a Master of Education in School Counseling and Educational Specialist in School Counseling were CACREP accredited, and highly emphasized the need to understand the impact of multiculturalism in counseling. It was required to complete at least three courses related to multicultural counseling, and I not only received instruction on theories related to multicultural counseling, but also participated in activities giving me hands-on experience with counseling individuals from various races and ethnicities. These programs prepared me four years ago for my first (and current) full-time school counseling position at a school on the south side of Atlanta.

I am Caucasian female school counselor at a private high school that epitomizes the term diverse. The student population is 48% African American, 23% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 13% identified as other. Forty-eight percent of the student population is male, while the remaining 52% is female. The school was founded on the traditions of the Catholic religion, yet almost half of the student body is Protestant, Buddhist, Muslim, or has no affiliation. Finally, even though the school has a tuition requirement, approximately 45% of the student body receives some kind of financial assistance. To summarize, the students who attend this high school come from very different races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, genders, and socioeconomic statuses. I have had to bear all of this in mind when approaching each individual student's personal/social, academic, or career needs. As a result, I have become more competent in my ability to be an effective multicultural counselor. This past year I had my first supervisee, an African American female graduate student in her final semester. Even though we had very different experiences in life and in our graduate programs, we had a good rapport based on genuine, open, and nonjudgmental dispositions. This allowed us to talk about multicultural issues in a safe environment. At first, she was hesitant to talk about how culture can affect not only the student, but also the counseling experience; however, when I encouraged the conversation in a supportive manner, she became more comfortable talking about the various relevant issues. She even used the multicultural lens during her next individual counseling session that I was able to observe. I do believe that my level of multicultural competence, encouragement for self-exploration, and nonjudgmental stance that created a

safe environment to explore the issues of multiculturalism helped our supervisory relationship, and helped her become a better counselor.

## Conclusion

As the United States' population demographics change, the mental health field must prepare counselors to provide appropriate psychotherapeutic services to a variety of individuals. While organizations, such as CACREP, require graduate programs to follow specific standards that include multicultural curriculum that is taught in a classroom, it is imperative that counselors in training receive practical and clinical learning opportunities that expose them to multicultural issues (Vereen, Hill, & McNeal, 2008). In turn, the counselor in training will have increased self-awareness, knowledge, and skills related to multicultural competence. Multicultural supervision provides that experiential opportunity, and encourages cultural sensitivity necessary for the development of interventions most suitable for the client (Christiansen et al., 2011). When the working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee is positive, and fosters multicultural competence development, the result is improved outcomes for the client, satisfying the ultimate goal of psychotherapy.

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