

STUDENT COHORTS, MULTICULTURAL TRAINING, AND MULTICULTURAL
COMPETENCE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF COHORT CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

by

KRYSTAL LOUISE MEARES

(Under the Direction of Rosemary Phelps)

ABSTRACT

Although there has been extensive research related to the incorporation of multiculturalism in graduate training programs, knowledge about effective ways to train multiculturally competent counselors is limited (Coleman, 2006). The lack of research on specific training experiences that contribute to the development of multicultural competence has informed the present study. This study sought to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of experiential interactions on multicultural competence by examining the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. Accordingly, this study explored the effect of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and environment) on multicultural awareness; and examined the moderating effects of multicultural training on the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. Participants included 115 doctoral students currently enrolled in counseling psychology programs which employed the use of a cohort model. Results suggested that feelings of belonging and morale regarding cohort membership combined with participation in multicultural training activities can significantly contribute to a student's multicultural development and competence. These findings provide

support for intentional structuring of student cohorts and the value of experiential and interactive instruction in multicultural training.

INDEX WORDS: multicultural competence, diversity, student cohorts, multicultural training

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KRYSTAL LOUISE MEARES

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KRYSTAL LOUISE MEARES

Major Professor: Rosemary E. Phelps

Committee: Edward Delgado-Romero
Brian A. Glaser

Electronic Version Approved:

Julie Coffield
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my angel, Kevin Isaac Julian Meares. You are the wind beneath my wings. I am eternally grateful that God thought enough of me to choose me to be your big sister. I strive daily to make you proud. I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an overview of the background and context which frames the study, followed by the statement of the problem, significance to the field of counseling psychology, purpose, research questions and hypotheses, and definition of key terms. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the researcher's personal and professional investment in the line of inquiry.

Background and Context

Demographic descriptions of the typical United States citizen have consistently changed throughout the history of this country (Hays & Erford, 2010). Currently, the overall U.S. population is approximately 308.7 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Of this number, 43% identified as members of one or more racial minority group. The growth of racial and ethnic minority populations over the last forty years has largely been attributed to trends in immigration, higher birthrates for specific racial and ethnic minority groups, and aging trends (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Evidence of increasing diversity in the United States provides specific implications for the provision of culturally appropriate human services.

Mental health services in the United States have been traditionally dominated by Western-European ideas about mental health, methods of healing, and psychological well-being (Sue & Sue, 2008). Accordingly, issues of inaccurate assessment, misdiagnosis, and inappropriate treatment of racial and ethnic minority clients have plagued the field due to vast generalizations and theories based on White, middle-class individuals (Robinson & Morris, 2000; APA, 2003). The changing face of the average American citizen has emphasized the need

for change in the mental health professions and promoted corresponding interventions (Dickson, Argus-Calvo, & Tafoya, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

In response to the needs of an increasingly pluralistic society, the field of psychology has devoted significant attention to issues of diversity and multiculturalism over the past thirty years. This thrust was initially spurred by the recognition that mental health providers were generally unequipped to provide effective services to diverse populations (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Robinson & Morris, 2000). As a result, specific standards, guidelines, and recommendations for working with culturally diverse populations have been created and adopted for use by various professional mental health organizations (Coleman, Morris, & Norton, 2006; APA, 2003).

Guided by the work of Sue and colleagues (1992), the Professional Standards and Certification Committee of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development created Multicultural Competencies which offered explanatory statements used to guide culturally sensitive counseling interactions (Holcomb-McCoy, 2000). These competencies were adopted by the American Counseling Association, Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, and the American School Counseling Association. As a result, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) now requires the inclusion of multiculturalism in graduate counseling training programs (Holcomb-McCoy, 2000).

The Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists, which are endorsed by the American Psychological Association (APA), encourage psychologists to be more self-aware, challenge preconceived notions and biases, and critically explore their knowledge about diverse populations (American

Psychological Association, 2003). In accordance with the aforementioned guidelines, APA has accentuated the need for increased attention to multicultural issues in graduate training and professional development. As a result, the national organization has mandated the inclusion of courses that focus on multicultural issues for accreditation of doctoral clinical training programs (Sherry, Whilde, & Patton, 2005; Sehgal et al., 2011).

APA accreditation guidelines explicitly state that “all students in doctoral programs of professional psychology should acquire breadth of knowledge and skills relevant to understanding and working with clients of differing...ethnic and racial backgrounds” (APA, 1991, p.2). Thus, multicultural training should include efforts to increase trainees’ cultural sensitivity, awareness, and knowledge of the impact of cultural variables on functioning. The aforementioned areas represent the construct of multicultural competence which describes the extent to which counselors are able to accept, respect, and understand cultural differences of their clients as well as their own assumptions, biases, and beliefs (Sue & Sue, 2008). Ultimately, the goal of multicultural training is to produce counselors who are self-aware, understand client worldviews, and are able to intervene in a culturally appropriate manner (Hays & Erford, 2010).

Significance of the Study

The field of counseling psychology has been at the helm of the movement to incorporate issues of diversity into training (McRae & Johnson, 1991; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Vera & Speight, 2003; Coleman, 2006). Increased importance of multiculturalism in the field is evidenced by at least a marginal increase on multicultural issues in counseling research, textbooks, handbooks, and policy (Delgado-Romero, Galvan, Maschino, & Rowland, 2005; Spanierman & Poteat, 2005).

Although there has been extensive research related to the incorporation of multiculturalism in graduate training programs, knowledge about effective ways to train multiculturally competent counselors is limited (Coleman, 2006). Specifically, Coleman (2006) found that most studies have focused on the outcomes of multicultural training as opposed to exploring aspects of trainees' experiences that are influential in their development of multicultural competence. Similarly, Zalaquett and colleagues (2008) reported that more research is needed to explore specific interventions that promote the development of multicultural competence.

Incorporation of multiculturalism in graduate training has typically taken the form of single or occasional courses which arguably invoke cultural sensitivity rather than competence (Robinson & Morris, 2000). Although these courses may challenge trainees' biases and beliefs about differences, some trainees remain culturally insensitive upon completion (Robinson & Morris, 2000). In fact, trainees have consistently reported the need for increased attention to multicultural competence citing desired changes in leadership and support for multicultural issues, consistent assessment of multicultural competence, diverse faculty, and additional multicultural resources (Fuentes, Bartolomeo, & Nicols, 2001). This study aims to address the aforementioned gaps in literature and training by providing insight about the potential impact of specific interventions, namely the use of the cohort model, on the development of multicultural competence.

Purpose

The lack of research on specific training experiences that contribute to the development of multicultural competence has informed the present study. Previous literature has documented the positive impact of trainee self-awareness and experiential multicultural interactions on the

development of multicultural competence (Coleman, 2006; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega, 2005). Trainees have consistently rated interactions with classmates, particularly discussions about cultural differences, as being the most impactful related to their multicultural development (Dickson, Argus-Calvo, & Tafoya, 2010; Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega 2005).

The present study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of experiential interactions on multicultural competence by examining the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. A review of previous literature has emphasized several gaps in the study of cohorts. The majority of research on cohorts has relied heavily on qualitative methods, limited samples from educational leadership programs, and descriptive accounts based primarily on the experience of faculty members (Lewis, Ascher, Hayes, & Ieva, 2010). This study attempts to take a different approach through the use of quantitative methods and diversifying the sample by soliciting student reports of cohort dynamics from various helping professions. This research will specifically investigate the association between multicultural awareness and (a) personal identity variables (b) multicultural training - curriculum, clinical experiences, research, and (c) cohort characteristics. Accordingly, the study aims are two-fold: (1) Explore the effect of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and environment) on multicultural awareness; (2) Examine the moderating effects of personal identity and multicultural training variables on the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

The current research represents an important step in identifying critical interventions that promote the development of multicultural competence among psychology trainees. Existing literature has documented the significance of diverse curricula, practicum experiences, and

personal identity variables to the development of multicultural sensitivity, awareness, and skills (Castillo, Brossart, Reyes, Conoley, & Phoummarath, 2007). This study seeks to examine factors that have not been previously addressed in the literature by exploring the impact of specific cohort variables on multicultural awareness.

Research questions and hypotheses

This study is designed to answer the following research questions: (1) To what extent do cohort characteristics predict multicultural awareness; and (2) To what extent do specific training variables (curricula, practica, and research) influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

Existing literature supports the hypothesis that increased experiential learning, in the form of quality interactions with peers, will contribute to increased multicultural competence (Dickson, Argus-Calvo & Tafoya, 2010). Additionally, research indicates that trust and a climate of cooperation are essential to successful cohort functioning (Burnaford & Hobson, 1995; Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001). Consequently, the researcher predicts that a linear combination of the aforementioned cohort variables (climate, cohesion, and relational satisfaction) will be a significant predictor of multicultural awareness.

With regard to the second research question, the researcher predicts that after controlling for personal identity variables (race and gender), additional training variables (i.e. research, curricula, and practica) will influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

Definition of Key Terms

Multicultural Competence

The concept of multicultural competence was first developed by the Education and Training Committee of APA's Division of Counseling Psychology (Division 17) and introduced in 1982 (Sue et al., 1982). This seminal article delineated eleven characteristics deemed necessary for the provision of appropriate to ethnic and racial minority clients (Robinson & Morris, 2000).

Sue et al. (1982) conceptualized multicultural competence as consisting of three components: beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Beliefs and attitudes refer to counselors' ways of thinking about and awareness of their own cultural identities, assumptions, and biases. Knowledge refers to understanding of diverse cultural groups and sociopolitical influences that affect clients' worldviews (Sehgal et al., 2011). Diverse populations include those that differ from the counselor on religion, ability or disability status, sexual orientation, age or gender (Arredondo et. al., 1996). Skills refers to abilities a counselor must possess in order to engage in productive work with individuals from particular racial or ethnic groups (Sue et al., 1982). The definition of multicultural competence for the purpose of this study is composed of two dimensions: cultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes) and cultural knowledge.

The construct of multicultural competence largely refers to the extent to which practicing professionals are able to work with individuals from a variety of cultural groups (Constantine and Ladany, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Furthermore, the term emphasizes the ability of a practitioner to respond to culturally different clients in a manner that is both sensitive and appropriate (Coleman, Morris, & Norton, 2006).

Cohort

Historically, the term cohort has broadly been defined as “a group of individuals having a statistical factor in common in a demographic study (Cohort, n.d.) In graduate training programs, the cohort model represents a group of individuals who follow a common course of studies in pursuit of a degree (Nimer, 2009). For the purpose of this study, cohort refers to “a group of students entering and pursuing a program of study together, characterized by social and cultural processes, shared experiences and interactions, collective efforts, and mutual commitment to an educational goal” (Maher, 2004).

The purpose of the cohort model is to further learning, decrease retention, and enhance departmental organization (Teitel, 1997). Research suggests that the success of the cohort is directly related to the cohesiveness and collaborative nature of the group (Nimer, 2009). The assumption of the cohort model is that students will become better professionals as they support each other in their personal and professional efforts (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001). While the purpose of the cohort model is generally consistent, the structure and format of cohorts vary across several dimensions including: size, student entry point, activity, and length of time students are together (Maher, 2004). Although there has been extensive research on the use of cohort models in teacher preparation, educational leadership and administration programs, research on the use of cohort models in psychology related programs is limited (McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008; Hesse & Mason, 2005; Nimer, 2009; McPhail, 2002; Mandzuk, Hasinoff, & Seifert, 2003; Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006).

Personal Identity Variables

For the purpose of this study, personal identity variables refer to personal characteristics of trainees that may or may not contribute to multicultural awareness. These characteristics

include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability status. Researchers have acknowledged the impact of the aforementioned variables on the development of biases and beliefs (Sue, 2001). Accordingly, it is believed that the relationship between personal characteristics and multicultural competence will have specific implications for the current study.

Cohesion

Cohesion is generally described in the literature as “an individual’s sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feeling of morale associated with membership in the group,” (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Chin, Salisbury, Pearson, & Stollak, 1999). In addition, cohesion represents a group’s commitment to unity, respect, and pursuit of group goals as well as satisfaction of individual needs (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998).

Relational Satisfaction

For the purposes of this study, relational satisfaction refers to the extent to which group members are content with intra-group dynamics and communication.

Multicultural Environment

The term multicultural environment refers to the extent to which the climate of a training site is physically, mentally, and emotionally supportive of diversity and multiculturalism (Liu, Sheu, & Williams, 2004). In addition to establishing a sense of comfort addressing multicultural issues, a productive multicultural environment is one that promotes the multicultural development of students through diverse curricula, research opportunities, and supervision (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

The Researcher

The researcher is a counseling psychology doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. The current project is a representation of her personal and professional commitment to multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice. Professionally, her experience as a member of various cohorts has caused her to reflect on the strengths, limitations, and benefits of the cohort model. Although the use of the cohort model has demonstrated structural and organizational benefits, there is limited information about its usefulness for students beyond helping them establish bonds (Teitel, 1997). In addition, the researcher's commitment to diversity has prompted her to seek out training experiences (practicum, research, professional development workshops, and coursework) that challenge her cultural awareness, knowledge and skills.

The researcher's commitment to issues of multiculturalism and social justice is born out of her personal experiences as an African American woman. Consequently, she has dedicated her time and efforts to public service organizations that represent the needs of oppressed and marginalized populations. A desire to continue her multicultural growth and development as well as impact the current status of multiculturalism in graduate training has led to the development of the present study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of research on multiculturalism in graduate training including: training models, multicultural learning environments, and multicultural competence. Additionally the chapter summarizes the current literature related to the use of student cohorts in graduate training programs.

Graduate Training and Multicultural Competence

Concerns about the exclusion of cultural issues in psychological training were first addressed during the APA Conference on Levels and Patterns of Professional Training in Psychology, held in Vail, Colorado in 1973 (Fouad, 2006). Over the last three decades, the standards' committees of professional organization, including the American Psychological Association and the American Counseling Association, have made significant efforts to incorporate issues of multiculturalism and social justice in counseling, clinical, and school psychology curriculums.

Consequently, there is a large body of research documenting the importance of incorporating diversity and multiculturalism in graduate training programs (Dickson, Argus-Calvo, & Tafoya, 2010; Zalaquett et al., 2008; Coleman, 2006; Robinson & Morris, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Ponterotto & Casas, 1987). Scholars have indicated the importance of multiculturalism in various aspects of training including: curriculum, clinical practice, research, and the overall learning environment (Fouad, 2006). Research suggests that multicultural training has implications for various outcomes

including: racial attitudes (Dickson, Argus-Calvo, & Tafoya, 2010); student-faculty interactions (Coleman, 2006); and multicultural competence (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

Curriculum

The Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists implores educators to “employ the constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in psychological education (APA, 2003, p.386). In response to this call for the development of culture-centered practices in education, Fouad (2006) suggested the following essential elements of a multiculturally infused psychology curriculum: an explicit statement of a commitment to diversity and philosophy of the program; active efforts to recruit graduate students from diverse populations; active efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty members; fair and equitable admissions processes; specific coursework aimed at increasing cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills; infusion of culture-centered approaches in all coursework; and annual evaluation of cultural competence of faculty and students. The aforementioned elements represent a commitment to multiculturalism that has implications for course development, equal representation of students and faculty of color, and continued assessment of multicultural competence.

A research study conducted by Reynolds (2011) provided important information about the infusion of multiculturalism into academic programs by exploring perceptions and experiences of faculty members who teach multicultural counseling courses. Respondents indicated that the use of varied teaching methods, faculty self-disclosure, opportunities for safe student interaction and discussion, broad definitions of diversity, and increased multicultural competence all contributed to positive student reactions in their respective multicultural courses. Furthermore, respondents indicated that their courses tended to focus on the knowledge aspect of

multicultural competence. Priester and colleagues (2008) found similar results in a study which explored the content of course syllabi for multicultural coursework. Results indicated that most syllabi demonstrated a high emphasis on learning about other groups, a low level of emphasis on self-awareness and understanding of self as a cultural being, and almost no evidence of an emphasis on skill development (Priester et al., 2008).

Various approaches have been used in multicultural training. Priester and colleagues (2008) describe two approaches to multicultural training: traditionalist and multiculturalist. The traditionalist approach suggests that defining multiculturalism in a broad sense reduces the significance of racism. As a result, training using this approach emphasizes focus on the four traditional minority groups (i.e. African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans). On the other hand, proponents of the multiculturalist approach endorse a broader view of multiculturalism which includes training on issues of diversity such as gender, religion, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation (Priester et. al., 2008).

Additionally, Ridley, Mendoza, and Kanitz (1994) propose six multicultural counseling training models which are typically used in counseling programs. These training models, listed in order of increasing emphasis on multicultural competence education, include: traditional program, workshop design, separate course, interdisciplinary cognate, subspecialty cognate, and integrated program (Kim & Lyons, 2003). The traditional approach endorses the view that all clients should be treated the same and thus does not mandate nor include diversity instruction as a specific component of the training program. In the workshop design, trainees are encouraged to attend diversity workshops outside of the training program. In the separate course model, multicultural courses are added to the program curriculum. The interdisciplinary and subspecialty cognate models are extensions of the separate course model which promote the

study of culture by encouraging trainees to take additional courses in sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines in which culture is central to their mission. The integrated model is an all-encompassing approach which involves incorporating aspects of multiculturalism in all coursework offered by the program (Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Ridley, Mendoza, Kanitz, Angermeir, & Zenk, 1994).

Although an integrated program is ideal, most training programs endorse a separate course model (Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Ridley, Mendoza, Kanitz, Angermeir, & Zenk, 1994; Robinson & Morris, 2000; Leach & Aten, 2009). In the separate course model, multicultural training generally takes the form of one of three instructional strategies. Traditional strategies include reading assignments, informal class discussions of culture-related topics, didactic lectures, and research assignments. Participatory strategies consist of role-plays, personal class discussions, counseling simulations and processing of affective reactions to course content and class assignments. Exposure strategies include active participation and interaction with persons from diverse backgrounds (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

Though studies have not specifically demonstrated differences between models in terms of effectiveness, student reports suggest the need for additional multicultural experiences and challenges that extend beyond a single course in order to become multiculturally competent (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Consequently, Tomlinson-Clarke and Ota Wang (1999) proposed a cultural training model that is designed to contribute to the development of multicultural competence. The model suggests that multicultural training occur in three phases. First, all students should begin their training with an introductory, didactic course which focuses on general multicultural issues and theories. This course should be designed to promote knowledge and awareness about universal issues related to diversity and multiculturalism. In the next phase,

students should be provided with more in-depth training on culturally relevant issues in additional multicultural courses which include experiential components. These courses should enhance students' understanding of self and others as cultural beings in order to contribute to a more personal rather than intellectual understanding of diversity. The final component of the model provides opportunities for students to engage in research, practica, internship, and supervisory experiences that involve experience with diverse populations (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000; Tomlinson-Clarke & Ota Wang, 1999).

Experiential Activities

The literature suggests that few training programs have focused on skill development as a part of multicultural training (Zalaquett et al., 2008). Consequently, Fouad (2006) suggests that programs add specific practicum and supervisory experiences that provide students with opportunities to develop skills in working with racially and ethnically diverse clients. Training programs should provide opportunities for multicultural practica and supervision that expose trainees to clients from culturally diverse populations and includes the discussion of multicultural issues as a core component of supervision (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

In addition to multicultural practica and supervision, several studies have reported the impact of specific aspects of training that have contributed to growth and development related to multicultural competence. Findings from Dickson, Jepsen, and Barbee (2008) indicate that interactive and process-oriented instruction is a crucial component of effective multicultural training. Coleman (2006) identified three clusters of process components students' reported as being critical to multicultural counselor training and development. Participants indicated that personal experiences (outside of training) with persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, didactic and experiential aspects of training, and experiences in multicultural training with peers

from different cultural backgrounds were most beneficial to their multicultural development. Neville and colleagues (1996) reported that students found experiential activities such as exposure to diverse cultures through interactions with classmates as being instrumental in positive attitude change related to diversity.

Dickson, Jepsen, and Barbee (2008) demonstrated the significance of participatory strategies (e.g. role plays and multicultural counseling simulations) on student attitudes related to diversity. Burnett, Hamel, and Long (2004) documented a positive relationship between peer learning (usefulness of immediate corrective feedback) and increased self-awareness related to multicultural competence. Dickson et al. (2010) found that students benefited the most from participatory activities (e.g. class discussions) that allowed them to experience culture clashes, situations of power/powerlessness, and privilege. Pedersen (2000) demonstrated the usefulness of experiential activities, such as role-playing and cross-cultural interviewing, for increasing multicultural awareness and challenging pre-conceived notions and biases. Heppner and O'Brien (1994) found experiential activities to be the most significant part of learning as reported by counselor trainees.

Kim and Lyons (2003) suggested the use of experiential games as a means of promoting multicultural knowledge about various ethnic groups. The authors note that game playing can encourage students to discuss sensitive topics as well as raise difficult questions in a non-threatening and safe format.

Multicultural Environment

Several studies have noted the significance of culturally sensitive environments in multicultural training. A training environment that is considered culturally sensitive is one that integrates multicultural issues throughout the entire curriculum, provides opportunities for

multicultural practica, encourages participation in multicultural research, and promotes a climate that is safe and comfortable for students and faculty (Pope-Davis, Liu, Nevitt, & Toporek, 2000; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). The routine practices of training programs, including attitudes and behaviors, contribute to the cultural ambience which either supports or negates the program's commitment to multiculturalism (Dickson, Jepsen, & Barbee, 2008). Moreover, the multicultural environment of a program can be influenced by several external factors including race relations in local communities, previous multicultural interventions, and current events (Tori & Ducker, 2004). In order to provide effective multicultural training, training programs must demonstrate an environment that is considerate of diversity and multiculturalism (Dickson, Jepsen, & Barbee, 2008).

Previous literature has indicated the relationship between trainees' multicultural competence and the multicultural environment of their training programs such that students perceive that the integration of multicultural issues throughout their training program uniquely contributes to their multicultural competence (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). In fact, Dickson & Jepsen (2007) found that program cultural ambience was a significant predictor of higher multicultural competence. Similarly, Coleman (2006) established that students who felt supported in their departments, related to issues of multiculturalism and diversity, reported more positive and thought-provoking interactions with colleagues and faculty members. Research exploring student perceptions of training environments has suggested that an obvious commitment to multicultural issues as well as a general cultural atmosphere is crucial to the development of multicultural competence (Reynolds, 2011). Fouad (2006) noted the importance of faculty evaluating their own cultural competence in order to communicate an individual and departmental commitment to growth in this area.

Multicultural Competence

The overall goal of multicultural training is to produce well-rounded psychologists who are able to recognize their own assumptions and biases, knowledgeable about diverse cultural groups, and able to respond to culturally different clients in a manner that is both sensitive and appropriate (Coleman, Morris, & Norton, 2006).

Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992) conceptualized multicultural competence as consisting of three components: beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Beliefs and attitudes refer to counselors' ways of thinking about and awareness of their own cultural identities, assumptions, and biases. Knowledge refers to understanding of diverse cultural groups and sociopolitical influences that affect clients' worldviews (Sehgal et al., 2011). Diverse populations include those that differ from the counselor on religion, ability or disability status, sexual orientation, age or gender (Arredondo et al., 1996). Skills refers to abilities a counselor must possess in order to engage in productive work with individuals from particular racial or ethnic groups (Sue et al., 1982).

Assessment

Various tools have been developed to assess multicultural competence, as conceptualized by Sue and colleagues, at the individual and programmatic level (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008; Hays, 2008; Gamst et al., 2004). Instruments developed to assess an individual's readiness to engage in culturally sensitive practice include: the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-and-Skills Survey (MAKSS; D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Kim, Cartwright, Asay, & D'Andrea, 2003), the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002), the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey (MCCTS; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), the Cross-Cultural

Counseling Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991), the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI; Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994), and the California Brief Multicultural Competence Scale (Gamst et al., 2004).

The MAKSS, initially conceptualized by D'Andrea and colleagues (1991), consists of 33-items which are designed to measure students' perceptions of the impact of specific instructional strategies on their multicultural counseling development. Scale validation studies have indicated that the scale demonstrates adequate criterion-related validity, internal consistency, and some degree of construct validity (Hays, 2008). The MCKAS is a 32-item scale that assesses two domains: multicultural knowledge and awareness. The instrument has demonstrated adequate criterion-related validity and strong internal consistency (Ponterotto et al., 2002).

The MCCTS is a 32-item measure that assesses trainees' perceptions of the adequacy of their training as well as requires them to rate their level of multicultural competence. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not competent) to 4 (extremely competent). The MCCTS has demonstrated acceptable properties of reliability (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). The CCCI-R is a 20-item measure designed to assess an individual's counseling effectiveness with culturally diverse clientele. Responses are measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The CCCI-R has demonstrated adequate construct and criterion-related validity as well as acceptable internal consistency (Hays, 2008).

The MCI is a 43-item self-report measure intended to evaluate a counselor's multicultural awareness, skills, knowledge, and relationship with diverse clients. Responses are measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very inaccurate) to 4 (very accurate). Ponterotto and colleagues (1994) noted that the MCI has acceptable internal consistency and demonstrates

adequate construct and criterion-related validity. The CBMCS is a 21-item scale designed to measure self-reported multicultural competencies of mental health practitioners from various ethnic backgrounds, educational levels, ages, and experience. Findings have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties including scale reliability, minimal social desirability effects, and adequate criterion-related validity (Gamst et al., 2004).

Program evaluation tools including the Multicultural Competency Checklist (Ponterotto, Alexander, & Grieger, 1995) and the Multicultural Environment Inventory (MEI; Pope-Davis, Liu, Nevitt, & Toporek, 2000) have been developed to assess the effectiveness of multicultural competency training. The Multicultural Competency Checklist consists of 22 items which measure various themes including: counseling practice and supervision, minority representation, research considerations, curriculum issues, physical environment, and student and faculty competency evaluation. This scale is designed to be completed by a training director as a means of assessing the extent to which the faculty is meeting competency standards (Hays, 2008).

The MEI consists of 27-items which assess the extent to which graduate training programs address multicultural issues in areas such as curriculum and supervision, climate, recruitment, and research. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of focus on multicultural issues within the program. Findings have demonstrated good construct validity and internal consistency (Ponterotto et al., 2002).

Although researchers have made significant strides in the assessment of multicultural competence, scholars have consistently noted limitations of current instruments used to measure multicultural competence (Hays, 2008; Seghal et. al, 2011; Constantine & Ladany, 2000, Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Sue, 1996). To begin, the literature has indicated that minimal

psychometric data is available for current MCC assessment tools. Consequently, researchers have indicated the need for additional factor analytic and validation studies (Ponterotto et al., 1994; Hays, 2008). Furthermore, research findings have indicated differences between self-report scores and independent observer ratings of multicultural competence as well as differences between self-reported attitudes and actual behaviors related to multicultural competence suggesting that MCC instruments may actually be measuring multicultural self-efficacy (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008; Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Additionally, present multicultural competency assessment tools generally center on working with diverse racial and ethnic groups without addressing other areas of diversity such as religion, gender, and sexual orientation (Hays, 2008).

Outcomes

Multicultural competence has been linked to multiple client outcomes including rates of attrition, utilization, and satisfaction (Constantine, 2001). Likewise, client's perceptions of multicultural competencies have been linked to multiple therapeutic variables including: perceived counselor trustworthiness, empathy, attractiveness, expertness, and the working alliance (Constantine, 2002; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). Furthermore, Fuertes et al. (2006) found a positive relationship between clients' combined ratings of therapist attractiveness, expertness, and trustworthiness and counselors' self-perceived multicultural competencies.

Student Cohorts

Scholars have typically defined cohorts as groups of students who begin a program together, follow a common course of studies, and develop a sense of community and support in pursuit of a degree in higher education (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001; Nimer, 2005; McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008). Although student cohorts have been used sporadically in

professional schools (i.e. medical, law) since the early 1940s, most higher education degree programs did not make use of the cohort model until the mid-1980s (Maher, 2004). The use of the cohort model was promoted in an effort to address common concerns of non-traditional graduate students around social isolation and lack of flexibility related to pursuing advanced degrees without interrupting their personal and professional responsibilities (McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008).

The rationale behind the cohort model centers on the idea, heavily documented in research, that “knowledge is constructed by humans through social interaction and education, therefore, should be based in learning communities where teachers and students act interdependently to construct meaning and understanding” (Cross, 1998; Hesse & Mason, 2005). This notion is further supported in a report by The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2002) which documents the impact of diverse forms of experiential learning, collaborative projects, and integrated learning communities on achievement in higher education (Hesse & Mason, 2005).

Faculty and students generally agree that a safer and more intimate learning environment can be created as a function of the same group of students remaining together over a long period of time (Barnett & Caffarella, 1992). Hayes and Paisley (2002) describe the cohort as the most authentic context for learning as it provides “the necessary balance of challenge and support as well as experience and reflection to promote human development” (p.172).

Scholars have noted that the structure, function, and nature of the cohort model have evolved over time (Pemberton & Akkary, 2010). Initially, cohorts were purposefully formed as a means of perpetuating lessons about real world group and interpersonal dynamic as well as diversity, specifically when diversity was intentionally maintained in the group composition

(Barnett & Caffarella, 1992; Horn, 2001; McPhail, 2002). Training programs appear to have strayed from using the cohort as a means of accomplishing interpersonal goals such as building meaningful relationships, teaching interpersonal skills, providing support, and promoting solidarity. Presently, the cohort model is typically used by training programs as a means of facilitating program goals such as structure and organization (Pemberton & Akkary, 2010).

In order to recreate opportunities for student connection and engagement which were present in former cohort structures, Pemberton & Akkary (2010), suggest that current graduate programs provide space during critical transitions (i.e. comprehensive exams, dissertation, and candidacy) for the emergence of naturally occurring cohorts. Additionally, the aforementioned scholars propose changes to admission and instruction to include specific criteria aimed at increasing diversity of the cohort group, activities aimed at encouraging interactions among cohort members, opportunities for reflective practice among cohort members, and involvement of learners in design of the learning process (Barnett & Caffarella, 1992; Pemberton & Akkary, 2010).

Types

Cohorts vary across several dimensions including: size, length of time students are together, and structure - open or closed, (Maher, 2004). Closed cohorts refer to cohorts that have one-entry point and lockstep coursework whereas open cohorts allow for multiple entry points and more variability in coursework sequence (Maher, 2004). Barnett, Basom, Yerkes and Norris (2000) also suggest a third structure which he describes as “fluid.” In a fluid cohort, students are able to move in and out as needed (Lewis, Ascher, Hayes, & Ieva, 2010). Students who are members of fluid cohorts may take some coursework together but generally enroll in additional coursework based on their personal aspirations, needs, and interests (Barnett & Caffarella, 1992).

Although cohorts vary across the aforementioned dimensions, Saltiel and Russo (2001) suggest that all cohorts have four primary characteristics: a defined membership within a long-term group of learners, a network of interactive of learning relationships that is created and maintained among the members, a highly structured meeting schedule, and a common goal (such as the completion of a graduate program) that warrants academic and emotional support among the members.

In order to create learning environments that foster learning and development, departments must be intentional about forming and structuring cohorts (McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008). Consequently, cohort members are chosen on the basis of departmental requirements and application material which generally consists of standardized test scores, resumes, transcripts, recommendations, interviews, and faculty perceptions about students' ability to thrive within the dynamics of the cohort model (Nimer, 2009). Additionally, in order to further the aim of promoting diversity, personal characteristics including: gender, ethnicity, learning style, and amount of related work experience are also considered (Barnett & Caffarella, 1992).

Strengths

One of the most significant benefits of the cohort model is that it provides opportunities for students to interact with people who represent differences across lines of race, religion, age, sexual orientation and other cultural dimensions (Hesse & Mason, 2005). The diverse community created within the cohort promotes increased self-examination, perspective taking, and consciousness-raising (Paisley, Bailey, Hayes, McMahon, & Grimmatt, 2010). As a function of the cohort structure, which is intended to promote a shared history and strong bonds, the

expectation is that students will challenge and encourage one another in ways that promote significant growth (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001).

Pothoff, Dinsmore, and Moore (2001) reported that students in cohorts showed increased preparedness for acting as social change agents as well as multicultural awareness compared to students who were not in cohorts (Lewis, Ascher, Hayes, & Ieva, 2010). As students become familiar with their cohort members their conversations change in ways that promote a deeper level of analysis, exploration, and reflection on sensitive issues around multiculturalism and social justice (Maher, 2004).

In addition to enhancing students' cultural awareness and knowledge, cohorts have demonstrated various benefits for students, faculty members and university communities. McPhail, Robinson, & Scott (2008) suggest that cohorts foster a sense of belonging, support risk taking, emphasize critical reflection and the development of shared understanding, encourage the consideration of multiple perspectives, and create an environment in which mutual respect flourishes. Maher (2004) emphasized the positive impact of the cohort model on student satisfaction and academic performance. Student responses in a study conducted by McPhail (2002) indicated that the cohort experience produced various positive outcomes including: enriched learning experiences, higher levels of accomplishment, and improved critical thinking, writing, leadership, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, Hesse & Mason (2005) found that working with others in supportive learning environments promotes increased involvement in learning, sharpens thinking, and deepens understanding. Supportive learning environments facilitate opportunities for increased interaction with peers and faculty members. Similarly, cohort models provide abundant opportunities for the development of communication skills which are especially significant in the helping professions (Echterling et al., 2002).

Research also suggests the added benefit of social and emotional support provided by the cohort. Graduate students have consistently identified lack of emotional support from faculty and classmates as a negative part of their learning experience (Nimer, 2009). In an effort to address the aforementioned concerns, several graduate programs have opted to structure student involvement through the use of the cohort model. The cohort model is intended to provide students with a sense of community and emotional support in order to cope with educational, personal, and financial challenges. McPhail, Robinson & Scott (2008) noted the potential for significant relationships to develop as a result of membership in the cohort. Likewise, cohort models promote higher rate of continued interaction, both personally and professionally, among members after the completion of the intended degree (Nimer, 2009).

Cohort models also provide structural and organizational benefits for faculty. With regards to administrative and departmental benefits, the use of cohort models has demonstrated improvement with scheduling, completion rates, and attrition (Lewis, Ascher, Hayes, & Ieva, 2010).

Limitations

The natural occurrence of team cultures that develop in cohorts can be alarmingly negative or incredibly powerful (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001). Research on group formation suggests that there is a natural pairing of individuals within groups according to interests, strengths, and similarities. Accordingly, a noteworthy challenge in the cohort model is the tendency for subgroups, which may promote division, to emerge throughout the course of the cohorts' development (Nimer, 2009; Lewis, Ascher, Hayes, & Ieva, 2010).

On the other hand, research has also noted challenges with the solidarity of cohort members in that it may contribute to an "us" vs. "them" mentality leading to tension between

students and faculty members (Lewis, Ascher, Haynes, & Ieva, 2010). Similarly, if the cohort model is simply used as a tool of convenience for the purposes of scheduling and tracking, students may interpret this as a lack of concern for individual needs (Lewis, Ascher, Haynes, & Ieva, 2010). Therefore, it is essential that faculty members are intentional about promoting a general understanding of the nature, function, strengths, and limitations of the cohort model prior to students' enrollment (Maher, 2004; Lewis, Ascher, Haynes, & Ieva, 2010; Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001).

Previous literature on cohorts has suggested the influence of personal identity factors on outcomes related to multicultural training and competence (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001). The aforementioned authors have documented changes in cohort dynamics as a function of gender imbalances, racial composition, and personality types. Students consistently report unpleasant interpersonal conflicts as a result of personality differences as being a major limitation of the cohort model (Teitel, 1997; Lewis, Ascher, Haynes, & Ieva, 2010). As a function of the structure of the cohort model, students have to endure in-group tension and conflict for the duration of the program. Sapon-Shevin and Chandler-Olcott (2001) suggested that the tensions between cohort members often resemble the negative attitudes, behaviors, and relationship struggles that occur in dysfunctional families.

Although an intended purpose of the cohort is to promote aforementioned positive outcomes, the success of the cohort is contingent upon the nature of interpersonal interactions within the cohort. Sapon-Shevin and Chandler-Olcott (2001) demonstrated that when students trust each other, they feel comfortable taking risks with their in-class interactions; however, when the trust is not present, students are less comfortable sharing their ideas and personal reactions for fear of judgment.

Current Study

In spite of increased training opportunities in multicultural education, the literature demonstrates that counseling psychologists continue to report inadequate multicultural counseling training and low levels of perceived competence when providing services to ethnic minority clients (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999).

The present study seeks to explore the impact of specific training variables, including the student cohort, on the awareness domain of multicultural competence. Although there is extensive research related to the constructs of cohorts, multicultural competence, and the multicultural environment separately, research on the impact of the multicultural environment and student cohort on multicultural competence has been limited. The present study attempts to understand how the multicultural environment and student cohort directly affects multicultural awareness. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the impact of personal characteristics (i.e., gender, and race) and additional training variables (i.e., clinical experiences, professional development workshops, curriculum, etc) on multicultural awareness.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedures used to investigate the current research. The discussion of research design and methodology addresses the following components: information on the sample, process of data collection, description of survey instrumentation, proposed data analysis and design limitations.

The current study used quantitative research methods to explore the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. To that end, the research presented here attempted to: (1) Explore the effect of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and environment) on multicultural awareness; and (2) Examine the moderating effects of multicultural training variables (research, practica, and coursework) on the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

Description of the Sample

The field of counseling psychology has taken the lead among applied psychology disciplines in attempting to incorporate multicultural diversity issues into academic curricula and applied training experiences. Consequently, students were recruited from APA-Accredited Counseling Psychology doctoral programs. Criteria for participation in the study included doctoral students who are currently enrolled in graduate training programs in counseling psychology identified as using cohort models.

An *a priori* power analysis was conducted to determine the minimum requisite sample size. The following parameters were entered for multiple regression analyses: anticipated medium effect size ($d = .15$), probability level ($\alpha = .05$), number of predictor variables (3), and

desired statistical power (.8). The power analysis concluded that a total of 78 participants are necessary to detect good model fit with power of .80 ($d = .15$, $\alpha = .05$).

Participants who did not respond completely to demographic information or at least one research instrument ($n = 7$) were excluded from analysis. After exclusion of non-qualified respondents, the sample included 115 participants. Participants included doctoral students currently enrolled in counseling psychology programs. Seventy-nine percent of the sample (79.1%, $n = 91$) was between the ages of 25 and 34. Seventeen percent of the participants (17.4%, $n = 20$) were men and eighty-three percent (82.6%, $n = 95$) were women. Participants self-identified as Black or African American (11.3%, $n = 13$), Hispanic American (4.3%, $n = 5$), Asian / Pacific Islander (8.7%, $n = 10$), White / Caucasian (73%, $n = 84$), Biracial (1.7%, $n = 2$) and Other (.9%, $n = 1$). The majority of the participants were seeking a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree (96.5%, $n = 111$), while the remaining participants indicated that they were seeking a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree (3.5%, $n = 4$).

The majority of participants reported previous experiences with multicultural training through research experiences, coursework, professional development workshops, and counseling sessions with culturally diverse clients. With regards to research, 82.6% ($n = 95$) of the sample reported engaging in at least 1 multicultural research project, while 17.4% ($n = 20$) of the sample denied engaging in any multicultural research. Similarly, 70.4% ($n = 81$) reported taking between 1-2 multicultural courses, while 13% ($n = 15$) denied taking any multicultural classes. Thirty percent ($n = 35$) of participants reported attending or conducting professional development workshops related to multiculturalism. In terms of practica experiences, 74.8% ($n = 86$) of participants reported experiencing 5 or more counseling sessions with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

The use of internet surveys for the purpose of research has been demonstrated to be more effective and efficient than traditional means of data collection (Zhang, 2000). Moreover, previous studies have indicated several benefits to using internet surveys for psychological research including: access to groups that are that are normally difficult to identify or access (Coomber, 1997), opportunities to efficiently survey larger numbers of individuals (Schmidt, 1997), and rapid collection of data (Barak, 1999). Although studies such as Zhang (2000) have also suggested various limitations (i.e. access to internet, comfort with internet survey format, etc.) for the purpose of this study, reported benefits outweigh previously discussed limitations.

Consequently, internet surveys were used as the method of data collection. An e-mail describing the study as an investigation of student cohorts was distributed to APA accredited counseling psychology graduate programs across the country. Specifically, the survey invitation was e-mailed to training directors and/or program chairs of the aforementioned programs. A follow up email was sent out two weeks after the initial email. The email included a link to the survey conducted through Survey Monkey, which was available from February 11, 2013 until April 11, 2013.

Individuals interested in participating were directed to an Internet address where they could access the online survey. Participants were first directed to a web page containing an informed consent form, and were instructed to indicate their agreement by clicking on text reading “Agree.” Those who consented were then directed to the survey page that included a demographic questionnaire and the following instruments: the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991), Perceived Cohesion Scale (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), Relational Satisfaction Scale (Anderson, Martin, & Riddle, 2001), Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and

Awareness Scale (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Riger, & Austin, 2002), and the Multicultural Environment Inventory-Revised (Pope-Davis, Liu, Nevitt, & Toporek, 2000).

In an effort to balance the numbers of intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students who agreed to participate, respondents were entered into a drawing to receive one of four \$25 Amazon gift cards, which was awarded at the end of data collection. Upon completion of the survey, participants were provided with the opportunity to submit their email addresses in order to be entered into the drawing. Participants' contact information was kept separately from their responses in an effort to maintain confidentiality. Similarly, participants' responses were password protected and only accessible by the researcher.

Instrumentation

Social Desirability Bias. The assessment of multicultural competence has been consistently linked with concerns about social desirability bias (Chao, 2006; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Worthington, Mobley, Franks, & Tan, 2000). Accordingly, a short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to identify the extent to which individuals exhibit this bias. The scale consists of 11 items. Scale items include: "There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone," and "I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable." Responses are measured on a dichotomous true or false scale. Scores on Short Form A of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale range from 0-11, with higher scores being indicative of a higher level of social desirability bias. Previous studies have reported adequate levels of internal consistency ranging from .69 to .86 (Reynolds, 1982). The MCSDS demonstrated adequate reliability in this sample: MCSDS, $\alpha = .75$.

Cohesion. Cohesion was measured using an adapted version of the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS), developed by Bollen and Hoyle (1990). The Perceived Cohesion Scale is a six-item measure designed to assess two underlying dimensions of cohesion: a sense of belonging and

feelings of morale. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores range from 6-30. Higher scores are indicative of a higher sense of belonging and morale. Using a 5-point Likert scale, participants responded to prompts such as, “I see myself as a part of the cohort,” and “I am content to be part of this cohort.” Initial studies demonstrated acceptable reliabilities for both the belonging and morale factors ($\alpha = .95, .87$, respectively). PCS subscales produced the following reliabilities in the current sample: belonging, $\alpha = .96$ and morale, $\alpha = .90$.

Relational satisfaction. Relational satisfaction was measured using an adapted version of the Relational Satisfaction Scale (RSS) which was conceptualized by Anderson, Martin, and Riddle (2001). The scale includes twelve items that measures participants’ satisfaction with intra-group relations in their cohorts. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: “The members made me feel involved in the group,” and “The group atmosphere is comfortable.” Scores on the RSS range from 12-60, with higher scores being indicative of a higher level of group relational satisfaction. Previous studies reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 ($M = 43.91, SD = 6.89$) indicating acceptable psychometric properties of scale reliability. The RSS demonstrated adequate reliability in this sample: RSS, $\alpha = .95$.

Climate. Cohort climate was measured using a subscale of the Multicultural Environment Inventory-Revised (MEI-R). The MEI-R consists of 27-items which assess the extent to which graduate training programs address multicultural issues. For the purpose of this study, the Climate and Comfort subscale was used to assess the degree to which trainees feel safe and valued as members of their training environment. The 11 items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a lot*), with higher scores indicating a greater degree

of perceived safety in the training environment. Results from previous studies demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties of scale reliability revealing a Cronbach's alpha of .92 for the Climate and Comfort subscale (Ponterotto et al., 2002). The Climate and Comfort Subscale of the MEI-R demonstrated adequate reliability in this sample: $\alpha = .89$.

Multicultural Awareness. Prior studies have documented notable issues with the measurement of multicultural competence (Seghal et. al, 2011; Constantine & Ladany, 2000, Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Sue, 1996). Namely, scales are limited in that they tend to measure anticipated rather than actual behaviors and attitudes, are subject to individual interpretation, lack uniformity related to construct measurement, and are influenced by social desirability (Sehgal et. al, 2011; Constantine & Ladany, 2000). In order to account for these limitations, the MCKAS scale, which has demonstrated consistent reliability and validity properties, was used in conjunction with the aforementioned social desirability scale.

Multicultural Awareness was measured using The Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS). The MCKAS is made up of 32 items that capture two aspects of multicultural competence - knowledge and awareness. For the purpose of this study, only the awareness subscale was used. The cultural awareness subscale is composed of 12 items such as: "I am aware that being born a minority in this society brings with it certain challenges that White people do not have to face." Participants rated items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*totally true*). Scores range from 12-84, with a higher score indicating a higher level of multicultural awareness. Coefficient alphas of the MCKAS subscales ranged from .75 to .85 for the awareness subscale and with psychology trainee samples (Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Riger, & Austin, 2002) indicating acceptable psychometric properties of scale reliability. Furthermore, the MCKAS has demonstrated

appropriate content, construct, and criterion validity (Chao, 2006). The Awareness Subscale of the MCKAS demonstrated adequate reliability in this sample: $\alpha = .72$.

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire (appendix), developed by the researcher, included questions for the respondent to answer regarding their personal identification (i.e. age, race, gender), degree type (i.e. Psy.D, or Ph.D.), type of cohort model used in program (open, closed, or fluid), years spent in cohort, and previous experiences with multicultural training (i.e. number of clinical sessions with culturally diverse clients, number of multicultural courses, multicultural workshops attended, and multicultural research projects engaged). Multicultural training was operationalized as practica experiences, coursework, workshops, and research dedicated to the exploration of the broad scope of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions.

Data Analysis

This study sought to answer the following questions: 1) Do cohort characteristics predict multicultural awareness; and (2) To what extent do specific training variables influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. Pearson correlations were used to determine whether there are statistically significant relationships between the aforementioned cohort characteristics. Continuous predictor and moderator variables were mean centered in order to reduce multicollinearity.

Multiple regression analyses were used to explore the first research question related to the effect of multiple predictor variables (cohort cohesion, relational satisfaction, and climate) on the criterion variable (multicultural awareness). Regression analyses allowed the researcher to examine the extent to which a combination of the aforementioned predictor variables accounts

for variance in the criterion variable. Multiple hierarchical regressions were used to explore the impact of naturally occurring levels of cohort cohesion, relational satisfaction, and climate on multicultural awareness while controlling for social desirability bias.

In addition, multiple hierarchical regression analyses were used as tests of moderation to investigate the second research question regarding the extent to which various training variables influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to: (1) examine the role of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and climate) as predictors of multicultural awareness and (2) explore the moderating effects of multicultural training (coursework, clinical experiences, research) on the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. This chapter will provide detailed information about the findings of the analyses conducted for this study. The data analysis will be presented in the following sections: (1) demographic data (2) preliminary statistical analyses and (3) research questions and findings.

Demographic Data

Participants. The total number of counseling psychology doctoral student participants was 115. Of the 115 participants, 95 were females and 20 were males. The female to male ratio in the current study is reflective of the gender ratio in most psychology doctoral programs (Cynkar, 2007). In terms of race/ethnicity, participants self-identified as the following: White/Caucasian (74.56%, $n = 85$), Black or African American (12.28%, $n = 14$), Hispanic American (4.39%, $n = 5$), Asian/Pacific Islander (8.77%, $n = 10$). Seventy-nine percent ($n = 91$) of the sample was between the ages of 25-34. Participants were eliminated if they did not complete one or more of the following scales: Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability Scale, Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness Scale, Perceived Cohesion Scale, Multicultural Environment Inventory Scale (Revised), or Relational Satisfaction Scale.

Additional exploratory questions related to cohort structure, composition, perceptions about multicultural competence, and previous experiences with multicultural training were

included on the demographic questionnaire. In terms of cohort structure, 59.1% ($n = 68$) of the sample endorsed the use of a closed cohort model, 26.83% ($n = 30$) endorsed the use of an open cohort model, and 4.3% ($n = 5$) endorsed the use of a fluid cohort model, and 10.4% reported the use of another model not previously listed ($n = 12$). Thirty-four percent (33.9%) of participants reported being a member of their cohort for 1 year ($n = 39$), 19.1% ($n = 22$) of participants have been in their cohort for 2 years, 9.6% ($n = 11$) of participants have been in their cohort for 3 years, and 34% ($n = 39$) of participants have been in their cohort for four or more years.

Eighty-one percent ($n = 94$) of the sample indicated that they considered their cohort to be culturally diverse. Similarly, 81.4% of participants believe that the members of their cohort are multiculturally competent ($n = 94$). When asked to rate the impact of various training experiences on their multicultural development, approximately fifty-six percent (56.52%) of the sample reported that their personal life experiences have had the greatest impact on their multicultural development, followed by clinical practicum (29.57%), didactic coursework (20%), and research (11.30%). Demographic information is detailed in Table 1.

Preliminary Statistical Analyses

An assessment of scale reliabilities was completed using Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the scales within this population. Information on means and standard deviations of each scale used in this study; as well as the means and standard deviations of variables of interest obtained from the demographic form is provided in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Total Sample

Variable	N (%)
Race / Ethnicity	
White / Caucasian	84 (73.0)
Black or African American	13 (11.3)
Asian / Pacific Islander	10 (8.7)
Hispanic American	5 (4.3)
Biracial	2 (1.7)
Other	1 (.9)
Age	
18 to 24	17 (14.8)
25 to 34	91 (79.1)
35 to 44	6 (5.2)
55 to 64	1 (.9)
Gender	
Female	95(82.6)
Male	20 (17.4)
Cohort Model	
Open	30 (26.1)
Closed	68 (59.1)
Fluid	5 (4.3)
Other	12 (10.4)

Number of multicultural courses taken

0	15 (13.0)
1-2	81 (70.4)
3-4	13 (11.3)
5 or more	4 (3.5)

Number of multicultural research projects engaged

0	20 (17.4)
1-2	50 (43.5)
3-4	35 (30.4)
5 or more	10 (8.7)

Number of multicultural workshops conducted/attended

0	28 (24.3)
1-2	35 (30.4)
3-4	23 (20.0)
5 or more	26 (22.6)

Number of culturally diverse counseling sessions

0	15 (13.0)
1-2	7 (6.1)
3-4	4 (3.5)
5 or more	86 (74.8)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Predictor, Outcome, and Moderator Variables

Measures	<i>M</i>	SD	Cronbach's α
MEI-R Climate subscale	41.93	8.15	.89
Perceived Cohesion Scale			
Belonging subscale	12.03	2.90	.96
Morale subscale	11.18	3.20	.90
Total score	23.21	5.92	.96
Relational Satisfaction Scale	46.86	9.89	.96
MCKAS Awareness subscale	75.32	6.58	.72
Number of multicultural courses	2.05	.62	--
Number of multicultural projects	2.30	.86	--
Number of multicultural workshops	2.42	1.10	--

Number of multicultural sessions	3.44	1.09	--
Multicultural Training (Total)	10.26	2.73	--

Descriptive Statistics. Multicultural training was measured using items from the demographic questionnaire. Participants provided information regarding the number of multicultural courses taken, research activities engaged, professional development workshops attended, and culturally diverse counseling sessions conducted. Scores on each variable ranged from 1-4. Mean scores and measures of standard deviation for the aforementioned variables include: Coursework ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .62$), Research ($M = 2.30$, $SD = .86$), Workshops ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.10$), and Counseling sessions ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.08$). The aforementioned multicultural training variables were summed to create one variable for multicultural training. This score included a possible range from 4-16 and had a mean of 10.26 ($SD = 2.73$).

Climate was measured using the Climate and Comfort subscale of the Multicultural Environment Inventory-Revised (MEI-R). Scores on the Climate and Comfort subscale range from 11-55, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of perceived safety in the training environment. The mean score for the sample was 41.91 ($SD = 8.15$).

Cohesion was measured using an adapted version of the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS), developed by Bollen and Hoyle (1990). Participants received an overall scale score, with scores

ranging from 6-30. Higher scores are indicative of a greater sense of belonging and morale. The mean score for this sample was 23.21 ($SD = 5.92$).

A short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to identify the extent to which individuals exhibited social desirability bias. Scores on this scale range from 0-11, with higher scores being indicative of a higher level of social desirability bias. The mean score for this sample was 3.68 ($SD = 2.69$).

Relational satisfaction was measured using an adapted version of the Relational Satisfaction Scale (RSS) which was conceptualized by Anderson, Martin, and Riddle (2001). Scores on the RSS range from 12-60, with higher scores being indicative of a higher level of group relational satisfaction. The mean score for this sample was 46.86 ($SD = 9.89$).

Multicultural awareness was measured using the Awareness subscale of The Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS). Scores on the aforementioned subscale range from 12-84, with higher scores being indicative of a higher level of multicultural awareness. The mean score for this sample was 75.32 ($SD = 6.58$).

The overall internal consistency for each scale was as follows: MEI-R climate subscale $\alpha = .89$; PCS belonging and morale subscales, $\alpha = .96$ and $\alpha = .90$, respectively; MCSDS, $\alpha = .75$; RSS $\alpha = .95$; and MCKAS awareness subscale $\alpha = .72$.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Pearson Product Moment Correlations were calculated and examined for scores equal to or greater than .80 in an attempt to investigate issues of multicollinearity. Results indicated a significant correlation between the cohesion and relational satisfaction variables ($r = .917$ $p < .01$), indicating potential multicollinearity within the sample. Consequently, results should be interpreted with caution. Bivariate correlates of multicultural competence (DV) were analyzed to assess correlations between cohort variables (IV) and multicultural training variables

(moderators). Pearson r correlations between variables and corresponding p values can be found in Table 3.

This study was designed to answer the following research questions: (1) To what extent do cohort characteristics predict multicultural awareness; and (2) To what extent do specific multicultural training variables (curricula, practica, professional development workshops, and research) influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

Table 3. Pearson correlations for predictor, outcome, and moderator variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. MEI-R	1.00								
Climate									
2. RSS Total	.572**	1.00							
3. PCS Total	.583**	.917**	1.00						
4. MCKAS	.012	.054	.015	1.00					
Awareness									
5. MC Training	.026	-.010	-.037	.180	1.00				
Total									
6. MC - Classes	.016	-.021	-.016	.083	.681**	1.00			
7. MC –	.075	.004	.043	.240**	.727**	.435**	1.00		
Research									
8. MC –	.015	-.085	-.136	.042	.844*	.494**	.520**	1.00	
Workshops									
9. MC –	.031	.086	.041	.096	.682**	.285**	.199*	.357**	1.00
Counseling									

Hypothesis 1: A linear combination of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and climate) will significantly predict perceived multicultural awareness.

Null Hypothesis 1: Cohesion, climate, and relational satisfaction, as measured by the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS), Climate and comfort subscale of the Multicultural Environment Inventory-Revised (MEI-R), and the Relational Satisfaction Scale (RCSS), respectively will not significantly predict multicultural awareness, as measured by the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS).

A multiple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the first research question which investigated the extent to which cohort variables significantly predict multicultural awareness. The predictor variables for the multiple regression analysis were climate, cohesion, and relational satisfaction and the criterion variable was multicultural awareness. The regression model using the aforementioned predictor variables did not significantly predict perceived multicultural awareness, $F(3, 108) = .421, p = .74$. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is retained. Additional information about this multiple regression analysis can be found in Table 4.4.

Hypothesis 2: After controlling for personal identity variables, multicultural training will significantly influence the relationship between cohort characteristics (cohesion, climate, and relational satisfaction) and multicultural awareness.

Null Hypothesis 2: The amount of change in the slope of the regression of the level of cohesion, climate, and relational satisfaction (predictor variables) on the level of multicultural awareness (criterion variable) that results from a unit of change in multicultural training (moderator variable) is not greater than what would be expected by chance.

Preliminary analyses revealed that there was no significant effect of social desirability on multicultural awareness, $F(2, 113) = 1.58, p = .211$. Thus, subsequent analyses did not include

social desirability. Similarly, preliminary findings did not reveal a significant effect of gender on multicultural awareness, after controlling for multicultural training, $F(1, 98) = .000, p = .994$. Additionally, the gender x race interaction did not indicate a significant effect on multicultural awareness after controlling for multicultural training, $F(2, 98) = .152, p = .860$. Thus, the subsequent analyses did not include participants' gender. However, results did reveal a significant effect of race on multicultural awareness after controlling for the effect of multicultural training, $F(5, 98) = 2.40, p = .043$. Consequently, subsequent hierarchical multiple regression analyses included participants' race.

A moderated multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis that multicultural training would influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. In the first step of the equation, race was entered. In the second step, cohort variables (cohesion, climate, relational satisfaction) were entered. In the third step, multicultural training (combined score of multicultural coursework, research projects, counseling sessions, and workshops) was entered. In the fourth step, the interaction terms (cohesion x training, climate x training, relational satisfaction x training) were entered.

Results of the moderated multiple regression analysis revealed no significant main effects (R^2 changeStep1 = .01; F change (1, 102) = 1.48, $p = .23$); (R^2 changeStep2 = .01; F change (4, 102) = .27, $p = .69$); (R^2 changeStep3 = .03; F change (5, 102) = 3.15, $p = .37$); or interaction (R^2 changeStep4 = .01; F change (8,102) = 3.02, $p = .08$). According to the value of the R^2 change statistic (.083), the interaction between the cohort variables (climate, cohesion, and relational satisfaction) and multicultural training only explains 8.3% of the variance in multicultural awareness over and above the percentage of variance explained by the cohort variables and multicultural training distinctly. Thus, the interaction between cohort variables (cohesion, climate, and relational

satisfaction) and multicultural training did not explain a statistically significant proportion of variance in multicultural awareness over and above what was explained by them separately, $F(7, 102) = 1.56, p = .16$. However, when entered in the fourth step, the cohesion by multicultural training interaction did reveal significant results, $t = -2.36, p = .02$. This significant interaction indicates that the effect of multicultural training on multicultural awareness is different for different values of cohesion.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis of cohesion, climate, relational satisfaction and multicultural awareness

Variable	B	SE (B)	B	T	P
PCS	-.254	.280	-.222	-.906	.367
MEI-R	-.023	.097	-.029	-.239	.811
RSS	.185	.166	.274	1.114	.268

R² = .012.

Table 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables predicting the MCKAS Awareness Subscale

Variable	B	SE (B)	β	T	P
Step 1					
Race	.764	.628	.120	1.218	.226
Step 2					
MEI-R	-.011	.103	-.013	-.104	.918
RSS	.150	.176	.220	.853	.391
PCS	-.253	.293	-.220	-.862	.391
Step 3					
MC Training	.433	.244	.177	1.776	.079
Step 4					
PCS x Training	-.268	.114	-.722	-2.357	.020*
MEI-R x Training	.042	.037	.136	1.123	.264
RSS x Training	.092	.063	.455	1.453	.150

Note. MEI-R = Multicultural Environment Inventory Revised; RSS = Relational Satisfaction Scale; PCS = Perceived Cohesion Scale; MC Training = total score of multicultural courses taken, research projects engaged, workshops attended, and counseling sessions conducted. Total R² = .14; **p*<.05, ***p*<.01.

Exploratory Analyses

Pearson r statistics revealed significant correlations between cohesion and relational satisfaction ($r = .917, p < .01$), and cohesion and climate ($r = .583, p < .01$). This suggests that participants who endorsed high levels of cohesion in their cohorts also endorsed high levels of relational satisfaction. Similarly, participants who endorsed high levels of cohesion in their cohorts also endorsed a greater degree of perceived safety in their training environment.

Correlation analyses also suggested significant relationships between training variables. Findings revealed significant correlations between the number of multicultural courses taken and the number of multicultural research projects engaged ($r = .435, p < .01$), the number of multicultural courses taken and the number of multicultural workshops attended ($r = .494, p < .01$), as well as the number of multicultural courses taken and the number of multicultural counseling sessions ($r = .285, p < .01$). Additionally, significant correlations were found between the number of multicultural research projects engaged and the number of multicultural workshops attended ($r = .520, p < .01$), as well as the number of multicultural research projects engaged and the number multicultural counseling sessions ($r = .199, p < .05$). The number of multicultural workshops attended was also significantly correlated with the number of multicultural counseling sessions engaged ($r = .357, p < .01$). Furthermore, a significant correlation was found between the number of multicultural research projects engaged and the outcome variable, multicultural awareness ($r = .240, p < .01$).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study sought to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of experiential interactions on multicultural competence by examining the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness. Accordingly, the study aims were to: (1) explore the effect of cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and environment) on multicultural awareness; and (2) examine the moderating effects of multicultural training on the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness.

Research questions guiding the study were: (1) To what extent do cohort characteristics (cohesion, relational satisfaction, and environment) predict multicultural awareness; and (2) To what extent does multicultural training – curricula, practica, workshops, and research - influence the relationship between cohort characteristics and multicultural awareness?

Descriptive analysis revealed that the sample included 115 counseling psychology doctoral students, ranging from age 18-64. The participant group included 95 females and 20 males. Participants self-identified as Black or African American (11.3%, $n = 13$), Hispanic American (4.3%, $n = 5$), Asian / Pacific Islander (8.7%, $n = 10$), White / Caucasian (73%, $n = 84$), Biracial (1.7%, $n = 2$) and Other (.9%, $n = 1$). The majority of the participants were seeking a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree (96.5%, $n = 111$), while the remaining participants indicated that they were seeking a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree (3.5%, $n = 4$). The majority of participants ($n = 68$) endorsed the use of a closed cohort model in their respective graduate programs.

Discussion

Results in this study did not indicate a significant association between social desirability bias and participants' self reported multicultural awareness. This finding is generally supported by the literature. Ponterotto and colleagues (2002) noted a significant negative relationship between social desirability and the MCKAS-Knowledge subscale. However, studies have also noted the lack of a significant relationship between social desirability and the MCKAS-Awareness subscale (Ponterotto et. al, 2002; Chao, 2006). There are additional factors which may have contributed to this finding. Compared to prior studies which noted a relationship between social desirability and multicultural competence, this study only measured the awareness domain of multicultural competence (Chao, 2006; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Worthington, Mobley, Franks, & Tan, 2000). Furthermore, the sample for the current study consisted of doctoral level graduate students in counseling psychology. Thus, it is possible that students at this level are familiar with measures aimed at eliciting social desirability bias and responded appropriately. The aforementioned factors may have contributed to the lack of significant findings between social desirability and multicultural awareness in the present study.

The first research question explored the relationship between cohort variables - cohesion, climate, and relational satisfaction – and multicultural awareness. Results indicated that a linear combination of the aforementioned cohort variables did not significantly predict multicultural awareness. This finding is unexpected given results from previous studies about group effectiveness which suggest that positive group processes (i.e. intragroup dynamics) contribute to the achievement of a specific goal or standard (i.e. multicultural competence) (Gladstein, 1984; Nibler & Harris, 2003; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). More specifically, Dickson & Jepsen (2007) found that program cultural ambience (i.e. climate) was a significant predictor of multicultural

competence. Similarly, Nibler & Harris (2003) found that group cohesion was a significant predictor of group performance. In the current study, preliminary analyses revealed a significant correlation between the cohesion and relational satisfaction variables which suggested issues of multicollinearity. Subsequently, the lack of variability between the aforementioned predictor variables may have contributed to the lack of significant findings related to the first research question.

The second research question explored the moderating effect of multicultural training (courses, clinical work, research, and professional development workshops) on the relationship between cohort variables and multicultural awareness after controlling for personal identity variables (gender and race). Preliminary findings did not reveal a significant effect of gender on multicultural awareness after controlling for multicultural training. Thus, the subsequent analyses did not include participants' gender. Preliminary analyses did reveal a significant effect of race on multicultural awareness after controlling for the effect of multicultural training. However, when entered into the hierarchical regression analyses, race was not determined to be a significant predictor of multicultural awareness.

Ultimately, personal identity variables (race and gender) were not shown to be significant predictors of multicultural awareness in the current study. It was interesting that the present research found no significant relationship between race and multicultural awareness; however this finding is supported by previous research which found similar results (Chao, 2006). The lack of significant results related to demographic variables may also be attributed to the lack of variability within the sample given that 83% of respondents were women and 72% of the sample identified as Caucasian American.

Results did not reveal significant main effects of the moderator (multicultural training) or predictor (cohesion, climate, and relational satisfaction) variables. However, results did reveal a

significant interaction of cohesion and multicultural training on multicultural awareness. While multicultural training when held constant did not prove to be a significant predictor of multicultural awareness, its interaction with cohesion did. The interaction indicates that the effect of multicultural training on multicultural awareness is different for different values of cohesion. This finding suggests that feelings of belonging and morale regarding cohort membership combined with participation in multicultural training activities can significantly contribute to a student's multicultural development and competence. Research suggests that the success of the cohort is directly related to the cohesiveness and collaborative nature of the group (Nimer, 2009). The assumption of the cohort model is that students will become better professionals as they support each other in their personal and professional efforts (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001). Thus, it might follow that the closeness of the cohort would promote openness and discussions about diversity which would ultimately contribute to increased multicultural awareness.

Exploratory analyses revealed significant associations between cohort variables and training variables. Correlational analyses revealed a significant relationship between cohesion and relational satisfaction. Accordingly, participants who endorsed high levels of cohesion in their cohorts also endorsed high levels of relational satisfaction. This could be attributed to the fact that the cohesion and relational satisfaction variables are so closely related such that, theoretically, a student who feels a sense of belonging to their cohort as well as positive morale will also endorse contentment with intra-group dynamics and vice versa. Results also revealed a significant relationship between cohesion and climate such that participants who endorsed high levels of cohesion in their cohorts also endorsed a greater degree of perceived safety in their

training environment. Ideally, students who feel safe and comfortable in the larger training environment would also feel safe and comfortable in their cohorts.

Correlational analyses also suggested significant relationships between training variables. Findings revealed significant correlations between multicultural courses taken and multicultural research projects engaged, multicultural courses taken and multicultural workshops attended, as well as multicultural courses taken and multicultural counseling sessions. Additionally, significant correlations were found between multicultural research projects engaged and multicultural workshops attended, as well as multicultural research projects engaged and multicultural counseling sessions. Multicultural workshops were also significantly correlated with multicultural counseling sessions. These results suggest that students who are invested in multicultural training (i.e. research) in one area are generally invested in other areas (i.e. practica, coursework) as well.

Results also revealed a significant correlation between multicultural research projects engaged and multicultural awareness. This indicates that participants who are involved in multicultural research report greater multicultural awareness. This finding provides important implications related to the importance of faculty encouraging and supporting the multicultural research efforts of students as it has been demonstrated to be significantly related to their multicultural awareness.

Implications

The findings in this study provide implications for graduate programs, faculty, and students. Although the cohort variables that were explored in the current study did not predict multicultural awareness, the literature suggests the significance of experiential activities such as exposure to diverse cultures through interactions with classmates as being instrumental in

positive attitude change related to diversity (Neville et al., 1996). When asked to rate the impact of various training experiences on their multicultural development, approximately fifty-six percent (56%) of the current sample reported that their personal life experiences (i.e. conversations about diversity with peers and others) have had the greatest impact on their multicultural development, followed by clinical practicum (29 %), didactic coursework (20%), and research (11%). These results echo findings from previous studies in which respondents noted that personal experiences with persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, didactic and experiential aspects of training, and experiences in multicultural training with peers from different cultural backgrounds were most beneficial to their multicultural development (Coleman, 2006). Similarly, Burnett, Hamel, and Long (2004) documented a positive relationship between peer interaction and increased self-awareness related to multicultural competence. These findings provide support for the use of experiential and interactive instruction for the purpose of multicultural training.

Although cohort variables and multicultural training were not found to be significant predictors of multicultural awareness independently, results did reveal a significant interaction of cohesion and multicultural training on multicultural awareness. The interaction suggests the significance of cohesion in cohorts related to positive outcomes. Scholars have noted that as students become familiar with their cohort members their conversations change in ways that promote a deeper level of analysis, exploration, and reflection on sensitive issues around multiculturalism and social justice (Maher, 2004). Similarly, Sapon-Shevin and Chandler-Olcott (2001) demonstrated that when students trust each other, they feel comfortable taking risks with their in-class interactions; however, when the trust is not present, students are less comfortable sharing their ideas and personal reactions for fear of judgment. Therefore, students and faculty

should be intentional about engaging in rapport and trust building activities (i.e. role playing, icebreakers, personal interviewing) early in the development of the cohort in order to promote trust and cohesion. Additionally, it is essential that faculty members are intentional about sharing and promoting a general understanding of the benefits of the cohort model (i.e. increased multicultural awareness and preparedness for acting as social change agents), prior to students' enrollment (Maher, 2004; Lewis, Ascher, Haynes, & Ieva, 2010; Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001).

Results from the current study provided information about cohort composition in counseling psychology doctoral programs as well as corresponding perceptions about multicultural competence within the cohort. Approximately eighteen percent (18.26%) of the sample reported that they did not consider their cohort to be multiculturally diverse. Likewise, eighteen percent (18.26%) of the sample indicated that they did not consider their cohort to be multiculturally competent. This finding suggests that a lack of cultural diversity in a cohort may contribute to a lack of multicultural competence in the cohort members. In order to create learning environments that foster learning and development, departments must be intentional about forming and structuring cohorts (McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008). Thus, in order to further the aim of promoting diversity, individual differences should be considered in the formation of cohorts.

Results demonstrated significant relationships between all four multicultural training variables (research, practica experiences, research, and workshops). These findings imply that students who are committed to multicultural efforts in one area of training are usually committed to multicultural efforts in additional areas of training. Thus, providing students with

opportunities to receive multicultural training in various areas (i.e. consultation, supervision, curriculum, etc.) could contribute significantly to their multicultural development.

Although causality could not be established, results from the current study also provided valuable information about the impact of multicultural training on multicultural awareness. Participation in multicultural research was found to be significantly associated with multicultural awareness. However, 83% of the sample reported engaging in only one or two multicultural research projects throughout their doctoral careers and 17% of the sample denied engaging in any multicultural research projects. This finding emphasizes the importance of multicultural research in the training curriculum and demonstrates the need for faculty members to encourage students to engage in multicultural research.

Limitations

The results of this study must be considered within the context of its limitations. This section discusses limitations related to recruitment efforts, data collection, and construct measurement. To begin, the recruitment method used in the study proved to be a limitation. An e-mail describing the study was distributed to APA accredited counseling psychology graduate programs across the country. Specifically, the survey invitation was e-mailed to training directors and/or program chairs of the aforementioned programs. Following dissemination of the aforementioned emails, the researcher received responses from several training directors indicating that they were unable to distribute the study to their students due to IRB guidelines at their respective universities. Accordingly, not all doctoral students in counseling psychology programs received an invitation to participate.

The use of internet surveys for the purpose of research has been demonstrated to be more effective and efficient than traditional means of data collection (Zhang, 2000). On the other hand, studies have also documented various limitations (i.e. access to internet, comfort with

internet survey format, response rates etc.) to using internet surveys as a method of data collection (Zhang, 2000; Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Hayslett & Wildemuth, 2004). The use of internet surveys in the current study may have proved to be a limitation.

More specifically, issues related to response rates and sampling bias may have affected the results of this study. Previous studies have reported that response rates from web-based surveys are not as high compared to response rates from traditional survey means (Hayslett & Wildemuth, 2004). Furthermore, studies have suggested concerns about internet surveys related to sampling bias. Zhang (2000) documented issues regarding self-selection. Accordingly, those respondents who participated in the current study may be significantly different than those who did not participate in the study. Consequently, the ability to generalize the results of this study is limited.

The overall goal of multicultural training is to produce well-rounded psychologists who are able to recognize their own assumptions and biases, knowledgeable about diverse cultural groups, and able to respond to culturally different clients in a manner that is both sensitive and appropriate (Coleman, Morris, & Norton, 2006). Due to the significance of multicultural competence in counseling psychology training programs, participants may have overly reported attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with the aforementioned training philosophy. Scholars have consistently documented limitations related to the use of self-report measures such that individuals tend to underreport on self-report measures in order to minimize negative appearance, impress the researcher, or evade negative consequences (Zhang, 2000).

Another possible issue potentially affecting the results of this study is related to social desirability bias. The assessment of multicultural competence has been consistently linked with concerns about social desirability bias. In an effort to account for socially desirable responding, a short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to identify the

extent to which individuals exhibit this bias. However, preliminary findings revealed that there was no significant effect of social desirability on multicultural awareness in the current study. This finding may reflect an emphasis on acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity in counseling psychology graduate programs as well as the keenness of psychology graduate students in detecting impression management measures as opposed to an actual absence of bias.

Although researchers have made significant strides in the assessment of multicultural competence, scholars have noted limitations of current instruments used to measure multicultural competence (Hays, 2008; Seghal et. al, 2011; Constantine & Ladany, 2000, Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Sue, 1996). The literature has noted that minimal psychometric data is available for current MCC assessment tools (Ponterotto et al., 1994; Hays, 2008). Furthermore, research findings have indicated differences between self-report scores and independent observer ratings of multicultural competence as well as differences between self-reported attitudes and actual behaviors related to multicultural competence suggesting that MCC instruments may actually be measuring multicultural self-efficacy (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008; Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Additionally, present multicultural competency assessment tools generally center on working with diverse racial and ethnic groups without addressing other areas of diversity such as religion, gender, and sexual orientation (Hays, 2008). Consequently, study results must be considered within the context of the aforementioned limitations related to the measurement of the awareness domain of multicultural competence.

The quantitative research design was a potential limitation in the current study. Researchers have suggested various limitations to using quantitative methods for the purpose of psychological research. Scholars have noted concerns such as problems with the operationalization and measurement of variables (Kelle, 2006) as well as the inability of

statistical analysis to provide meaningful theoretical interpretations (Gelo, Braakman, & Benetka, 2008). The quantitative research design used in the current study may not have adequately captured the unique experiences of participants. Similarly, the survey format may have limited participants' ability to explore and discuss the wide range of cohort and program dynamics that may affect multicultural development and competence.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused specifically on the current experiences of doctoral students in counseling psychology programs. It is recommended that future studies consider expanding the sample to include participants from graduate programs in other helping professions, including clinical and school psychology. Further examination of programmatic differences in multicultural training could provide important implications for both faculty and students. Future research should examine how the concept of multicultural competence is constructed in other helping professions.

Future research should consider expanding the study to include a qualitative component in order to provide a more in-depth analysis of the individual experiences of participants. Adding a qualitative component may provide additional information about the relationships between cohort dynamics, multicultural training, and multicultural competence. Using a mixed-methods approach could provide more insight into student perceptions' of the usefulness of the cohort model as a tool to promote multicultural development and multicultural competence. Likewise, longitudinal data should be explored to examine the extent to which cohort characteristics predict the trajectory of multicultural competence. Using longitudinal data could potentially increase the sample size and provide more powerful results about the impact of training variables and group dynamics on multicultural development over time.

The use of self-report measures in the current study may have proved to be a limitation. Self-report scales were used with the notion that the social desirability scale would account for confounding factors related to impression management. Nonetheless, these reports were participants' perceptions of actual behaviors and could be less reliable than reports of their actual beliefs and behaviors. Future studies should attempt to incorporate the responses of multiple informants (supervisors, teachers, and peers) to provide a more accurate depiction of the observed phenomenon.

Additionally, further examination of demographic variables (age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc.) as predictors of multicultural competence is warranted. Similarly, future research could also explore the effect of the intersection of the aforementioned demographic variables as well as the demographic variables observed in the present study in an effort to further explore individual differences related to the effect of cohort dynamics on multicultural competence.

For the purpose of this study, multicultural awareness, as measured by the awareness subscale of the MCKAS, was used as the outcome variable. Prior studies have documented coefficient alphas that range from .75 to .85 for the awareness subscale with psychology trainee samples (Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Riger, & Austin, 2002) indicating acceptable psychometric properties of scale reliability. The current study noted similar results in this sample: $\alpha = .72$. However, it is suggested that future research consider using a measure of multicultural competence that has demonstrated stronger properties of reliability and validity. Moreover, it is recommended that future studies consider measuring additional domains of multicultural competence (i.e. knowledge and skills) in order to provide a

more complete picture of the impact of multicultural training and group dynamics on multicultural competence.

This study is the first one in multicultural research to include cohort variables as a predictor of multicultural competence. Future studies should consider exploring additional cohort variables that may potentially impact multicultural competence. Previous literature on group dynamics suggests the significance of several factors (in addition to group process) such as group composition and structure in predicting effectiveness (Gladstein, 1984; Knouse & Dansby, 1999). Future research could benefit from exploring additional cohort characteristics such as group composition (i.e. demographic composition) and structure (i.e. organization, roles) that have the potential of impacting group dynamics and predicting multicultural competence. Further examination of the impact of cohort structure (open vs. closed vs. fluid) on multicultural outcomes is also warranted.

Conclusion

The field of counseling psychology has been at the helm of the movement to incorporate issues of diversity into training (McRae & Johnson, 1991; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Vera & Speight, 2003; Coleman, 2006). The Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs (2006) noted that “training communities are enriched by members’ openness to learning about others who are different from them . . . both trainers and trainees are expected to demonstrate a willingness to examine their personal values . . .” (p. 643). The current study reflects the aforementioned core values of counseling psychology related to the commitment to exploring issues of diversity and social change in graduate training programs (Packard, 2009; Nicholas & Stern, 2011).

The researcher’s personal experiences as a member of a student cohort as well as a desire to impact the current status of multiculturalism in graduate training led to the development of the

present study. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of cohort characteristics and multicultural training on multicultural awareness. The findings of this study provided previously unknown information about the usefulness of the cohort model in graduate training programs and also provided multiple areas for further research. Results from the current study represent an important step in identifying critical interventions that promote the development of multicultural competence among counseling psychology trainees.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

Welcome to “**An exploration of cohort dynamics and multicultural competence,**” a web-based survey designed to examine the effect of various cohort characteristics on the multicultural awareness of doctoral students in the helping professions. Before taking part in this study, please read the consent form below and click on the "I Agree" button at the bottom of the page if you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in the study.

Informed Consent

Investigator Identification: This research study is being conducted by Krystal L. Meares, M.A. a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at the University of Georgia, under the supervision of Edward Delgado-Romero, Ph.D.

Study Description: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of cohort characteristics on multicultural competence. The survey will consist of a series of questionnaires about cohort experiences and multicultural training as well as questions asking your demographic information and will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. You will be able to save your answers as you work. Participation is strictly voluntary and you can terminate the survey at any time. To thank you for your time and effort, the email address that you provide (if you wish to do so) will be entered into a drawing to receive an Amazon.com gift card valued at \$25. If you do not wish to participate in the research study but would like to enter the drawing, you can send the researchers an email requesting entry. If you win, you will receive an electronic gift card via the email address that you provide.

Possible Risks and Benefits: Although there are no direct benefits to this study, the study contributes to our current understanding of student cohorts and factors that aid in the development of multicultural competence. This study provides no more than minimal risk of discomfort, stress or harm to you, although some participants may feel uncomfortable answering questions about their cohort experiences.

Participant Information: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also choose to not answer any question(s) that you do not wish to, for any reason. The information that you provide will be confidential. Your name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaires. All demographic information will be combined with other participants' information, so no individual responses will be reported.

On-Line Data Collection: Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. Once the information is received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. The researchers will strip all data files of the IP addresses as soon as the data is downloaded to the researchers' computer. The email addresses submitted for participation in the prize-drawing will not be associated with survey responses in any way. Once information is submitted at the end of the survey, the researchers will not be able to remove or delete the information from the research record. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the Institutional Review Board and University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Questions or Concerns: In the event that you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Krystal Meares at kmear@uga.edu or 305-788-0604 or contact Dr. Edward

Delgado-Romero at edelgado@uga.edu or 706-542-0500. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators, or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail address IRB@uga.edu.

Electronic Consent: Please indicate your choice below. Clicking on the “continue to the next page” button below indicates that you have read and understand the terms of this study and thus voluntarily agree to participate. If you do NOT wish to participate in the study, please decline participation by closing the window.

APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

My name is Krystal Meares and I am a doctoral candidate in the counseling psychology program at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research study, under the supervision of Dr. Edward Delgado-Romero, for my dissertation that will examine the effects of cohort characteristics on multicultural competence.

Current doctoral students in counseling psychology whose current graduate programs employ the use of a cohort model are invited to participate in this study. To participate in the survey click the appropriate link below. You will be redirected to a confidential online survey. In compensation for your participation in this study, you have the option of entering a drawing in which each participant has equal chance of receiving an Amazon.com gift card valued at \$25.00 each. The gift cards will be electronically sent to your e-mail address which you will have the opportunity to submit once you have given informed consent to participant in the research study. Your e-mail address will not be linked to your survey results at any time. If you do not wish to participate in the research study but would like to enter the drawing, you can send the researchers an e-mail requesting entry.

Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. Once the information is received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. Your participation in this study WILL NOT require the disclosure of identifiers such as name, date of birth, address, or citizenship status. The maximum time needed to complete the entire survey is approximately twenty-five minutes. This includes completing a few measures and a short demographic questionnaire.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Georgia (IRB #2013-10633-0). If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to email me at kmeares@uga.edu or Dr. Edward Delgado-Romero at edelgado@uga.edu. Thank you in advance for your participation.

For access to the survey please copy and paste the following link in your web browser:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QS77SNC>

If you do not want to participate in this survey please decline participation by closing email.

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Race/Ethnicity:
4. Name of School:
5. Current year in academic program:
6. Expected degree:
 - A. Ph.D.
 - B. Psy.D.
7. Which of these training experiences has had the greatest impact on your multicultural development?
 - A. didactic coursework
 - B. research
 - C. clinical practicum
 - D. personal experiences
 - E. other (please specify) _____
8. For the purpose of this question, the term ‘multicultural’ refers to the broad scope of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions” Please indicate the number of:

a. Multicultural classes taken:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
b. Multicultural research projects engaged:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
c. Multicultural workshops participated/conducted:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
d. Sessions with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
9. How long have you been a member of your cohort (in years)?
10. Which of the following describes the structure of the cohort model used in your current academic program?
 - A. Closed: one-entry point and lockstep (sequential) coursework
 - B. Open: multiple entry points and variability in coursework sequence
 - C. Fluid: multiple entry points and coursework based on individual needs
11. Do you consider your cohort to be culturally diverse?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
12. Do you consider your cohort to be multiculturally competent?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

APPENDIX E
 Multicultural Environment Inventory-Revised
 Climate and Comfort Subscale
 Pope-Davis, D. B., Liu, W. M., Nevitt, J., & Toporek, R. L., (2000)

Instructions: Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as reflective of the climate in your cohort.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. There is a place I can go to feel safe and valued.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I generally feel supported.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I feel my comments are valued in classes.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The environment makes me feel comfortable and valued.	5	4	3	2	1
5. There are faculty with whom I feel comfortable discussing social and political issues and concerns.	5	4	3	2	1
6. There are various methods used to evaluate student performance and learning.	5	4	3	2	1
7. The faculty are making efforts to understand my point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I feel comfortable discussing social and political concerns in supervision.	5	4	3	2	1

9. I feel comfortable with the cultural environment in class.	5	4	3	2	1
10. There is a diversity of teaching strategies and procedures employed in the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
11. There is a demonstrated commitment of recruiting students and faculty from minority cultural groups.	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX F
 Perceived Cohesion Scale
 Bollen, K. A., & Hoyle, R. H. (1990)

Instructions: The following questions are designed to elicit your opinion about your experiences as a member of a specific group. When you are answering the questions, please consider your reactions toward your experience as a whole and not about isolated incidents. For each of the following items, circle the number on the scale that most nearly expresses your level of agreement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel a sense of belonging to this cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
I am happy to be a part of this cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
I see myself as part of this cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
This cohort is one of the best anywhere.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel that I am a member of this cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
I am content to be part of this cohort.	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX G
 Relational Satisfaction Scale
 Anderson, Martin, & Riddle (2001)

Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings about your group membership, using the 5-point scale below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The cohort members spend time getting to know each other.	5	4	3	2	1
The members make me feel a part of the cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
I look forward to cohort meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
I do not feel part of the cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
The members make me feel liked.	5	4	3	2	1
My absence would not matter to the cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
I can trust cohort members.	5	4	3	2	1
We can say anything in this cohort without worrying.	5	4	3	2	1
I prefer not to spend time with members of the cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
The members make me feel involved in the cohort.	5	4	3	2	1
Some of the cohort members could become my friends.	5	4	3	2	1

The cohort atmosphere is comfortable.

5

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APPENDIX H

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Reynolds Short Form Reynolds & Gerbasi (1982)

Instructions: Please indicate your response to the following questions by indicating true or false.

	True	False
It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.	T	F
I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	T	F
No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	T	F
There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	T	F
I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.	T	F
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.	T	F
I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	T	F
I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	T	F
There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	T	F
I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.	T	F
I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	T	F