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Counsellor and Supervisor Views of Multicultural and Social Justice Education*

Counsellors and practicum supervisors reflected on their professional education preparation, and sometimes lack of preparation, for engagement in multicultural counselling and social justice activities. They highlighted the need for increased emphasis on applied experiences, both within and outside the classroom; the translation of theory into practice; a broader, systemic conceptualisation of client experiences and professional practice roles; and specific skills training for social justice action and advocacy. Implications for counsellor education are highlighted.

Key words: social justice, multicultural counselling, counsellor education

In the last two decades, there has been an increased recognition of the importance of multicultural counselling and social justice in the practices of counsellors and counselling psychologists. Researchers and theorists argued for a move beyond the focus on the individual to a broader understanding of the contexts and systems that influence clients' lives (Greenleaf, Williams, 2009; Hage, Kenny, 2009; Vera, Speight, 2003). Clients' presenting concerns can only be fully understood through attending to clients' cultural identities, and effective and relevant change processes can only be implemented by examining both barriers to resources and services and experiences of socio-cultural oppression (Arthur, Collins, 2010).

At the same time, a number of frameworks for multicultural counselling competency have emerged to prepare counsellors to work with diverse clientele in a way that fully attends to the complex contexts of their lives (Arredondo et al.,

* Preparation of this manuscript was partially funded by a Standard Research Grant awarded to Arthur and Collins from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1996; American Psychological Association [APA], 2002; Collins, Arthur, 2010a). With the evolution of the constructs of multicultural counselling and social justice, these conceptual frameworks have shifted towards a more inclusive definition of culture (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, and social class), a broader appreciation of the systemic influences on clients' lives, and a more direct focus on the roles and responsibilities of practitioners to effect change at the systemic level (Collins, Arthur, 2010a, 2010b).

In response, graduate programmes in counselling and counselling psychology have added multicultural counselling and, in some cases, social justice as central foci in the development of competency for professional practice (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, Bryant, 2007; Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, Hof, 2008). However, less attention has been given to how to most effectively foster students' development of a social justice consciousness and prepare them for engagement with the systems that influence clients' lives (Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, Mason, 2009). The focus has primarily been on the content of graduate curriculum, rather than on the learning processes that are most effective (Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, Montoya, 2006). This raises the question of how well counsellor educators are preparing practitioners for the complex and multifaceted roles and applied practice skills required to operationalise their multicultural and social justice consciousness (Miville et al., 2009).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the perspectives of counsellors and practicum supervisors on their educational preparedness for engagement in multicultural counselling and social justice action with their clients. We were interested in the positive learning experiences that stood out as facilitators of competency development, as well as the challenges they encountered, both as part of graduate education and in their engagement in professional practice.

Methodology

The critical incident technique (CIT) has been expanded for contemporary research in a variety of contexts (Arthur, 2001; Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, Maglio, 2005). For example, CIT has been used to examine reflective practice in graduate education (Wong-Wylie, 2007) and to explore beginning counsellors' perceptions of their professional identity (Howard, Inman, Altman, 2006). We have previously used the CIT to investigate the social justice competencies of career development practitioners (Arthur, Collins, Marshall, McMahon, 2013; Arthur, Collins, McMahon, Marshall, 2009). Caldwell and Vera (2010) used CIs from doctoral students and counsellors to explore application of a social justice orientation to practice. This study was part of a larger research project aimed at exploring the efficacy of graduate education for multicultural and social justice competency. Data was collected through an online survey, a portion of which solicited both a positive and

a less positive critical incident (CI) in response to the following general prompts: (a) Reflect on your professional education and describe a meaningful event that supported the development of your competence for multicultural counselling and social justice; and (b) Reflect on how you might have been better prepared to address multicultural and social justice issues in counselling and/or supervision roles, and describe a meaningful event that hindered or created a barrier in the development of your competence for multicultural counselling and social justice. A series of sub-questions provided additional guidance for the participants' responses. For each CI, respondents focused on clients or client-supervisee interactions involving cultural differences based on ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, religion, and/or ability.

Two participant groups are included in the current paper: counsellors and practicum supervisors. The data from students are reported elsewhere (Collins, Arthur, Brown, Kennedy, 2013). Twenty-five practicum supervisors, associated with the counselling psychology programmes at the researchers' academic institutions in Canada, responded to the survey; 15 provided CIs. Sixty eight percent of the supervisors resided in Alberta; 12% in British Columbia, 8% in Quebec, and the rest across the country. Thirty-three percent were 50 to 59 years of age; 29% were 40 to 49; 17% were 60 to 69; and the rest were younger. Seventy-two percent were female, and 92% were Caucasian. Counsellors were invited to participate through the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association and provincial counselling associations. Forty-eight counsellors responded, with 29 providing CIs. The counsellors were more widely dispersed: 43% Alberta, 23% Ontario, 15% British Columbia, and the rest were distributed over remaining provinces and territories. Thirty-three percent of counsellors were also aged 50 to 59; however, the next largest group was 30 to 39 (25%), followed by 29 or less and 40 to 49 (both at 17%), making this group younger overall than the practicum supervisors. Seventy-five percent were female, and 98% were Caucasian. The majority of both counsellors and supervisors had a Master's degree (70% and 80% respectively) and the rest had a doctoral degree.

Data from the CIs was analysed using NVivo software to isolate, cluster, and relate emergent concepts. Each transcript was segmented into single ideas, but coded according to the context of the statement to preserve meaning. For instance, a statement such as, "allowed me to explore my own feelings and thoughts that could affect a multicultural counselling relationship" was contextualised by the specific prompt it followed or the previous statement of that participant. Each of the CIs was first broken down according to the nature of the learning process identified (e.g., a specific learning activity or an applied practice experience). Then the impact of that learning process was analyzed. We applied a critical lens to the interpretation of participants' experiences, taking into account influences of power structures within society, education, and the profession, and exploring both overt and covert meanings (Fox, Prilleltensky, Austin, 2009). Rigor was established by concurrent

coding of transcript data by multiple researchers. In addition, the researchers engaged in the process of reflexivity to increase trustworthiness by discussing how their values, assumptions, and biases relating to the research activities were potentially bearing on the coding decisions (Fox et al., 2009).

Results and Discussion

Three main domains arose from the analysis of respondents' insights into the development of multicultural counselling and social justice competency: (a) Competencies facilitated, which reflected the learning outcomes from the CIs; (b) barriers encountered, including personal, interpersonal, or contextual factors that posed challenges to competency development; and (c) gaps identified, focused on additional competencies participants wished they had acquired through their education or suggestions for modifying learning processes. Within each of these domains, broad constructs were identified, and then more specific examples of those constructs were clustered. It is clear that counsellors and practicum supervisors have developed competencies for multicultural counselling and social justice, based on learning experiences within and beyond their graduate education. However, they have also encountered barriers and identified gaps in both the content of their learning (competencies) and the learning processes (both education and work). Each domain will be explored in the following sections.

Competencies Facilitated

As we explore the broad constructs, excerpts from respondents' CIs are used to support the themes in each area: they are identified by P for practicum supervisors and C for counsellors.

Awareness of culture – self and others. For both groups, the most frequently referenced competency construct was *awareness of others' culture*, with specific examples in three areas: (a) awareness of diverse client cultures – “I have never forgotten the importance of understanding someone's experience from their own individual perspective” – P; (b) awareness of injustice and oppression – “I learned about the power relations that exist in society, and how some cultures are privileged over others” – C; and (c) awareness of systemic influences, often tied to cultural identity(ies) – “these courses opened my eyes to the inequality that exists in our society. It put a name to the phenomena, and explained how it operates” – C. Both groups also developed *self-awareness* in three specific areas: (a) their own privilege and biases –

I had never thought much at all about what it meant to be a feminist or what it meant to be born with the colour of skin, gender, sexual orientation, and social status... was eye-opening and heartbreaking at the same time: I had to face some ugly truths about privileges and injustices woven into my life – C;

(b) personal culture and cultural identity(ies) – “it helped me understand and be more conscious of my own values and thus trying to not impose them on others” – P; and (c) the boundaries of their competence to engage in multicultural counselling and social justice – “also about my internal and external barriers to practicing this paradigm to the level I would like to” – C. Fewer examples were identified for boundaries of competence than for other areas.

Awareness of culture, both one’s own and that of clients, has become a central focus in the multicultural literature and is common to most models of competency development (Arredondo et al., 1996; Collins, Arthur, 2010a; Sue et al., 1998). Counsellors and supervisors in this study recognised the inseparability of cultural self-awareness from a true appreciation of the culture of others: “Since I have an awareness of where I am coming from, I am cognisant of what I’m comparing clients’ values/experiences to” – P and “I cannot separate my cultural identity and ‘self’ from the counselling process” – C. The literature supports this overall finding that counsellor education programmes do relatively well in supporting increased awareness of culture and cultural identities (Cates, Schaeffe, 2009; Pieterse, 2009). Supervisors highlighted one or two specific activities, group processes, or instructional strategies that had a negative impact on competency development. For counsellors, specific learning activities consistently contributed to competency development, along with each of the other CI learning processes.

Culturally sensitive client-counsellor relationship. Another broad construct was competency in developing a *culturally sensitive client-counsellor relationship*. Both counsellors and supervisors supported the following specific elements, in order of frequency: (a) acceptance of and respect for difference – “we then need to develop an approach to working with difference based on respect, non-judgmental attitudes, and a desire to understand cultural differences, and to learn about them from the people we serve” – P; (b) building trusting and collaborative relationships – “clients and supervisees describe their experiences more specifically, with examples, and the conversation becomes more personal, bidirectionally” – C; (c) inquiring about client or supervisee culture – “if as counsellors we assume that we know what is important for our clients without asking, we can go very wrong, almost making people ‘invisible’” – P; and (d), to a lesser degree, understanding power differentials – “the experience was a reminder to not become complacent about how power dynamics work in counselling across social identities” – C. Counsellors added the element of inquiring about the context(s) of client/student experiences: “I came to understand the dynamic and interactive exchange between the individual and her social context and gained insights into how individuals actively negotiate their circumstances” – C.

Creating a culturally responsive relationship between counsellor and client is foundational to competent practice. For this reason, Collins and Arthur (2010a; 2010b) centralise the working alliance as the third core domain of competency in their *culture-infused counselling* model. Interestingly, for counsellors, instructor

approaches/perspectives were not linked to their interpersonal competency development in this area, although this may simply be a reflection of the specific learning processes they chose to highlight in their CIs.

Broadening of perspectives on profession and roles. Counsellors and practicum supervisors both connected their CIs to a *broadening of perspectives*, although the relative weight on specific elements of this concept differed. Supervisors most frequently emphasised culture as a foundation for all counselling, noting – “I’ve learned to respond differently now when I’m described as ‘a counsellor who works with diversity.’ Aren’t we all diverse or multicultural? Don’t we all... work with diversity or multiculturalism?” and “I now work with individuals as a whole quite differently than when I first starting practicing. I see them in a larger context.” Counsellors, on the other hand, provided more examples to support social justice as a part of the counsellor role: “I have realised that it is my duty to involve myself in social justice activities. I really want to ‘walk the talk.’” Both groups also emphasised the need for critical reflection on traditional approaches to counselling theory and practice. These insights resulted from their analysis of their own learning experiences, which “reinforced a white, middle class approach to counselling as the best practise” – C. “By presenting things from a mainstream perspective, it doesn’t allow for students to become critically aware of their own cultural and social milieu” – P. One counsellor concluded: “The whole nature of ‘helping’ needs to be carefully and clearly looked at and discussed.” Given the age distribution, many respondents likely completed their training at a time when more traditional approaches were the norm. Their experiences mirror the transition within the counselling psychology profession to a broader conceptualisation of practice roles and responsibilities and the integration of a social justice consciousness (Greenleaf, Williams, 2009; Hage, Kenny, 2009).

Culturally sensitive counselling process. It is interesting that only the practicum supervisors specifically noted competency in a culturally sensitive counselling process. Perhaps they were more focused, in their supervision role, on the various elements noted: (a) culturally inclusive case conceptualisation – “become more understanding of the various dynamics within the presenting symptoms in the psychological assessment and treatment;” (b) culturally sensitive assessment – “it allowed me to be mindful of my non-verbals and interactions during the assessment phase – so I could determine how large a role culture may play;” and (c) consciousness-raising with clients –

... learning how to help clients see how they are influenced by assumptions they might not agree with... for example, there are lots of assumptions about gender, and how we ‘should’ behave according to gender. Some of those assumptions ... may in fact not be the ones they prefer, but more so societal influences, family, customs, etc.

The lack of examples in this area by counsellors suggests that these various elements of the counselling process may not be receiving adequate focus in counsellor education programmes. There is considerable evidence that the development of cultural awareness and the counsellor-client relationship are privileged in many programmes (Alberta, Wood, 2009; Pieterse et al., 2009; Ratts, Hutchkins, 2009). Other components of the counselling process tend to be parcelled out into courses on assessment and interventions, for example, which may not include a strong focus on multicultural and social justice issues and practice principles.

Professional self-management. Counsellors alone identified the construct of *professional self-management*, focusing on: (a) commitment to continued competency –

... it only scratched the surface and I have to continue to seek out opportunities to learn and grow so that I may check assumptions and challenge my belief systems... I'm grateful for the foundation of my programme so that I can at least... know what I don't know and have a way of checking in on myself;

and (b) resiliency and responsibility for their own learning – “it made me realise that I held responsibility for my own education.” Both the *counselling process* for supervisors and *professional self-management* for counsellors were linked only to their single graduate course in multicultural counselling and their applied practice experiences.

Social justice action. *Social justice action* was evidenced less frequently in the CI analyses for both groups. Learning was tied to a single graduate course and applied practice experiences; supervisors also credited personal reading, reflection, and research. Both groups most frequently noted the specific element of advocacy at the systemic level. Framing their responses in terms of the American Counseling Association advocacy competencies, they provided examples for both “advocacy with” and “advocacy on behalf of” (Ratts, Hutchkins, 2009, p. 270) students/clients to impact the systems that negatively influenced their lives: “...worked with him on... ways in which he wanted to deal with the situation (including, had he wanted it, more involvement on my part, such as talking with agency staff to coordinate a meeting or something like that)” – P and “feeling empowered by engaging in activism encouraged me to perform activism on behalf of clients and oppressed groups, even though I might not have any clients from that marginalised group” – C. The other two elements of social just action, for both groups, were empowerment of clients – “in individual treatment it is about empowering our clients” – P; “we can work with a client's cultural groups to help them achieve empowerment” – C; and consciousness-raising of others – “if most Canadians were truly aware of what's going on, they wouldn't stand for it. Spreading awareness is the first step” – C.

The relatively low number of responses related to social justice action reflected the stronger focus for both groups on multicultural awareness and responsiveness within the context of individual, family, or group counselling. There was less

evidence that learning experiences resulted in competency for social justice action, particularly as it extends to activities beyond direct client intervention. This observation is in keeping with the literature (Alberta, Wood, 2009; Cates, Schaeffle, 2009; Pieterse, 2009; Pieterse et al., 2009; Ratts, Hutchkins, 2009). Santiago-Rivera, Talka, and Tully (2006) pointed to the insufficiency of micro-level interventions for problems derived from contextual or systemic factors. A shift in teaching focus, or at least additional skills training related to social justice roles and actions, is required to more fully meet client needs. In the next section, we identify links between competencies facilitated and gaps in both learning content and process. The need for increased focus on social justice action is reinforced.

Gaps Identified

Under the domain of *gaps identified*, three main constructs emerged: the need for increased competency in particular content areas and the need for changes to learning processes to undergird this competency development, within both graduate education programmes and work contexts. We begin with a review of what respondents identified as gaps in their *competencies*, because these potential deficits in learning flow logically from the competency discussion above.

Competency gaps. Both groups noted less competency for social justice action in the discussion above. As expected, social justice applied practice skills were most frequently identified as competency gaps by counsellors; however, practicum supervisors did not identify gaps in this area. This may simply be a reflection of the smaller sample size for supervisors and the particular focus of their CIs. The counsellors noted: “It would help to ... know... what to do to diminish inequalities. Sounds silly but what happens is a new question,” and requested “explicit instruction on applying and implementing social justice advocacy.” The call for applied practice skills training resonates with other literature (Alberta, Wood, 2009; Pieterse et al., 2009).

Supervisors provided the most examples related to competency in understanding the culture of others; counsellors identified this second to social justice applied practice skills. “It would have been beneficial to have background on some of the cultures I was working with and their experiences from their home country” – P; “I still have a lack of knowledge of other cultures and religions... the focus often seems to be on First Nations, but there are many others that I don’t know about” – C. Counsellors placed particular emphasis on the need for awareness related to “religious values and practices.” Understanding and appreciation of religious diversity is an emergent area in the multicultural and social justice literature, identified in other studies as a missing or neglected part of counsellor education (Vera, 2009). The next most frequently cited content (competency) gap for counsellors was awareness of systemic influences, which ties logically to their call for

social justice applied practice skills above. They noted a need for “a framework of social consciousness and how power and difference work within our multicultural and diverse society,” and for understanding of the “social determinants of health.” Interestingly, as with the social justice applied practice skills above, supervisors did not identify gaps in this area. Instead, they identified self-awareness, particularly of privilege and biases. In their CI reflections, supervisors primarily provided examples of their own competencies and needs; however, the examples here focused on observations of student/supervisee self-awareness and accountability – “I would want to see coursework assisting students in identifying their biases” or:

I think that one of the most important things to learn would be the awareness of how we make assumptions about others. Making assumptions about others isn't what is problematic – assumptions can be quite helpful, but when those assumptions are taken for granted and not checked with the person in front of you, then it becomes a problem.

This shift in perspective may explain some of the differences between counsellors and supervisors in this section. Counsellors alone noted understanding of power differentials – “discussion of power and the therapy session,” specifically “power differentials and perception,” and the importance of “equality between the counsellor and the client.”

The competency gaps for both counsellors and practicum supervisors were linked to CIs from both their graduate course and applied practice experience; the discussion above reflects these two key areas. For counsellors, instructor approaches and perspectives also contributed to perceived competency gaps.

Although both counsellors and practicum supervisors identified areas in which they possessed competencies for multicultural counselling and social justice, they were aware of other areas in which they were less well prepared for the challenges of professional practice. In most cases, particularly for counsellors, the examples provided focused on systemic factors, both as contexts or causal factors in client problems and as targets for change. This theme runs through the study and reflects the current literature. A shift in focus is required away from the individual client to the contextual and systemic factors that contribute to problem development and mitigate problem resolution, which will necessitate changes in the way in which education of counsellors occurs (Constantine et al., 2007).

Education process gaps. In addition to curriculum content gaps, both counsellors and practicum supervisors noted the need for substantive changes to learning processes within counsellor education programmes. Both groups called for a strong conceptual foundation for multicultural counselling and social justice and an integration of these themes across all courses. In keeping with earlier observations, they advocated for a shift of perspective from the intrapsychic to the social-contextual. Particular emphasis was placed on “critical consciousness” and the lens of “critical theory” as a means of “challenging mainstream perspectives and research,

and work with differences in gender, race, sexual orientation, class etc. within their work setting in a more a just, open, and empowering way.” A critical psychology framework facilitates analysis of how the counsellor and the client construe reality, as well as examination of the broader sociocultural factors impacting their experiences and perspectives (Fox et al., 2009; Durham, Glossoff, 2010). Both the shift in focus to a more systemic perspective and the application of a critical lens to theory and practice are likely most effective if supported by the programme-level infusion these counsellors and practitioners also called for: “If it had been incorporated into the whole of the master’s programme, I likely would have found it to be more meaningful” – C; “really promote the integration of multi-cultural and social justice competencies/understanding across all coursework” – C; for example, “I can see how my stats course could have integrated issues of culture and social justice more fully in the course content. ‘Limitations of studies’ does not do justice to the issues” – P.

Both groups most frequently noted specific learning activities that could enhance the learning process. Where they differed, however, was in the nature of these proposed learning activities. Supervisors focused on ways to improve traditional delivery models through interaction, role-play, case examples, and guest speakers. In keeping with their social justice focus in the previous section, counsellors focused on getting students out of the classroom or online environment to connect with community agencies, practitioners, or members of various cultural groups and to participate in social justice activities through volunteering, engaging in advocacy, or attending a political rally. Their emphasis was on the application of learning in the real world. This may explain why there was no link in the concept map between the specific learning activities CI and education processes for counsellors. We limited the definition of specific learning activities in our coding to course-based activities. Only this CI was not tied to gaps in education processes.

Both supervisors and counsellors wanted an increase in overall learning opportunities related to multicultural counselling and social justice. For many of the more experienced practitioners, there was no such training when they completed their graduate programmes: “There was no coursework or discussion around multiculturalism or social justice in my master’s programme” – C; “Multiculturalism and social justice was not really acknowledged at the time of my training” – P; “I would hope that there is much more focus now than there was then on developing attitudes, knowledge or skills regarding working with minority clients and appropriately addressing their needs” – P; and “Perhaps if there was already more content on social justice then I could have had a better base to start from” – C. Both groups agreed that more applied practice experience was essential: “More placement opportunities in various diverse cultural settings” – P; or “Practicum placements in community agencies that emphasise social justice interventions” – C. They contrasted book learning and applied practice: “I think that we need to engage fully in experiences which help us understand others at a deeper level, and this does

not occur through reading some book on cultural differences” – C. One participant noted how learning could be more directly connected to advocacy experience:

... book knowledge provides very little except for a foundation for just getting out there and practicing. Wouldn't it be great if our practicum experiences included something on advocacy and social justice? We could actually participate in improving the state of mental health in our communities and – dare I say – work ourselves out of a job! – P.

These exemplars showed considerable support for the current call for more applied practice experience to build mastery of these complex competencies (Burnes & Singh, 2010; Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011; West-Olatunji, 2010).

Work process gaps. Although less of a focus, both counsellors and practicum supervisors also noted ways in which their learning could be improved within work environments. The frequency of the various concepts varied across groups. Supervisors emphasised more professional development opportunities, noting the “lack of formal training in multicultural or social justice issues across staff complement.” Counsellors placed greater weight on increased collegial support and collaboration: “The only way I can think of to address that is to get out there and do the work with others that have been entrenched for a while, and also can provide social support.” For counsellors, but not supervisors, workplace leadership was also noted: “Those in power need to understand what's going on.” Although not specifically the focus of this study, these insights into potential learning processes in work contexts provide possibilities for future research. The literature calls for an extension of multicultural and social justice training to ongoing clinical training within organisations (Park-Taylor et al., 2009). Parra-Cardone, Holtrop, and Cordova (2005) warn that social justice commitment may wane over time without a professional context that supports continued competency development.

Barriers Encountered

One of the important elements that emerged was identification of barriers to competency development that are important to address if we want to enhance learning opportunities and outcomes. There is, once again, some mirroring of ideas raised in earlier sections of this paper.

Lack of support. Both counsellors and practicum supervisors most frequently highlighted lack of support as a barrier. In their learning experiences, multicultural counselling and social justice were not viewed as central to their work and roles: “Every example of context was systematically countered through ‘empirically-validated’ justification for personalising and pathologising” – C; “we were taught to help the individual client with, for example, a racist supervisor, but not taught that we had any role within an organisation or society to address the supervisor, or

society” – C. In addition, the multicultural and social justice principles were not modelled in practice. In some cases, this inconsistency was evident in respondents’ instruction and course content: “I did not receive the same respect for difference that I was being taught is essential for a good counsellor. I found this to contradict the purpose of multicultural counselling. I found this hard to accept and understand.” – C. In other cases, they reflected on the lack of modelling in their practicum experiences: “Supervisors need to be educated, somehow, on this topic” – P; “I wanted to explore it further, but it seemed to be stopped in its tracks. I didn’t get much in-vivo supervision/leadership” – P. For some, these barriers continued into their current work contexts: “I feel like an agent for a system that is culturally biased and dare I say, racist” – C; “sometimes unable to work with certain staff due to their rigid beliefs” – P. Durham and Glossoff (2010) and Singh et al. (2010) recommended that educators renew attention to modelling multicultural and social justice principles in interactions with students.

Lack of personal agency. Counsellors also provided multiple examples of a lack of personal agency as a significant barrier. Most significant was a lack of confidence, which resonates with earlier comments about gaps in their sense of competency:

This part is harder – I feel self consciously under-qualified to speak as a “multiculturally aware” counsellor – all I feel I really know is that I don’t (and maybe cannot) know enough to really be as competent multiculturally so I try to be humble and curious so I can learn from my clients and supervisees.

I became my own barrier for a while – I was almost “too” aware of my lack of awareness – interestingly, I went through a period where I think I reflected too much (if that’s possible) and I became kind of stuck and less confident (which wasn’t bad but caused quite an identity crisis for a bit).

The latter comment reinforces the need, noted earlier by counsellors, to balance the emphasis on raising awareness with the development of applied practice skills and the application of theory to practice in supportive supervised contexts. Interestingly, no supervisors provided examples of a lack of confidence. However, both groups did struggle with a sense of powerlessness: “Situations like this make me feel a bit hopeless about the possibilities of seeing change...” – P; “cultural empathy exposes injustices and a feeling of powerlessness” – C; “it is unpleasant to feel uncomfortable with the small outcomes created by big problems” – C. In some cases, this sense of powerlessness stemmed directly from the culturally oppressive contexts in which counsellors worked: “I’m following policies or direct orders that continues to prevent equal access to educational opportunities for some. On the other, I find myself advocating for those students during meetings. They both seem to cancel each other out.” Counsellors also tied their lack of personal agency to a personal sense of cultural oppression in some cases: “I was, in many ways, an equal of this supervisor, yet I felt silenced.”

Lack of buy in. For practicum supervisors, lack of buy in emerged more frequently than lack of personal agency, although counsellors also provided examples. "... I sometimes found myself feeling resentful that it was a 'have to' rather than something I was inspired to do... I then felt guilty for feeling resentful. It made me question my commitment to social action" – C. This is another area where the perspectives of the supervisors included reflections on the students they supervised: "some supervisees... have not developed their self-awareness to what would be deemed appropriate for a practicum level. When trying to address this with a supervisee – it created a barrier to the experience and the practicum ended." Miller and Sendrowitz (2011) argued that self-efficacy (of which *personal agency* is a component) forms a foundation for both interest in and commitment to social justice (e.g., *buy in*).

Lack of competency. Not surprisingly, lack of competency itself sometimes posed a barrier to further competency development or engagement in multicultural and social justice processes with clients. Counsellors noted: "Lack of understanding of different cultures;" "I felt I was missing certain skills in working with various cultures." Supervisors commented: "I felt very unprepared and... was unable to capture the magnitude of the issues faced by these families" and "initially in working with clients, I found my awareness increasing but not my ability to act on my awareness." In both cases, their comments reflected observations noted earlier in this paper that both awareness and corresponding applied practice skill development are essential.

Infusing Culture and Social Justice in Education and Practice

One of the central themes that emerged from counsellor and practicum supervisor reflections on professional development CIs was that, to a large degree, their graduate programmes did not fully prepare them to meet the diverse needs of clients or to expand professional roles to address the contextual and systemic factors so often shaping clients' experiences. There were many areas in which they identified competencies related to multicultural counselling and social justice; however, to an important degree, their applied practice experiences served to fill in the gaps in their formal training. The most influential CIs in the Caldwell and Vera (2010) study were "exposure to injustice" and "influence of significant persons" (Results ¶2), both of which are more likely to occur in applied practice settings. In addition, the learning in respondents' graduate programmes was often contained within a single graduate course or specific learning activity in other courses. There was little evidence of an integration of awareness and skill development across courses. This may reflect, in part, the age distribution of participants in the study; however, it is a reminder of the need to infuse these elements throughout graduate curriculum, rather than isolating them to a specific multicultural counselling course (Fouad, Arredondo, 2007; Lewis, 2010; Pack-Brown, Thomas, Seymour, 2008). The infusion

approach reflects the APA's (2002) *Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists*.

The other central theme that emerged from this study was the disproportionate competency development related to awareness of culture (both of self and others) as opposed to more complete understanding of the systemic influences on clients' lives and specific applied practice skills for effecting change at the systems level. This observation is consistent with observations of other researchers (Alberta, Wood, 2009; Cates, Schaeffe, 2009; Pieterse, 2009; Ratts, Hutchkins, 2009). As counsellor educators, we appear most effective in engaging students in consciousness-raising and less effective in providing them with the skills to transform their awareness of multicultural and social justice issues into applied practice, including systems level analysis, advocacy, and social/organisation change strategies (Durham, Glosoff, 2010; Greenleaf, Williams, 2009; Lewis, 2010).

Collins and Arthur (2010a, 2010b) have revisited their own model of *culture-infused counselling*, in recent years, to make more explicit the attainment of specific skills for social justice action. One of the lessons from this research is the importance of pairing curriculum related to skill development with applied practice experiences, in which students have the opportunity to engage in activities that require them to translate theory into practice through experiential learning activities, direct engagement with clients experiencing social injustice, and/or modeling from supervisors, practitioners, and other community members actively engaged in various forms of social justice action. Others have come to similar conclusions, recommending outreach or service learning opportunities, volunteerism, social justice-focused practicum placements, group work, and other learning processes for translating theory into practice (Ibrahim; 2010; Miller, Sendrowitz, 2011; West-Olatunji, 2010). It is in this translation of book learning into real life contexts that the most effective learning experiences transpired for participants in this study.

This exploratory study provided a glimpse into what worked and what did not work for counsellors and practicum supervisors in their learning, offering some preliminary insights into the ways in which graduate education might be transformed to better prepare students for real-life encounters with clients. The respondents in the study may have participated due to a specific interest in the topic of multicultural counselling and social justice. This study was also limited by the wide time-frame over which participants completed their graduate training. The authors, in a separate paper, examine the experiences of current graduate students in relation to multicultural counselling and social justice education (Collins et al., 2013). As the call for social justice as a central focus in both the practice of counselling psychology and counsellor education becomes more widely accepted, we encourage other researchers to explore how we might most effectively prepare our graduates to meet this challenge.

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