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Multicultural Competence in Counseling Students: Addressing Social Class in Multicultural Counseling Courses

Abstract

There are consistent findings of clinician bias toward clients of differing social classes, and little research about faculty efforts to address bias within educational programs. Informed by a literature review, quantitative methodology and descriptive exploratory design were used to examine counselor educators' instructional strategies for teaching multicultural counseling. Additionally, perceptions of faculty effectiveness and comfort level with social class issues were explored.

Keywords

class bias, multicultural counseling strategies, multicultural competence

Authors

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Prior to the 1970s, research related to clinician bias was centrally focused on social class (Haase, 1964; Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958; Kahn et al., 1959; Lee & Temerlin, 1970). However, following the 1970s, there was a significant shift in focus to other important cultural factors, such as race (Burris, 2012; Constantine et al., 2001) and gender (Davidson & Abramowitz, 1980; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 2001), or the intersection of race and gender with social class (Harley et al., 2002). The topic of social class, or individual's position in society based on social and economic factors, was reintroduced into conversations regarding multicultural competency (MCC) and deemed critical to consider (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Liu et al., 2004; Smith, 2005).

Findings of clinician bias toward clients of differing social class groups, namely those living in poverty, has been generally consistent in the scarce literature available (Bamgbose et al., 1980; Cook & Lawson, 2016; Cook, 2017; Liu et al., 2007; Lopez, 1989; Smith, 2005, 2009). Both explicit and implicit beliefs and values can predict an individual's behavior (Boysen, 2010). Negative bias and oppression toward differing socioeconomic status (SES) populations, or classism, manifests as reduced access to services, inaccurate mental health diagnoses and assessment of prognoses, and inappropriate hospitalizations (e.g., Dougall & Schwartz, 2011; Hudson, 2005; Jurado, 2020). Significant effort has been made to better understand how social class and clinician bias manifest in the clinical judgment of counseling or psychology professionals and how those biases affect clients (Kim & Cardemil, 2012; Rivas, 2008; Settin & Bramel, 1981). Therefore, examining the academic practices of faculty to address social class and classism in master's level multicultural coursework may be critical to counselor development.

Multicultural competence is defined by and based upon a three-factor development model: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Barden et al., 2017). Despite the requirement of educators to produce culturally competent counselors, cultural competence development seems to be influenced

by the personal beliefs and attitudes of the student (e.g., Boysen, 2010; Smith, 2005). Some programs are designed to meet this educational task in a single class, while others follow an infusion model and integrate concepts of multiculturalism into all coursework (Abreu et al., 2000; Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Celinska & Swazo, 2016).

Not only do academic institutions carry the burden of clinical training, they also must do it in a way that encourages the provision of unbiased clinical services to all populations, training students to meet the required mandates in the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) *Code of Ethics*. The current study began with a literature review of the mandates, guidelines, and standards that are currently in place that outline expectations of multicultural counselor education, current methods faculty utilize to meet those benchmarks, and which specific pedagogical teaching interventions and strategies instructors implement in the classroom to address different cultural variables. Subsequently, the author investigated reported efforts to address master's level counselor education and curriculum aimed at increasing students' awareness, knowledge, skill, and advocacy in the area of social class multicultural education, or cultural competence education related to social class. Additionally, correlations were reviewed between faculty reported variables in teaching SES and multicultural counseling and the reported strategies utilized.

Literature Review

The counseling profession has little information regarding the actual implementation of specific efforts by faculty in the training of master's level students directly related to issues of social class. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature regarding efficacious multicultural strategies and interventions regarding social class. Those in the counseling profession have addressed many critical multicultural issues including gender, race, and ethnicity in counselor training and research (Sue et al., 2022). However, classism and the poor, or those living in poverty,

have been largely neglected (American Psychological Association, 2000; Shepard et al., 2022; Smith, 2005; Sue & Lam, 2002).

Social class is a salient cultural variable that affects an individual's experiences throughout their life, including their thoughts and behaviors (Manstead, 2018; Zweig, 2004). Unlike other cultural identities, such as race and gender, social class is not easily recognized through external cues and may be overlooked despite its significant contribution to an individual's identity. Social class status is a complex concept that not only involves the financial components of SES but also incorporates the ideas of identity and culture (Jensen, 2012), and economic or political power (Zweig, 2004). Social class status is determined by chance at birth and serves as a significant determinant in the initial trajectory of one's life, of the values assumed, of the goals to which he or she will aspire, and of style of communicating with others (Jensen, 2004). The complexity of social class status makes it a challenge to be accurately measured as there are multiple facets that can be influential, including education, occupation, income, and perception of one's status (Kraus & Stephens, 2012).

Classism

Individuals in lower social class groups face an objective reality that limits their access to health care and education (Jurado, 2020). Understanding classism begins with a basic understanding of its definition in its most overt form as "a systemic oppression perpetuated by the power dynamics of those who control the social and economic resources" (Pietrantonio & Glance, 2019, p. 2). However, classism also exists at a less explicit level and in more covert ways. Liu (2011) described the ignorance of, or inattention given to social class issues as a significant classist behavior. As such, the denial or avoidance of acknowledging that class-based bias exists is in and of itself a form of classist behavior and may maintain the emotional distance of individuals from

different classes.

Counselor Education and Multicultural Counseling Competencies

Sue et al. (1992) highlighted the need for multicultural competency and presented a call for institutional change, to which several governing bodies responded. The ACA, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) have worked to increase standards related to multicultural competence and to define expectations for clinical training programs. The ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics* provides a guide for counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators to reference for clarity and uniformity. The code includes counseling best practices and specific boundaries of practice woven within each domain of the ethical standards. The ACES created *Standards for Counseling Supervisors* (Supervision Interest Network, ACES, 1990) with requirements for counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors. Most of these ethical standards align with the accreditation standards of the CACREP. CACREP offers guidelines to which programs must adhere within the areas of program design, diverse faculty and student recruitment (ACA, 2014, F.11.a and F.11.b), and competency standards. The CACREP presents eight common core areas for education, one of which is social and cultural diversity.

Faculty Attitudes and Personal Variables

Teaching multicultural subject matter presents unique challenges for instructors, as they must address issues related to their own self-awareness and bias, students' biases, and the interplay of both (Reynolds, 2011). Socially desirable responding has shown to contribute significantly to perceived competence and training for counselor trainees (Pietrantoni & Glance, 2019). As such, instructors should be aware of students' individual developmental stages and current willingness to display vulnerability in the classroom. Instructors carry significant influence in student

development, as studies have demonstrated that higher education faculty transmit more than simply new knowledge (Miller & Miller, 2002). Higher education faculty may transmit their own attitudes, beliefs, and values to students (Avina & Delaney, 2014; Miller et al., 2007). This is not to say the transition of these values or beliefs is a negative process, rather it is an additional area of consideration when exploring the call to produce culturally competent counselors.

Approaches, Techniques, and Teaching

MCC Teaching Methods and Techniques

Given the charge to address the broad cultural areas of awareness, knowledge, and skill development in counseling students, faculty likely must utilize a variety of teaching strategies and interventions. The purpose of the current study was not to identify the most efficacious, but the most utilized, and those perceived as most efficacious for MCC and social class awareness by teaching faculty.

The lack of attention to social class is evident in the graduate classroom as well as in the overall underrepresentation of social class in psychology and counseling research. Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) surveyed 158 African American and White American counseling students to assess multicultural training and noted the students reported the topic of SES was given 15.83% of attention in their coursework. In a comprehensive review of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Lee et al. (2013) noted 32% of all articles from 1954 to 2009 included significant multicultural content. Within those 1,202 journal articles, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and social class together made up less than 1% of *Journal of Counseling Psychology* articles (Lee et al., 2013).

Despite the clear expectations of learning and implementing culturally competent counseling services, issues surrounding SES and classism may not be adequately addressed in the

current curriculum for counseling students. While students explore topics of race, gender, and spirituality, Sue and Lam (2002) reported that even in the context of multicultural competence, the topic of social class is widely neglected. Class is a significant factor in the development of an individual's worldview, and thus the counselor's worldview—as it relates to class—may interfere with or affect his or her attitudes about clients and assessments of client needs, diagnosis, and prognosis.

Interestingly, social class and SES are noted areas of competence for counselor training, yet the research remains lacking. To best understand the aim of strategies, assignments, and faculty course facilitation, the author of the current study has categorized the assignments into the three primary domains of MCC: awareness, knowledge, and skill.

Faculty Perspectives of Teaching and Pedagogy

In addition to exploring reported teaching approaches and opinions about facilitating a MCC course, researchers have examined syllabi for content analysis. Priester et al. (2008) conducted a content analysis of 64 master's level introductory MCC courses to determine the amount of attention given to the multicultural counseling competencies, different cultural groups addressed, and variation of teaching strategies. Results indicated self-awareness, knowledge, and skill were common themes. Surprisingly, 28% of syllabi had no mention of skill development, which resulted in Priester et al. (2008) claiming that multicultural programming “almost completely ignore[s] the development of related skills” (p. 2). In this analysis, 17% of the syllabi included SES (Priester et al., 2008).

Last, the authors compiled a list of specific instruction used by faculty teaching MCC courses. For the current study, the author used the list of 38 teaching strategies found in the Priester et al. (2008) review and grouped the reported assignments and activities into themed clusters to

create the dissertation questionnaire. These specific activities were utilized along with other reported teaching interventions to explore the specific application of interventions to address the domains of social class, SES, and classism by counselor educators.

Information from Priester et al. (2008) regarding MCC course content was used in the current study. While there seems to be an improvement in the percentage of reported time devoted to the topic of SES (17%), the study did not provide the type of instruction that makes up this 17%. Additionally, the list of teaching activities and assignments serves only to inform the reader about general assignments. This study was designed to increase the understanding about faculty reported assignments and effectiveness of teaching activities used to increase cultural competency and counselor educator characteristics that may correlate with classroom behavior, such as comfortability, perceived personal efficacy, and personal experiences with cultural variables.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a descriptive exploratory associational design using data obtained from an online survey following IRB approval and adhered to appropriate research ethical standards.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following primary research questions:

1. What are the most frequently employed academic activities used by faculty to address the topic of classism in MCC courses?
2. What percentage of MCC course syllabi is devoted exclusively to the topic of social bias as compared to other cultural variables?
3. Are social bias instructional strategies associated with faculty demographic characteristics? If so, what are they?

4. How do faculty rate the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in addressing issues of social class?
5. What are faculty-reported levels of comfort with teaching social class topics, and is there a relationship between their comfort with teaching social class topics and the proportion of overall instructional strategies they devote to the topic of social class?

Selection of Participants

The population of interest was counseling faculty teaching in higher education counseling programs who have taught MCC courses. Participants were counseling professionals who met the following three inclusion criteria: (a) held a PhD, PsyD, or EdD in counselor education, counseling, or psychology; (b) were currently employed part- or full-time at a college or university in a master's level program in counseling, school counseling, marriage and family counseling, or counseling and psychology; and (c) had experience teaching a MCC course at least once prior to participating in this research.

The sampling frame was the Kent State Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Network listserv (CESNET-L) and master's level counseling programs listed on the CACREP website. The sample was a convenience sample; no random selection process was used to identify specific educators for participation. A total of 122 multicultural counseling faculty agreed to take the survey.

Instrumentation

The current study involved the use of an online survey to collect data. Due to lack of a published survey that assessed teaching strategies pertaining to SES and social class, researchers drew upon Priester et al.'s (2008) summary of 64 multicultural counseling syllabi to generate a list of instructional strategies to incorporate into a self-administered survey. Priester et al. (2008)

identified 38 specific teaching strategies which the researchers categorized into four groups. The survey was designed to evaluate current practices and perceived levels of effectiveness and comfortability among counselor education faculty when teaching social class topics in MCC courses.

The questionnaire consisted of 26 items. Questions addressed demographic information, faculty experience level, amount of time faculty devoted to different cultural variables, effectiveness of individual strategies to address each cultural variable, perceived comfort and efficacy surrounding each cultural topic, and greatest barriers faculty perceived to integrating the topic of social class into their courses.

Results

Respondents were an average of 45 years old and ranged in age from 24 to 70 years. Among the 114 respondents who completed the survey, 75% were female and 25% were male. With respect to ethnicity, a little over half of both males and females were Caucasian (51% and 54%, respectively). A greater percentage of females than males were African American (26% and 18%, respectively). Hispanic respondents were evenly divided between males and females (males, 11%; females, 13%). Asian and American Indians represented a combined percentage of 6% of the females and 4% of the males. More males (14%) than females (5%) preferred not to identify their ethnic group.

Respondents had taught an average of 8 to 10 years, with a maximum of 30 years. Few participants had personal experience with biases which also did not vary with age. Respondents reported the most personal experience with gender bias, followed by racial bias, classism, and ageism. Females reported more gender bias than did males, whereas males reported more sexual orientation bias than did females.

For Research Question 1, the most effective instructional strategies (in order from best to least) for teaching classism were interviewing a member of a different culture, cultural self-examination, service work for a minority organization, personal self-awareness, and attending a cultural event as a minority. The two strategies respondents rated as the least effective were role-playing and writing research papers.

For Research Question 2, the most class time was devoted to the topic of racism, and the least time was devoted to ageism and ableism. Approximately 12% of the class time was devoted to classism. These results did not differ by faculty gender.

Analyses for Research Question 3 showed that few demographic variables were associated with instructional strategies. The exception was that older respondents devoted more time and that younger respondents devoted less time to teaching issues of classism in MCC courses. Otherwise, faculty gender, religiosity, sexual orientation, and SES change from childhood to adulthood did not vary significantly with time devoted to teaching classism.

For Research Question 4, teaching effectiveness was rated similarly to time devoted to each topic. Respondents reported they were most effective at teaching racism and sexual orientation issues and least effective at teaching ageism and ableism.

For Research Question 5, respondents reported they were moderately to very comfortable teaching all of the MCC topics. Respondents were the most comfortable teaching ageism and about equally comfortable teaching sexual orientation issues, racism, and classism. Respondents were significantly more comfortable teaching ageism than ableism or religious bias. The correlation between time devoted to teaching classism and comfort level with classism was positive and statistically significant but weak.

Discussion

Faculty were asked to rate the effectiveness of the strategies to teach each of the cultural domains identified. Faculty were also given the option to select “N/A” to report they did not use the identified strategy. Unfortunately, faculty were surprisingly silent in responding to these questions. This silence may reflect how faculty perceived the importance of the topic, the course overall, or their belief in the influence of their assignments to address the topic. It may also reflect the amount of time devoted to planning and developing teaching methods related to social class content in this particular course. If it is the case that faculty are not developing teaching strategies specific to topics of social class and classism, it may be a reflection of access to material, their own training experiences, or their personal interactions with individuals from other social class groups. It is possible that faculty are following prescribed syllabi without taking time to reflect on the use or efficacy of specific teaching strategies.

Because so few faculty rated all the teaching strategies, inferential statistics could not be utilized. In fact, only 11 males and 21 females rated all 12 strategies for teaching about classism. This finding seems to echo that of Kim and Lyons (2003) who reported the lack of strategies to teach multicultural counseling to be a significant shortcoming of counselor education programs. In the present study, the 32 participants who did respond ranked five academic or instructional strategies as being most effective (i.e., interviewing a member of a different culture, cultural self-awareness paper, service work for a minority organization, personal self-awareness development plan, and attending a cultural event as a minority) and two as least effective (i.e., role-playing and research papers).

In descending order, faculty reported the following breakdown of time allotted to each cultural topic: racism 27%, sexism 13%, heterosexism 13%, classism 12%, religious bias 10%,

ableism 9%, and ageism 8%. Social class and classism reportedly received an average of 3 hours and 36 minutes of instruction. Considering the great impact that culture and identity development play in creating an individual's worldview, this small amount of time may not be sufficient to address counselors' long-held beliefs and biases. The limited amount of time devoted to each topic is of concern and may reflect the continued findings of clinician bias in research, namely in the areas of social class and classism. It is possible that faculty do not give more attention to social class and classism due to practical reasons. When faculty were asked to share the greatest barriers to integrating the topic of social class into their courses, nine faculty specifically reported time as a significant barrier. It is also possible that faculty have not been prepared in their own training programs as the requirement for teaching multicultural counseling is relatively new and early multicultural courses focused on race and ethnicity until research reported a significant intersection of race and class. Eleven faculty specifically mentioned the lack of research and a consistent conceptualization and definition as barriers to teaching about social class. The literature is scarce when addressing appropriate and effective methods for teaching students about the culture of social class and how to provide clinical services to clients from different social classes. In order to identify the most effective methods, future research should include an intervention study into the effectiveness of different teaching tools to address social class bias and overall competence.

Three correlations were found. First, and not surprisingly, respondents' age in years was positively correlated with years of teaching experience. Second, years of teaching was modestly correlated with the number of MCC courses taught. Last, and most interestingly, there was a positive correlation between age in years and the amount of time faculty reported to address social class and classism in their MCC course. Therefore, as faculty in this sample aged, they taught more, and the more they taught, the more they taught about issues of social class and classism in

counseling. This finding may be related to life experiences of older faculty. Simply by having more experiences they have had more opportunities to interact with individuals from different social class groups. It is also possible that faculty in their 50s, 60s, and 70s were privy to the boom of attention given to social class at the start of clinician bias research in the 1970s. Faculty in this study specifically cited “students’ encapsulation, lack of exposure, awareness, or experiences with individuals from other classes” as barriers to teaching about social class. Perhaps faculty’s own experiences with other classes also affect their teaching and perceived importance. This could be confirmed in future research.

Interestingly, there were no other correlations or relationships between faculty characteristics and the content of the course. Surprisingly, no personal demographics, other than age, had an effect on teaching instruction or course design. It is possible that faculty are following a prescribed teaching curriculum and avoiding incorporating personal experiences in their teaching. With the increase of accrediting bodies and rigorous accountability, the field of counselor education and the “art” of teaching may be declining. Perhaps, fulfilling the requirements of accreditation leaves little room for academic freedom and constructivist teaching methods.

Faculty generally rated themselves moderately effective or better within all cultural domains. They rated themselves most effective at teaching about racial bias and sexual orientation bias and less effective (although still moderately effective) in all other domains. After using efficacy ratings for teaching classism as the baseline, respondents reported they were significantly more effective at teaching racism and sexual orientation issues than they were at teaching classism, but significantly more effective at teaching classism than at teaching ableism.

Respondents felt moderately to very comfortable teaching all the MCC topics. Respondents did not report significant differences in comfort when comparing classism to other cultural topics. Respondents' reports of comfort may have been a reflection of social desirability. The topics included in the multicultural course are generally understood to be uncomfortable in nature. It is possible that respondents did not want to admit to their discomfort with any topic. However, given the emotional connection to cultural identification, the common resistance from students, and the relative inexperience of some of the respondents, their complete comfort seemed unlikely. Respondents reported being the most comfortable teaching ageism but were equally comfortable teaching sexual orientation issues, racism, and classism.

There were significant correlations between the estimated percent of MCC class time devoted to teaching classism and ratings of comfort teaching ageism, ableism, racism, and classism. The two strongest correlations were between comfort level teaching classism and teaching religious bias, followed by comfort with classism and sexual orientation biases. Note that the only comfort rating that did not correlate with classism was comfort level teaching ableism, and while faculty reported comfort teaching ableism, they reported decreased levels of efficacy. In the open-ended responses many of the faculty reported "comfort level and knowledge of the instructor," "fear of engaging in uncomfortable dialogue," and "fear of talking about money" as barriers to integrating the topic of social class in MCC courses.

Implications of the Study

The results imply a significant uniformity in teaching MCC courses. The respondents answered almost identically across the board, regardless of personal experience and demographic factors. Although women experienced more gender bias and certainly experience the world in a way unique from men, they do not adjust the course to reflect that. Similarly, men reported

experiencing more sexual orientation bias and yet, this did not seem to manifest in classroom content.

Perhaps even more interesting is the similarity of content allocation without any formal requirements to do so. While CACREP offers general requirements surrounding topics that must be included in counselor multicultural education courses, there are not presently any guidelines or standards regarding specific time or methods to address each topic. Despite the absence of specific standards, faculty seem to have created their own norm that is seemingly not driven by personal cultural variables or lived experiences of bias. This finding is contrary to what Reynolds (2011) discovered when investigating faculty's multicultural teaching practice; in which, faculty agreed that "when teaching multicultural counseling course, I often self-disclose my own personal attitudes and experiences. My own cultural identity affects how I design, teach, and interact with the students" (p. 169). In the current study, faculty did not permit their personal experiences or identities to affect course content formation or implementation. This then begs the question, what did guide the faculty to allocate almost identical course time to the cultural variables presented?

It is possible to infer that class allocation of time may be a result of the textbook used to teach the course. In the most recent version of Sue et al.'s (2022) textbook, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, there is a relatively small section devoted to the topic of social class and classism. While it is an improvement to finally include social class in the MCC textbook, it may take some time to see the positive effects in clinician bias research while faculty adjust and restructure their courses.

A similar inference can be made after considering the one variable that did have an effect on the amount of time devoted to the topic of social class and classism, which was age. It is possible that those in their 50s, 60s, and 70s experienced different academic training programs

than younger faculty. This difference in training may have led faculty to place more emphasis on issues of social class and classism.

There are also implications for accrediting bodies. Counseling programs are becoming increasingly influenced by accreditation standards, namely CACREP. While this accreditation increases uniformity and has positive implications for increasing counselor identity and possibly credibility, there remains much ambiguity in the implementation of the MCC course. Effective counselor multicultural education on topics of classism and economic disadvantages and how these influence people's experiences is key in improving client outcomes and clinical care. Building from studies evaluating counselor multicultural education and connecting them to effective everyday practice is a bridge that is further missing from the literature.

Finally, there are some implications regarding the faculty teaching the MCC course. Many respondents of this survey identified as African American and lesbian, gay or bisexual. It is of concern that faculty may be selected to teach the course due to an ascribed "minority status" rather than an expertise or commitment to the field of study. Identifying as a minority may result in being asked to be the spokesperson for all minorities. To the contrary, multiculturalism is a mandate of all counselors and counselor educators. Instead of selecting faculty to teach the course based upon their cultural identification, competency should be based upon knowledge and preparedness to teach the course.

Limitations

Limitations in the current study included a small sample size, potential participants' willingness to partake in the study, and lack of external verification of participant status as counselor educators with current employment in a university counseling program and experience teaching at least one MCC course. Limitations also included knowledge of participants'

potentially unique personal experiences with ethical dilemmas regarding social class bias and any effects of selection bias or instrumentation bias (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Furthermore, there was a limitation related to the availability of teaching material, theoretical models, and specific strategies related to teaching concepts of social class. Another limitation is that this study involved the use of self-report survey data, which may have been influenced by participants' awareness that they are "being studied" and by potential social desirability bias (Gliner & Morgan, 2000), which seemed likely to be relevant to the topic of social class and social bias. Additionally, self-report of methods used and time spent teaching was not corroborated by syllabus materials nor student reports and perceptions of education content.

Future Research

This study can serve as a foundation for future research about cultural variables and course design. As the field of counseling has begun to respond to the call to address social class and classism in counselor multicultural education, it is critical moving forward to come to an agreement surrounding the definitions and vernacular used to discuss and describe social class. After a focused and agreed upon definition of social class has been established, researchers may be more productive in evaluating teaching strategies and assignments for instructing counseling students. An intervention study of the effectiveness of various teaching tools used to address social class understanding and bias could provide tangible recommendations that can reduce negative clinical outcomes. Additionally, case studies that display how to apply social class multicultural competence to counselor education and training could provide a more concrete guideline for, and an example of, how to successfully implement concepts with clients and the positive impact that can have.

Both content and context are critical to explore in the future. It would be beneficial to examine faculty characteristics that correlate with increased time devoted to teaching about social class, namely age. One way to accomplish this would be to explore faculty's own experiences in other classes and how these impact their teaching methods and perceptions of importance. Further exploration into the academic training and lived experiences of faculty in their 50s, 60s, and 70s may increase the understanding about why and how these faculty implement the topics of social class and classism into their courses at a higher rate than younger professors.

Further study about the selection of course content, such as how and why faculty report selecting multicultural topics to address in the classroom, would be helpful. Last, the report of comfort across all cultural topics warrants further investigation. Further exploration of how faculty and their students report experiencing social class in their personal lives may provide a rationale for their reported comfort or distancing from this sensitive topic.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to address the largely neglected topic of social class to increase the understanding of current practices pertaining to addressing the topic in counselor multicultural education. Specifically, the focus of this exploratory study was on the instructional methods used in master's level MCC courses to (a) identify instructional strategies faculty use to address social class, (b) identify faculty demographics that are associated with the selection of specific strategies, and (c) provide baseline information to guide future studies. Unfortunately, faculty failed to respond to the specific social class instructional strategies, leaving continued investigation of this question critical. What was discovered was the highly consistent allocation of time for each cultural variable in MCC course design despite personal demographics and experiences with bias. The only personal factor that affected time devoted to teaching about social class and classism was

age. Although personal experiences with bias were reported by both men and women, none affected the implementation of increased time to any cultural variable.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors have received no outside funding source for the current research and have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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