

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: EARLY CAREER SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERCEPTION OF MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

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With the demographics of American school children rapidly changing and the demographics of school psychologists remaining relatively unchanged, more than ever school psychologists are working within the cross-cultural zone. This means that they are working with students and families who are culturally different from them. It has become vital that school psychologists are multiculturally competent; however how this form of competence develops is relatively unknown. Grounded theory methodology was used in the current study to explore how early career school psychologists who work in diverse schools define multicultural competence and multicultural competence development. Results indicate that the participants felt that multicultural competence should largely focus on interpersonal relationships with students and families as well as self-awareness. Additionally, the participants felt that multicultural competence was dynamic as opposed to stagnant. With respect to multicultural competence development, the participants felt that their early career experiences contributed to this area of competence more than any other factor. The foundation of their multicultural competence was made up of a desire to work in a diverse setting as well as their background and exposure to different cultures. They felt that their graduate school

classes contributed to this foundation. Personal experiences also contributed to multicultural competence, but were not as significant as professional experiences.

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MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT:  
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

By

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## DEDICATION

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Within the past few decades, multicultural issues have received increased recognition in the fields of psychology and counseling. Pederson (1990) described multiculturalism as the ‘fourth force’ in psychology. The American Psychological Association (APA) has integrated multicultural competence into its ethical code (APA, 2010) and has published its own set of multicultural guidelines, (APA, 2002). However, it has been difficult for psychology practitioners to translate the ideals of multiculturalism to practice (Gallardo, Johnson, Parham, Carter, 2009). The American Counseling Association (ACA) moved from not mentioning multicultural issues in their original 1961 ethical codes to focusing on multicultural issues in their ethical codes published in 2005 (Watson, Herlihy & Pierce, 2006). The counseling field has placed more emphasis on the development of multicultural theory (Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997), but counseling paradigms for multicultural competence are not sufficient for psychologists in general and school psychologists in particular. There is not enough literature on multicultural issues in school psychology (Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002) and in order to address the unique needs of the current school population, more is needed.

#### *Necessity of Cultural Competence*

The issue of multicultural competence in school psychology is one that the specialty has grappled with over the past few decades (Esquivel, Warren, & Littman-Orlizky, 2007; Newell, Natasi, Hatzichristou, Jones, Schanding, & Yetter, 2010). Several scholars have implored the profession to treat multicultural issues as more than a special topic and develop comprehensive multicultural models for school psychologist scientist-

practitioners to use in their practice (Ingraham, 2000; Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Rogers et al., 1999). Many hold the belief that multicultural issues must be integrated into the framework of all areas of school psychology, including assessment (Rhodes, Ochoa & Ortiz, 2005), consultation (Ingraham, 2000; Tarver Behring & Ingraham, 1998), counseling, and intervention (Ingraham & Oka, 2006).

A contributing factor for the growing need to address multicultural issues in psychology is the gap between culturally diverse clients and the mental health professionals who work with them. This gap is especially clear in schools. Rogers (2005) reported that between 1990 and 2000 the number of racial and ethnic minority children enrolled in schools increased by eight percent while Caucasian children enrolled in schools decreased by the same amount. Additionally, the demographics of school psychologists have remained relatively unchanged. According to a national survey, nearly 89% of school psychologists are Caucasian (Lewis, Truscott, & Volker, 2008). Curtis, Chesno-Grier and Hunley (2004) examined data from previous research and determined that when demographic information was examined from 1980-1981, 96% of school psychologists were Caucasian, when examined from 1989-1990, almost 94% were Caucasian, and when examined from 1999-2000 nearly 93% were Caucasian. Recently, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, and Cunningham (2011) researched the school psychologist demographics and they remain largely unchanged. When school psychologists were examined from 2004-2005 92.6% were Caucasian and in 2009-2010, this number decreased to 90.7%. In the same time period, African-American school psychologists increased from 1.9% to 3%, Asian/Pacific Islander school psychologists increased from 0.9% to 1.3%, Hispanic school psychologists increased from 3.0% to 3.4 %, and those

school psychologists who define themselves as “other” increased from 0.8% to 1.0%. The only other racial/ethnic group other than Caucasian that decreased in number during this time period was Native American/Alaskan Native who decreased from 0.8% to 0.6%. Although there are an increasing number of school psychologists of color, their numbers are not increasing at a rate commensurate with the school-aged population. At an increasing rate, school psychologists are working within the cross-cultural zone (Lee, 2006), meaning that they are working with students and families who are culturally different from them. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important that school psychologists are culturally competent.

Aside from individual work with students and families who are culturally different from them, school psychologists should be on the forefront of helping to close the achievement gap. The achievement gap is the difference in academic achievement between children of differing demographic characteristics. There exists both a racial achievement gap, in that White and Asian children achieve at a significantly higher level than Black and Hispanic/Latino children (McKwon & Weinstein, 2008), and a socioeconomic achievement gap, where middle class and higher children achieve at a greater level than economically disadvantaged children (Buckhalt, 2011). School psychologists should be working to close this gap to ensure that all children are achieving at a level commensurate with their ability rather than their background.

#### *Role of School Psychologist*

The role of a school psychologist comprises several functions which include assessment and evaluation, consultation, intervention, prevention, research and planning ([http://www.nasponline.org/about\\_sp/whatis.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/about_sp/whatis.aspx)). Although school psychologists are

often defined by the assessment and evaluation aspect of their role, consultation, and intervention are earning greater attention in the literature. It is now clear that school psychologists must be culturally competent in all of the aforementioned areas. In this section, the roles of assessment and evaluation, consultation, and intervention will be discussed. Because research and planning are more closely related to school psychologist professors and researchers and less related to practitioners in a school they will not be discussed in this section.

### *Assessment*

The area of multicultural competence that is arguably explored most frequently in the school psychology literature is assessment and evaluation. School psychologists should possess knowledge of psychological instruments and their appropriateness for given populations and students. It has been suggested that “most psychological instruments do not adequately address the influence of culture on functioning” (Hitchcock et al., 2006, p. 16). Not only should school psychologists know which instruments to choose given the culture of a student, they should also understand the most appropriate procedures as well. While some have described a process of nondiscriminatory assessment (Martines, 2008; Ortiz, 2002; Scribner, 2002) a comprehensive and widely practiced alternative to the current assessment procedures has not been established. More research is necessary to help guide school psychologists in their decisions about psychological instruments and the most appropriate processes and procedures in assessing children of various cultures.

### *Consultation*

Ingraham (2000, 2003) discusses the importance of school psychologists possessing multicultural competence when consulting with parents and other school professionals. The same issue that arises in assessment is reflected with consultation. Because there has not been sufficient empirical research (Ingraham, 2000; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005) and a lack of a comprehensive multicultural consultation framework for school psychologists (Ingraham, 2000; Ortiz & Flanagan, 2002), it is unclear what constitutes multicultural competence in consultation practices.

### *Counseling & Intervention*

As previously mentioned, the field of counseling has placed more emphasis on multicultural research and development (Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997). D.W. Sue et al. (1982) created a framework of multicultural counseling competencies upon which several subsequent multicultural counseling frameworks are based (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; D.W. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; S. Sue, 1998). However, the foci of these conceptualizations are on the counselor, not the school psychologist. Although these frameworks have been influential in conceptualizing school psychologists' multicultural competence (Miranda, 2002; Rogers, 1998) they do not completely account for all the multicultural competencies that need to be possessed by school psychologists. While these conceptualizations are helpful for one aspect of intervention for school psychologists, they are not sufficient. School psychologist practitioners need guidance in evaluating research on interventions in order to determine its appropriateness for a given student or population of students. Additionally, they need to be able to make changes to evidence based interventions as necessary to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ingraham & Oka, 2006). In other

words, school psychologists require their own unique framework for multicultural intervention.

### *Conclusion*

While it is important that the aforementioned scholars have focused on individual aspects of school psychology multicultural competence, more research is needed to develop a broader and more directly applicable framework. Much of the previous literature has focused on individual aspects of multicultural competence for school psychologists or has focused on professions that are related to school psychology. While the current literature contributes to an understanding of school psychology multicultural competence, it is not sufficient. The current study will help fill this gap in the multicultural school psychology literature by providing more information concerning the development of school psychology multicultural competence.

### *Statement of Problem*

Although the fields of psychology and counseling have acknowledged the importance of multicultural competence for all of their practitioners, this recognition has not translated to the literature in the specialty of school psychology. As previously mentioned, much of the literature that does exist focuses on specific aspects of competence such as assessment or consultation rather than a comprehensive framework for multicultural competence (i.e., Rhodes, Ochoa & Ortiz, 2005). School psychology is a multifaceted specialty and the multicultural research reflects this; it remains difficult to conceptualize a comprehensive multicultural school psychology framework. Frisby and Reynolds (2005) and Esquivel, Lopez, and Nahari (2007) have produced handbooks on multicultural issues in school psychology. Additionally, the National Association of

School Psychologists (NASP) does offer a definition of cultural competence (NASP, 2003), yet there is a need for a comprehensive conceptualization of school psychology multicultural competence that is grounded in data and supported by literature.

More articles concerning school psychologists' multicultural training are also needed. While the specialty has recognized that it is important to be multiculturally competent, how a school psychology *becomes* multiculturally competent is unknown. How do school psychologists become multiculturally competent? Is all of their competence developed during graduate training? What experiences are vital in developing competence? Can some experiences be omitted? Are the classes, practicum, trainings, and on-the-job experiences cumulative? These are important and unanswered questions concerning multicultural competence development of school psychologists. Without knowledge of *how* school psychologists gain this important professional characteristic, it is impossible to know if the current training paradigms are sufficient in producing multiculturally competent school psychologists.

#### *Purpose and Overview*

The purpose of the current study was to explore early career school psychologists perceive their own development of multicultural competence. According to the chair of the NASP Early Career Workgroup, early career psychologists are defined as “professionals in their first five years of practice” (A. Silva, personal communication, March, 2012). There is a need for more research on this topic as multicultural competence is an important component of school psychologists' overall professional competence. More information is needed about *how* this form of competence is acquired. This was a grounded theory study because the lack of previous research calls for an

exploration of the topic and the generation of a theory about multicultural competence development. The researcher interviewed six school psychologists who work in diverse schools (“diverse schools” are operationalized in Chapter III). All participants were within their first five years of practice as a school psychologist. This is vital because it is important that the participants were able to reflect on their graduate training. Those who have practiced for more than five years may have forgotten some specifics of their graduate training. In addition, this study was about the school psychologists felt about the *development* of their multicultural competence. Therefore, it was important that the respondents were able to reflect on their early career experiences as later career experiences may be more related to the maintenance of their multicultural competence.

This study informs all those who are invested in creating multiculturally competent school psychologists. The information gleaned from this study is vitally important to graduate training institutions, scholars, school districts, professional organizations, and school psychologists themselves. The results of qualitative grounded theory studies are not meant to be generalized to other populations; therefore, further research exploring the efficacy and efficiency of training paradigms is an important next step. This study is a necessary first step in conceptualizing the development of school psychologists’ multicultural competence.

### *Definitions*

There are many terms that are used in the multicultural literature and they are sometimes used interchangeably. This can lead to confusion and the terms that are used can lose meaning because of the lack of clarity of their definitions. This section attempts

to reduce that confusion by defining the terms that will be used throughout this document.

*Multicultural Competence and Cultural Competence.* In a study conducted by Rogers (2006), she asked school psychology faculty and staff to define multicultural competence. The most frequent definition (36% of respondents) was “the ability to translate knowledge of cultural differences into effective and sensitive school psychological services” (p. 126). This is similar to another definition that defines multicultural competence as “an individual going beyond the mere possession of multicultural sensitivity to also attain an acceptable level of knowledge, a sufficient shift in attitude, and the production of a repertoire of behaviors consistent with successfully interacting with diverse populations in multicultural settings” (Wallace, 2000, p. 1101). These definitions are also similar to a National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) definition of *cultural competence* (described in greater detail in Chapter III). Because of the similarities between these definitions, multicultural competence and cultural competence were used interchangeably throughout this document and the interviews. However, this writer attempted to use *multicultural competence* with greater frequency to help prime the interviewees to think of *multiple* areas of culture and diversity as opposed to just one or two.

*Culture.* Frisby (2009) stated many people assume that culture is a “monolithic entity” (p. 449) but he argued that there are many individual differences that occur within a culture. Collier, Brice, and Oades-Sese (2007) agree, stating that culture is dynamic and that “no two individual members of the cultural group share exactly the same system of cultural knowledge” (p. 354). While it is important to consider the individual

differences within a cultural group, the majority of definitions of culture reflect the shared experience of a group of people. For the purpose of the present study, culture is defined as “a group’s ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, and ways of acquiring knowledge and passing it on” (Trumbull, Greenfield, Rothstein-Fisch, & Quiroz, 2007).

*Diversity.* Diversity is a term that “includes race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, language, ability, and economic status” (Newell et al., 2010, p. 250). All areas of diversity were explored in the present study. The participants all worked in diverse schools, however the operational definition of which did not include all of these aspects of diversity. It was not possible to include all areas of diversity as data is not collected for all of them, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion. However this writer probed for additional information about all areas of diversity.

### *Research Questions*

Two research goals guided the development of the current study. While the focus of this study was on the participants’ perceptions of multicultural development, developing an understanding of the first goal, defining multicultural competence, was necessary to provide a framework for the second goal, multicultural competence development. In order to adequately describe their own competence, the participants should explain what they feel competence is. The two research goals used a grounded theory approach to generate theories of:

1. How early career school psychologists define multicultural competence, and
2. Early career school psychologists’ perception of multicultural competence development.

The research goals of the current study helped to guide the development of the research questions. The research questions are:

1. How do school psychologists conceptualize multicultural competence?
2. How do school psychologists conceptualize the development of their own multicultural competence?
  - a. Do school psychologists believe that it is their graduate training that has led them to be multiculturally competent, their work in the schools, or a combination of both?
  - b. How has their graduate training and field experience influenced their multicultural competence?

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

This literature review will begin with a discussion of diversity in the schools today. There are a multitude of reasons why school psychologists must be multiculturally competent and a discussion of schools will demonstrate that need. Next, there will be a discussion about how multicultural competence is conceptualized in the school psychology literature and in the related field of counseling. A discussion of multicultural counseling, in general, is warranted because the counseling field is on the forefront of diversity research and literature. However, it is important to point out that the discussion of multiculturalism in counseling generally pertains to the *act* of counseling. Therefore, a discussion of the conceptualization of multiculturalism in the school counseling literature is warranted as well. Although some of their tasks overlap, much of what school counselors do is different from school psychologists. However, some of the school counseling literature takes into account the multifaceted nature of jobs in a school. In this way, the school counseling literature is pertinent to school psychology. Then there will be a discussion of how multicultural competence is conceptualized in the school psychology literature. Finally, there will be a discussion of multicultural training for all of these disciplines. This review will demonstrate the need, outlined in Chapter I, for more research concerning the multicultural training of school psychologists.

#### *Multicultural Competence of School Psychologists: Importance*

##### *Diversity in Schools*

Oftentimes, the seemingly inclusive terms of diversity and multiculturalism are used as euphemisms for racial and ethnic diversity. In fact, much of the focus in school

psychology and counseling literature is on differences in race and ethnicity. However, there are several other forms of diversity and ignoring them in research and practice can lead to misunderstanding of constructs and ineffective service delivery. This section will contain a discussion about the ways that race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, sexual orientation, and religion may affect students and therefore the service delivery of school psychologists.

The racial and ethnic demographics of the United States are changing. Rogers (2005) noted that from 1990 to 2000 the number of racial and ethnic minority children in schools increased from 20 percent to 28 percent. National statistics on education echo a similar trend. According to the Digest of Education Statistics, the percentage of Caucasian students enrolled in public schools has decreased just over eight percent (63.0 percent to 54.9 percent) between 1998 and 2008. During the same time period, the Hispanic population has increased from 14.9 percent to 21.5 percent; African-American students have remained the same at 17.0 percent; and Asian/Pacific Islander students have increased from 3.9 percent to 5.0 percent (Digest of Education Statistics, 2010). This means that there are an increasing number of children of color in schools. Conversely, from 1971 to 1996, there was a decrease in the amount of minority teachers in the schools. White teachers increased from just over 88 percent to nearly 91 percent. African-American teachers decreased from just over 8 percent to slightly over 7 percent. All other ethnic minority teachers decreased from 3.6 percent to only 2 percent (Rogers, 2005). This racial and ethnic gap between teachers and students may be contributing to the achievement gap between racial and ethnic minority children and Caucasian children (Storz, 2008). Racial and ethnic minority children, particularly African-American and

Latino students, have consistently lower test scores than White and Asian-American students. These lower test scores have implications for the future such as educational attainment and occupational status (McKwon & Weinstein, 2008). Teachers may have differential expectations for their students based on race and ethnicity, which McKwon and Weinstein (2008) have shown does contribute to the achievement gap. Additionally, teacher quality is an important factor in closing this gap (Flowers, 2007) and research has shown that understanding of diversity issues and how they relate to classroom management and lesson planning can increase positive outcomes for children (Delpit, 1995). Having been trained in both direct (counseling, assessment, intervention) and indirect (consultation) service delivery, school psychologists are uniquely equipped to help address this issue and others that may contribute to the achievement gap. It is clear to see why school psychologists must be multiculturally competent in order to deal with this and other issues pertaining to the racial and ethnic achievement gap between students.

Additionally, there are high rates of children living in poverty in schools. Although a disproportionate number of these children are children of color (Ehrhardt-Padget, Hatzichristou, Kitson & Meyers, 2004), low socioeconomic status is a pervasive issue that affects children of all races. There are myriad reasons for this disparity. Many of these reasons stem from problems in the home. They range from issues surrounding health care access to parental reading proficiency. However, schools and teachers have a profound effect on student outcomes as well (McKwon & Weinstein, 2008; Steele, 1997). While socioeconomic status does have a significant effect on students, educational quality appears to have a larger effect (Anderson & Keith, 1997). School psychologists

must be aware of this and know how to work with students and families with unique challenges due to their socioeconomic status. They must also be able to assist teachers and administrators in working with students and families of low socioeconomic status in order to provide the high quality services that they need.

There are also large numbers of children in schools with emotional, mental, and physical disabilities. In the past, these students were separated from other students. They were in separate classrooms and in some cases, separate schools. In recent years, with the passing of laws such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and a growing inclusion movement (Greer, Greer, & Woody, 1995), these children are being included in general education classrooms with increasing frequency. This has highlighted the importance of administering appropriate services for all students. School psychologists must know how to work with these students, support teachers in their efforts towards appropriate education for all students, and help families become familiar with all educational options (Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005). This includes options that school psychologists who are not culturally aware may not be familiar with. Without this cultural knowledge and awareness, school psychologists run the risk of not providing parents and teachers with the comprehensive information necessary to make the most appropriate decision (Ingraham, 2000; Ingraham, 2003; Ochoa & Rhodes, 2005; Tarver Behring & Ingraham, 1998). School psychologists must be trained in order to be competent in these areas.

There has been increased attention in the literature about LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) individuals. For many LGBTQ students, school is a hostile, and even dangerous, place. LGBTQ students are at greater risk for suicide,

physical abuse, and bullying (Stone, 2003). Despite these increased risks, schools are not doing all that they can to ensure safety for these students. Without a safe environment it is difficult for students to concentrate on their studies. School psychologists have training in school culture and climate and should work to ensure that their school is welcoming and safe for all students. School psychologists must have adequate multicultural training in order to provide the most appropriate services and create the best school environment.

With the advent of No Child Left Behind, it is now mandatory for schools to ensure that all students are receiving the highest quality education that they can provide. Many students who were previously ignored or marginalized by the educational system are now being recognized. All of the diversity in the schools demonstrates just how important it is for school psychologists to aid schools in providing that high quality education. It is imperative that school psychologists are multiculturally competent and therefore those working within the specialty must learn more about the best way to train school psychologists for multicultural competence.

#### *School Psychologist Demographics*

Although the demographics of children are changing, the demographics of school psychologists for the most part are not. Based on the results of a nationwide survey of school psychologists, Castillo et al. (2011) estimated that nearly 91 percent of school psychologists were White. In a study conducted by Lewis, Truscott, and Volker (2008), a sample of 124 school psychologists, both NASP and non-NASP members, were contacted by phone. Of those participants, approximately 89% were Caucasian, almost 6% were African-American, 4% were Hispanic, and nearly 2% were “other.” None of

those sampled in this study self-identified as Asian or Native American. Additionally, there is often a socioeconomic disparity between school psychologists and the students and families that they serve (Brown, Shriberg, & Wang, 2007). There is not much data on the ability status, religion, and sexual orientation of school psychologists, but one can assume that because of the changes in the school-aged population that more than ever school psychologists are working within the cross-cultural zone (Lee, 2006). This means that school psychologists are working with people whose culture is different from their own. Because of this demographic disparity, there is an increasing awareness in the school psychology specialty that working with students and families of a different culture presents unique challenges. Issues around prejudice, discrimination, and social stigmas (Lopez & Rogers, 2007) can arise and impede relationships, influence decision-making, or lead to inappropriate services. School psychologists must possess competence in all professional areas, which includes multicultural awareness and skills.

### *Service Delivery*

*Assessment.* A central role of school psychologists is that of assessment. Though the role of the school psychologist is evolving, administering and scoring measures, interpreting results, and writing reports continues to be the way many practitioners spend the majority of their professional time (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingford, & Hall, 2002). With the increase of children of color, English Language Learning (ELL) children, and children of low socioeconomic status in the schools it is imperative that school psychologists are competent in this area. However, there is a lack of consensus regarding what competence in this area would mean. Sternberg (2004) proposed four

models regarding the relationships between ability, assessment measures, and culture.

The four models are illustrated in Table 2.1:

**Table 2.1: Sternberg's (2004) Models of the Relationship of Culture to Intelligence, p. 326**

Tests of Intelligence	Dimensions of Intelligence		
	Relation	Same	Different
	Same	Model I	Model II
	Different	Model III	Model IV

---

In model I, the nature of intelligence within a culture and the assessments used to measure that intelligence are the same. This model argues that intelligence does not have cross-cultural differences and therefore can be assessed without regard for culture.

Model II notes that there is a difference in intelligence between cultures, but there is no change in the tests that measure those different forms of intelligence. Model III postulates that intelligence is the same cross-culturally, but the methods and assessment tools used to measure those forms of intelligence do not differ. Model IV argues that both the nature of intelligence between cultures and the assessment tools used to measure them differ cross-culturally. Depending on the model that an individual school psychologist believes philosophically and professionally, the service delivery of assessment would look very different. There needs to be greater consensus and consistency in order for service delivery to be more uniform and therefore possess greater fairness and accuracy.

*Consultation.* Another important function of a school psychologist's job is consultation with teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, families, and community members. According to Tarver-Behring and Ingraham (1998), multicultural consultation is a "culturally sensitive indirect service in which the consultant adjusts the consultation

services to address the needs and cultural values of either the consultee or the client, or both” (p. 58). With this view, it is necessary that culture is “infused in all aspects of consultation” (p. 58) in order to provide the best possible services. Sirmans (2004) found that the school psychologists who participated in her dissertation study felt that possessing a general understanding and awareness of the influence of culture on others was an important aspect of school psychology consultation competence. This indicates that both scholars and practitioners in the field feel strongly that consultation competence must incorporate multiculturalism and diversity. In other words, there should not be a need for a multicultural consultation definition; *all* consultation should be multicultural.

*Counseling.* Multicultural issues in counseling are discussed later in the current chapter in sections: *Multicultural Competence: Counseling* and *Multicultural Competence: School Counseling*.

*Intervention.* Although counseling is a form of intervention, there are many other interventions that school psychologists suggest and help teachers to implement in order to create the best possible outcomes for students. There are several resources available to school psychologists for interventions, but it is sometimes necessary for modifications to be made in order “to best address the unique cultural and contextual setting” (Ingraham & Oka, 2006, p.128). Additionally, school psychologists need to be able to determine whether the extant research on evidence-based interventions is valid for students within their school populations (Ingraham & Oka). School psychologist practitioners need guidance regarding the selection and implementation of interventions.

#### *Multicultural Competence: Counseling*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the literature on multicultural competence of counselors and school counselors was previously reviewed in the author’s unpublished master’s thesis, Sweeney (2009).

The field of counseling is on the forefront of studying multiculturalism in the social sciences. Counselors have long recognized the importance of taking a client's culture into account in order to understand and communicate effectively. Therefore, there is a plethora of multicultural research and literature in the field of counseling (Lopez & Rogers, 2001). This section will include information about some of the ways in which multicultural competence has been discussed in the field of counseling. While a comprehensive discussion of multicultural competence in counseling is beyond the scope of this review, several important and seminal theories will be discussed.

### *Ethical Conceptualization*

It is important to recognize that multicultural competence of counselors is not simply a practical issue; it is an ethical one as well. Watson, Herlihy, and Pierce (2006) discuss the fact that in 1961 there was no mention of multiculturalism in the American Counseling Association (ACA)'s original ethical code, but in 1995 multicultural issues were integrated throughout the document. In 2005, ACA released its most updated ethical code. Due to the increased awareness of the importance of multiculturalism, partly because of the research of D.W. Sue and others, the current ACA ethical code *focuses* on multicultural issues. Multicultural counseling competency has been formally recognized as a vital aspect of the counseling profession.

The mission of the ACA ethical codes mentions its commitment to diversity. This commitment is reflected in the codes themselves. There is no formal section on multicultural competence. Rather issues of diversity and multiculturalism are infused throughout the document, making it clear that ACA is committed to promoting the multicultural competence of its members.

### *Multicultural Domains Conceptualizations*

*Three Domains.* One of the first and most influential conceptualizations of multicultural counseling competence was outlined by Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues (D.W. Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pederson, Smith & Vasquez-Nuttal, 1982). In the paper, the authors discuss three areas of multicultural competency: beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The beliefs and attitudes area encompasses multicultural awareness and includes four specific competencies. This area discusses the importance of a counselor having an awareness of his or her own cultural heritage. In addition to awareness of one's own culture, a counselor competent in this area would understand how culture plays a part in his or her values and beliefs and in turn how those beliefs might affect the counseling relationship with clients. A counselor competent in this area would also understand how circumstances involving the referral process would be relevant through a cultural lens.

The multicultural knowledge area in D.W. Sue et al. (1982) also outlines four competencies that counselors should possess. Counselors who are competent in this area have an understanding of circumstances that interact and may have an effect on the counseling relationship. Competent counselors understand the sociopolitical context in which they are working and how it has impacted people of minority status. They also possess basic information about the cultural group that a client comes from and the institutional barriers that have affected that group. They understand basic information about the therapy process.

Finally, according to D.W. Sue et al. (1982), a multiculturally competent counselor would also possess three competencies in the skills area. Having awareness

and knowledge of multicultural issues in the counseling relationship is important, but cannot stop at those two steps. Multiculturally competent counselors will also put their awareness and knowledge into practice and demonstrate multicultural skills. A multiculturally competent counselor will be able to understand and utilize both verbal and non-verbal communication responses. This counselor will also build upon knowledge of institutional barriers and assist the client in working against institutional barriers if necessary.

After ten years, D.W. Sue updated his multicultural competence conceptualization and published a new article, which built upon and expanded on the previous one. The D.W. Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) article outlined dimensions under which counselors would possess the same three areas of multicultural competence outlined in the D.W. Sue et al., (1982) paper: beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The dimensions were counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases, understanding the worldview of the culturally different client, and developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. As opposed to D.W. Sue et al., (1982)'s eleven competencies, D.W. Sue et al., (1992) outlined 31 competencies: nine under beliefs and attitudes, eleven for knowledge, and eleven for skills. In addition to expanding the number of competencies, the authors were much more urgent in their language and tone of the article. They stated that integrating multicultural competence into the field of counseling was no longer optional; it was now urgent, necessary, and ethical.

*Five Domains.* This conceptualization is an update of D.W. Sue et al. (1992)'s conceptualization. Holcomb-McCoy (2000) increased the number of domains from three to five. Three of the five factors were the same as D.W. Sue and colleagues (1982, 1992)

previous models: awareness (referred to previously as beliefs and attitudes), knowledge, and skills. The other two were new and distinct constructs. The first was definition of terms. This factor was related to counselors having an understanding of terms and terminology. The second new factor was racial identity development. This factor reflected the expectation that counselors would have an awareness and knowledge of different racial identity theories. Although this article is not a complete conceptualization, it is important to discuss because it recognizes that the seminal theories of D.W. Sue and colleagues may need to be expanded or altered.

#### *Counselor Client Match Conceptualization*

S. Sue (1998) also believed that there were three dimensions of cultural competence in counseling. However, the author's conceptualization of those competencies differed from D.W. Sue and colleagues (1982, 1992). The generation of these multicultural competent characteristics was rooted in the importance of a match between counselor and client. According to this article, the three characteristics critical to cross-cultural competence are scientific mindedness, having skills in dynamic sizing, and being proficient with a particular cultural group; these characteristics are discussed below.

Scientific mindedness, according to S. Sue (1998) refers to a counselor who makes hypotheses as opposed to permanent conclusions about a client. That counselor is creative in the testing of those hypotheses and then uses data to inform counseling procedure and intervention. Scientific mindedness allows the counselor to be flexible in his or her conceptualizations of the client. It disallows the counselor to make quick judgments based on early information. This characteristic may be described as a skill

that is closely aligned with D.W. Sue et al.'s, (1992) concept of counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases. Instead of making assumptions based on the counselor's own experiences and worldview, that counselor makes the conscious choice to use data to guide intervention.

Dynamic sizing (S. Sue, 1998) is another important characteristic for culturally competent counselors to possess. The counselor is discriminating in selecting what information about a particular group is applicable to their client and what information is not applicable. A counselor competent in this area understands that there are stereotypes about groups and avoids automatically assuming that their client fits one of those stereotypes. Rather, the counselor has an awareness of his or her own possession of these stereotypes and how they might affect the counselor's behavior.

Proficiency about a particular cultural group, or culture-specific expertise, is the third and final characteristic discussed by S. Sue (1998). This is closely aligned to some of the knowledge competencies that D.W. Sue et al., (1982) mentions. Culturally competent counselors should understand basic information about the group that their client comes from and the sociopolitical influences on that group. However, the counselor must always strive to avoid stereotyping a particular individual with respect to his or her cultural group. This expertise about certain groups will inform the counseling and therapy process as well as selection of specific interventions while keeping in mind the individuality of the client.

#### *Schema Conceptualization*

Dissatisfied with previous multicultural counseling literature, Ridley, Mendoza, Kanitz, Angermeier, and Zenk (1994) sought to define multicultural competence in a

different way. The authors believed that there were four particular limitations in the literature on multicultural counseling competence: definitional variance, inadequate description of construct indicators, lack of theoretical grounding, and limitations in measurement and research designs.

Because of these problems, the conceptualization outlined in the Ridley et al., (1994) article is grounded in the cognitive theory of information processing. There are five dimensions of competency that a counselor should possess to be multiculturally competent. The first is counselor cultural self-processing. A counselor has had experiences that have resulted in schemata about particular groups of people and the counseling process. Just as D.W. Sue et al., (1982) mentioned that counselors must be aware of their own values and biases, Ridley et al., (1994) asserted that counselors must be aware of their own schemata and how that may affect the counseling relationship.

The second part of cultural competency outlined in this article is purposive application of schemata. This is the area of competency that helps guide a counselor's actions. The counselor should be able to collect data and use that data to inform every part of the counseling process. This is not dissimilar from S. Sue's (1998) idea of scientific mindedness. The counselor must recognize that his or her schema influences how the data collected is interpreted and in order to be competent, counselors must not allow stereotypes to influence decision-making more than data.

The third factor outlined in Ridley et al., (1994) is maintaining plasticity. This outlines the importance of a counselor being fluid in their thinking. If a counselor is not able to maintain plasticity, than he or she possesses schema that are too rigid. The

counselor must work to have schema that will allow him or her to interpret data about a client that will be accurate and disallow the counselor to resort to stereotypic thinking.

The fourth factor in the Ridley et al., (1994) model is active-selective attention. This discusses the importance of considering all relevant cultural information when working with a client. In schema theory, it is thought that people cannot attend to all possible information. Therefore, they only attend to the information that they deem relevant. According to Ridley et al., (1994), if counselors are culturally insensitive than they will not attend to information from the client that is culturally relevant, which will be problematic in the counseling relationship.

The fifth and final part of cultural competency outlined in Ridley et al., (1994) is the motivation of the counselor. If counselors are not motivated to challenge their existing schemata that disallow them to work effectively with clients who are culturally different then the other factors will not help. The counselor's motivation can be an internal drive or imposed from an external source, however, the motivation must be extant in order for the remainder of the factors in the model to be effective.

#### *Summary of Multicultural Counseling Competence Models*

While the work of D.W. Sue and colleagues (1982, 1992) is perhaps the most widely cited conceptualization of cultural competence in the field of counseling, there are several other ways that scholars have contemplated the multicultural competence of counseling. Many of the concepts discussed overlap with one another. Common in all of the models is the idea of counselor awareness of their own culture and worldview as well as knowledge about the cultural group of the client. Additionally, the importance of collecting data and having that inform practice and intervention is another common

theme. Translating knowledge and awareness to culturally competent skills is another pervasive theme.

Despite these commonalities between the conceptualizations, there are major differences. The lack of consensus between the models demonstrates the importance of future research and development of multicultural competence theory. Additionally, implicit in all of these theories is the dyad of counselor and client. As previously mentioned, this is a major limitation in applying these theories to school psychology. In the following section, there will be a discussion of theories of multicultural competence in school counselors. While this is not the same as school psychology, the conceptualization may be more applicable than general counseling theories.

#### *Multicultural Competence: School Counseling*

All of the multicultural counseling competence conceptualizations are applicable to school counselors as well. However, there are areas of competence that are specific to school counselors. As mentioned previously, the models of multicultural counseling competence often refer specifically to the relationship between counselor and client during the actual counseling process. School counselors have a plethora of other duties in addition to counseling students. The following section will discuss the conceptualization of multicultural competence applicable specifically to school counselors.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The ACA ethical codes also apply to school counselors and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) ethical standards specifically discuss the importance of cultural competence for school counselors. In the ASCA ethical standard's Preamble,

which frames the tone of the rest of the document, the importance of serving those who have been historically underrepresented and underserved in the educational system is mentioned. While the ASCA codes have a specific diversity section under Responsibility to Self, it is similar to the ACA codes in that issues of multiculturalism and diversity are infused throughout the entire document. It is clear that ASCA, like ACA, requires its members to be multiculturally competent.

### *Nine-Dimension Conceptualization*

Holcomb-McCoy's (2004) conceptualization of school counselor multicultural competence is closely related to the D.W. Sue et al. (1982, 1992) and Holcomb-McCoy (2000) conceptualizations. Holcomb-McCoy's (2004) model of multicultural competence is expanded to include items pertinent to school counselors. In this model, Holcomb-McCoy mentions 51 competencies embedded in nine dimensions of school counselor multicultural competence. The nine dimensions are: Multicultural Counseling, Multicultural Consultation, Understanding Racism and Student Resistance, Understanding Racial and/or Ethnic Identity Development, Multicultural Assessment, Multicultural Family Counseling, Social Advocacy, Developing School-Family-Community Partnerships, and Understanding Cross-Cultural Interpersonal Interactions. Although Holcomb-McCoy (2004) does not specifically mention the competency domains of awareness, knowledge, and skills, many of the items within the nine domains of competency reflect these constructs. For example, the first competency under the Multicultural Counseling domain, *I can recognize when my attitudes, beliefs, and values are interfering with providing the best services to my students*, is comparable to one of the competencies in D.W. Sue et al.'s (1982) attitudes and beliefs domain, which states

that a culturally skilled counseling psychologist is aware of his/her values and biases and how they may affect minority clients. Similarly, one of Holcomb-McCoy's (2004) competencies in the Understanding Racism and Student Resistance domain, *I can identify racist aspects of educational institutions* is closely related to a competency in D.W. Sue et al.'s (1982) Knowledge domain, *the culturally skilled counseling psychologist is aware of institutional barriers which prevent minorities from using mental health services*. While these competencies are not exactly the same, it is clear how the work of D.W. Sue and colleagues influenced Holcomb-McCoy's (2004) conceptualization tailored to counselors working in school settings. One area that was added to the model that is not directly reflected in D.W. Sue and colleagues' previous work is social advocacy. As multiculturalism as a construct has evolved in the counseling and school counseling fields, social justice and advocacy have been viewed as increasingly important and necessary as a part of multicultural competence.

#### *Multicultural Competence: School Psychology*

The specialty of school psychology is making strides to catch up to the counseling profession in relation to its recognition of the importance of multicultural competence. There is a history of multicultural school psychology literature that dates back as early as the 1960's and 1970's (Lopez & Rogers, 2007) yet, the body of literature itself is scarce. Miranda and Gutter (2002) conducted a meta-analysis to update Wiese Rogers' (1992) article on school psychology multicultural competence literature. Miranda and Gutter examined articles in the *Journal of School Psychology* (JSP), *Psychology in the Schools* (PiTS), *School Psychology Review* (SPR), and *School Psychology Quarterly* (SPQ) that were not a part of a special issue relating to

multiculturalism. Despite the large increase in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in the schools, the literature does not reflect this trend. Of the over 1,300 articles in those journals from 1990-1999, only 8.3 percent dealt with issues of cultural diversity. There are several reasons the authors mention that could account for the lack of research. It could be that there is little interest or that practitioners, rather than researchers, are committed to the topic. It could also be that journals reject articles about diversity at a higher rate. One other reason outlined in the article has to do with the fact that minorities are wholly underrepresented in the specialty of school psychology. Whatever the reason, Miranda and Gutter argue that the lack of research is problematic given the increasing diversity of students and families in the schools.

Strein, Cramer, and Lawser (2003) published a similar study with even smaller numbers. These researchers examined all research topics from 1994 to 1998 in the same research journals. In defining multicultural articles, Strein et al. took into account articles that had a secondary as well as a primary focus on multicultural issues. Despite this broad view of multicultural articles, only 6.2 percent were found. Additionally, a greater percentage of these articles were classified as having a secondary (3.6%) rather than a primary focus (2.6%) on multicultural issues. Strein et al. also examined the percentage of multicultural articles in *School Psychology International* (SPI). This number was far greater with 15.3 percent of articles with a primary (6.8) or secondary (8.5) focus on multicultural issues. It is unclear why these researchers found a significantly smaller percentage of multicultural articles. It is possible that the years that Strein et al. selected had fewer articles or they defined multicultural articles more stringently. Whatever the reason, it is clear that more research is needed in this area.

Despite the lack of focus on this subject in the literature, there have been some scholars that have developed school psychology multicultural competence conceptualizations, reflecting the importance of this topic to the specialty. The importance of multicultural competence has been reflected in school psychologists' ethical codes as they have in ACA and ASCA ethical codes and standards. School psychologists ascribe to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical codes, both of which mention the importance of multicultural competence. Just as it is for counselors, multicultural competence of school psychologists is being recognized as both an ethical and practical issue.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

NASP's Professional Conduct Manual (2010) publishes its *Principles for Professional Ethics*. Unlike the ACA or ASCA codes, the NASP manual does not mention issues related to diversity in its introduction. Diversity is first mentioned in Principle I.3: Fairness and Justice. Multiculturalism and diversity are discussed throughout the document, indicating their importance in the field of school psychology.

While school psychologists have a unique set of ethical standards that they must ascribe to, they are also psychologists. Therefore, the APA *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2010)* are applicable to their practice as well. Similarly to the NASP manual, there is no mention of multiculturalism or diversity in the Introduction or Preamble of the APA codes. Diversity issues are mentioned as part of one of the five overarching ethical principles. Issues of diversity are also mentioned throughout the document, but not with as much frequency as the ACA codes.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has also published an individual manual for use specific to multicultural issues titled *The Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* (2002). This document outlines six specific guidelines that all psychologists, including school psychologists should ascribe to. While this is an important step forward in integrating multicultural competence into the practice of all psychologists, the guidelines do not hold the same weight as standards. Guidelines are more aspirational and therefore not as enforceable as standards. The first guideline is “psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from themselves”. According to this guideline, it is necessary for psychologists to be introspective concerning their own cultural point of view. The second guideline is “psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from themselves”. This describes the importance of recognizing the impact of culture for all people. The third guideline, “as educators, psychologists are encouraged to employ the constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in psychological education” relates to the importance of infusing multiculturalism in psychological education. The fourth guideline, “culturally sensitive psychological researchers are encouraged to recognize the importance of conducting culture-centered and ethical psychological research among persons from ethnic, linguistic, and racial minority backgrounds” recognizes the importance of multicultural considerations in

research. “Psychologists strive to apply culturally–appropriate skills in clinical and other applied psychological practices” is the fifth guideline and describes the specifics of how multiculturalism should be a part of applied practice. The sixth and final guideline “psychologists are encouraged to use organizational change processes to support culturally informed organizational (policy) development and practices” encourages psychologists to consider multiculturalism when they look at larger scale organizational or structural change.

#### *Awareness Discussions*

While there has been a lack of specific models of school psychology multicultural competence in the literature, it is a topic that is mentioned in several journal articles. It is important to consider how scholars and practitioners in the specialty appear to conceptualize multicultural competence even if they do not specifically outline their vision. Ehrardt-Padgett et al. (2004) discuss the importance of affirming the cultural uniqueness of all students. The authors believe that it is important to consider all social identities present in students and tailor assessment and intervention to that student’s unique identity. Nastasi (2006) echoes a similar sentiment in discussing Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) ecological model that takes several factors, including culture, into account when conceptualizing how to approach one’s work with a child or family. Nikels, Mims, and Mims (2007) mention that the notion of the “typical” American student is changing and that diversity must be an important initiative in schools because educators must prepare students for life in a diverse environment. While the aforementioned scholars have not created a model of multicultural competence to date, it

is important to mention that multicultural competence has been considered and recognized as important in the school psychology literature.

### *Domains of Competency Conceptualization*

Rogers and Lopez (2002) sought to identify multicultural competencies that were uniquely vital for school psychology multicultural competence. The authors asked 24 experts (12 male and 12 female) on school psychology multicultural competence two questions: “what do the experts believe are the critical research practice-, and theory-derived cross-cultural competencies that school psychologists should have?” and “what other competencies, not addressed in the literature but based on expert experience, are critical cross-cultural school psychology competencies?” (p.118) Similar to D.W. Sue and colleagues, a model containing domains of competence with specific competencies was developed.

A total of 102 competencies emerged, and 62 were published, in the Rogers and Lopez (2002) article. These specific competencies were organized under 14 major categories or domains of competence. The domains were: Assessment, Report Writing, Laws and Regulations, Working with Interpreters, Working with Parents, Theoretical Paradigms, Counseling, Professional Characteristics, Consultation, Culture, Academic Interventions, Research Methods, Working with Organizations, and Language. Rogers and Lopez helped organize what others had talked about into a working model that could be used to assess the multicultural competence of school psychologists. Although it is unclear how much this model has been applied to research or practice, it is beneficial for school psychologists to have a working model of multicultural competence.

### *Service Delivery*

*Assessment Conceptualizations.* Ortiz (2002) stated that in order to accurately assess culturally and linguistically diverse children and practice non-discriminatory assessment, school psychologists must utilize a variety of tools and strategies as mandated by IDEA (2004). It is not sufficient to pick a psychological test that claims to be nondiscriminatory; school psychologists must understand *why* that test may or may not be appropriate for a particular child and supplement that test with additional procedures. Although Ortiz argued that we have not yet devised a comprehensive framework for nondiscriminatory assessment, he did outline a best practice procedure for reducing bias when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse children (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Framework for nondiscriminatory assessment (Ortiz, 2002, p. 1328)**

Framework Component	Explanation
Assess and evaluate the learning ecology	Evaluate intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for learning difficulties; create hypotheses that reflect the student's unique background within the context of the learning environment
Assess and evaluate language proficiency	Determine proficiency in all languages that a student speaks, especially in relation to their Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
Assess and evaluate opportunity for learning	Evaluate the school that the child attends including the curriculum, personnel, policies, and the instructional setting
Assess and evaluate educationally relevant cultural and linguistic factors	Identify and assess factors outside of school that may significantly affect the student's learning process
Evaluate, revise, and re-test hypotheses	Consider all reasonable and viable factors relating to student's learning difficulties in order to reduce confirmatory bias
Determine the need for and language(s) of assessment	The assessor or assessment team should determine exactly what should be assessed and in what language
Reduce bias in traditional testing practices	Administer tests in a standardized way and attempt to evaluate the results in a nondiscriminatory manner <i>or</i> modify the testing process in a way that is less discriminatory initially
Utilize authentic and alternative assessment procedures	Utilize standardized and non-standardized methods of assessment that are designed to reduce bias; Collect a broad range of information
Evaluate and interpret all data within the context of the learning ecology	Collected data should be evaluated within the context of the information about the student's unique experience and background
Link assessment to intervention	Modifications to the instructional program and specific remedial strategies that are linked to the results of the assessment are necessary

When working with second language learners, Scribner (2002) argued that school psychologists must be knowledgeable in four areas. These areas are (a) achieving English language proficiency, (b) issues of acculturation that affect achievement, (c) advocacy-oriented assessment practices that reflect advances in the field of psycho-educational evaluation, and (d) instructional interventions and modifications. Scribner listed these as basic considerations, meaning that they are absolutely necessary components of competence when working with second language learners.

Martines (2008) outlined a different conceptualization of multicultural assessment. This author adapted a conceptualization by Ridley and colleagues (Ridley, Hill, & Li, 1998; Ridley, Li & Hill, 1998) that was developed for counseling psychologists to be more applicable for school psychologists. This conceptualization is known as Multicultural Assessment Procedure (MAP) and is intended to guide practitioners to consider various pertinent issues in multicultural assessment.

MAP includes nine micro-decisions that a school psychologist should consider during the assessment process. These micro-decisions are organized as questions that a practitioner should ask oneself. These are included in table 2.3:

**Table 2.3: Multicultural Assessment Procedure Micro-Questions (Ridley, Li & Hill, 1998, p. 855)**

1. Are the salient data that I have readily identified enough to make a competent assessment conclusion?
2. What additional data-gathering methods should I use?
3. How do I respond to the data?
4. Which data are cultural and which are idiosyncratic?
5. How do base rates apply to the cultural data?
6. Which stressors are dispositional and which are environmental?
7. Which data are clinically significant and which are insignificant?
8. What is my working hypothesis?
9. What is my conclusive assessment decision?
  - a. What is the nature of psychopathology, if any?

- b. How do non-pathological but clinically significant data fit into the assessment conclusion?
- 

In addition to these questions and subsequent micro-decisions, Martines (2008) presented four phases of the procedure that should be followed. The four phases are outlined in table 2.4:

**Table 2.4: Multicultural Assessment Procedure Phases (Martines, 2008, pp. 35-38)**

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Phase	Description
Identify Cultural Data	Utilize clinical interview; Review salient cultural data
Interpret Cultural Data	Separate cultural and idiosyncratic data; Apply base-rate information to cultural data; Differentiate dispositional and environmental stressors; Construct working hypothesis
Incorporate Cultural Data	Rule out medical explanations; Use psychological testing to support or refute hypothesis; Compare gathered data to DSM criteria
Arrive at a Sound Assessment Decision	Following first three phases, a conclusive assessment decision can be made; Always consider that additional important information can emerge

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These four phases should be followed to arrive at a sound decision, but it offers little information about how to select particular assessment tools or what information should be considered important. Alternative methods to traditional psychological assessment have also been suggested (Martines, 2008; Vasquez-Nuttal et al., 2007), such as portfolio assessment, dynamic assessment and qualitative analyses. However, it is

unclear if these alternative methods would be considered acceptable means of evaluating a student’s cognitive ability. It is clear that appropriate multicultural assessment is an area that the specialty of school psychology has grappled and struggled with. More research is necessary in order to help scholars and practitioners determine best practice.

*Consultation Conceptualizations.* In 1998, Tarver Behring and Ingraham called to the profession to include culture as a “central component in the field of consultation” (p. 57). Two years later, Ingraham outlined a Multicultural School Consultation (MSC) framework to fill what she saw as the dearth of comprehensive conceptualization in this area (2000). This framework includes five components, described in Table 2.5 below. Ingraham saw this as essential in order for school staff, including school psychologists who are participating in the “consultation constellation” (p. 323) to be responsive to cultural issues that may arise over the course of a consultative relationship.

**Table 2.5: Components of Multicultural School Consultation (Ingraham, 2000, p. 327)**

Component	Content
Domains for Consultant Learning and Development	Understanding one’s own culture; Understanding the impact of one’s own culture on others; Respecting and valuing other cultures; Understanding individual differences within cultural groups and multiple cultural identities; Cross-cultural communication/multicultural consultation approaches for rapport development & maintenance; Understanding cultural saliency and how to build bridges across salient differences; Understanding the cultural context for consultation; Multicultural consultation and interventions appropriate for the consultee(s) and client(s)
Domains of Consultee Learning and Development	Knowledge; Skill; Objectivity and decreasing: <i>Filtering perceptions through stereotypes, Overemphasizing culture, Taking a “color-blind” approach, Fear of being called a racist</i> ; Confidence

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Cultural Variations in the Consultation Constellation	Consultant-consultee similarity; Consultant-client similarity; Consultee-client similarity; Three-way diversity. Tri-cultural consultation
Contextual and Power Influences	Cultural similarity within a differing cultural system; Influences by the larger society; Disruptions in the balance of power
Hypothesized Methods for Supporting Consultee and Client Success	Framing the problem and the consultation process; Potential multicultural consultation strategies for working with consultees; Continue one's professional development and reflective thinking

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Martines (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of different consultation models and discusses the important components in relation to multicultural consultation competence. Referring to Altarriba and Bauer (1998), Martines listed three things that a school psychologist should do when entering into the cross-cultural zone in consultation. They “should: (a) be sensitive to the communication style of the consultee; (b) learn the cultural values of the consultee; and (c) adapt the consultation/interview and problem-solving process to the above variables” (Martines, 2008, p.281). Martines also stressed the importance of understanding the power differential in a consultative relationship (referring specifically to Erchul & Martens, 2002) and how that power may be influenced by cultural factors. Martines (2005) also felt that it is important to consider the resistance that a teacher-consultee may feel in discussing multicultural issues. School psychologists should possess the skills and awareness to recognize this resistance and the knowledge to respond appropriately.

As previously mentioned, this information from Martines (2008) is a meta-analysis and not a complete conceptualization. More research is needed to combine all of these theories and models to create a comprehensive conceptualization of multicultural consultation competence.

One theory of consultation that Martines (2008) did not discuss is Instructional Consultation (IC; Rosenfield, 1996). Lopez and Truesdell (2007) argued that Instructional Consultation should be utilized with English Language Learners. They outlined several reasons why IC is an effective method of consultation when the student is learning English. These reasons are listed in table 2.6:

**Table 2.6: Rationale for Using IC with ELL Students (Lopez & Truesdell, 2007, pp. 72-73)**

1. IC helps teachers to explore language and cultural differences that impact the learning process
2. Teachers' perceptions about ELL students' instructional progress and difficulties is investigated during the IC process
3. Effective instructional adaptations, strategies, and interventions are devised to help ELL students to succeed academically
4. Culturally sensitive classroom management strategies are explored to create more supportive learning environments
5. The IC process helps with strategies to collaborate with culturally and linguistically diverse parents regarding learning and instructional issues
6. IC helps develop school-wide instructional practices and policies relevant to ELL students.

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This information helps to conceptualize how to adapt an existing theory to fit with students of different backgrounds. However, in practice, this adaptation may manifest itself differently. This may negatively affect the fidelity of the IC process, rendering it less effective. This further illustrates the importance of a comprehensive conceptualization of multicultural consultation.

*Counseling Conceptualizations.* A discussion of counseling conceptualizations is not included here as this information has been encompassed in previous sections. Please see *Multicultural Competence: Counseling* and *Multicultural Competence: School Counseling* for a description of the counseling conceptualizations.

*Intervention Conceptualizations.* Although there lacks a comprehensive conceptualization of culturally sensitive evidence-based intervention (EBI) development, there are conceptualizations of evaluating extant EBI's for different cultural groups. The cultural specificity hypothesis (Kratochwill & Stoiber, 2002) is one such conceptualization. This hypothesis assumes that the effectiveness of an intervention will differ between cultural groups. The authors argued that it is important and necessary to consider the context of race, culture, and ethnicity when choosing interventions so as not to potentially discriminate against those who are the recipients of the intervention. Ingraham and Oka (2006) recognized that while this conceptualization is a good start, it has several potential problems. There is a lack of recognition that interventions are culturally embedded, making it difficult to discern the specific components of success. Additionally, the definition of culture used for the hypothesis relies on demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The authors argue that these demographics alone are not sufficient to represent one's culture.

While they do not outline a specific conceptualization, Ingraham and Oka (2006) do present a series of suggestions for making EBI's more culturally sensitive and therefore applicable for a given population or a particular student. According to the authors it is important to examine EBI's from a multicultural perspective. In order to do this, school psychologists need to realize that (a) culture permeates the questions asked

and the choices of inquiry; (b) methods and tools of inquiry are culture-bound; and (c) culture influences how we make sense of results of investigations. Additionally, they suggest guidelines for making decisions about implementing an EBI in a new setting while considering the cultural context. Practitioners should (a) assess the quality of evidence available; (b) study the generalizability and transferability of an intervention; and (c) ask the questions outlined in Table 2.7.

**Table 2.7: Questions to ask when considering evidence about an intervention and possible transportation and adoption in a new setting (Ingraham & Oka, 2006, p. 144)**

7. What are the similarities and differences between the people and context of the study versus those of my work setting? Assess the transferability and generalizability.
  - a. How do the community, setting, and environmental context compare with mine?
  - b. How do the participants in the study compare with those in my setting? Do my intended participants hold similar beliefs, worldviews, and perspectives?
  - c. How do the interventionists compare with mine?
8. When there are differences among the context, participants, and/or interventionists, what modifications in the intervention or process of adopting the intervention would best take into account the cultures of my intended setting? Make adjustments to match the context and target population.
  - a. Where can I get information to inform the design of the necessary modifications?
  - b. What assumptions am I making about the universality or cultural specificity of this intervention and my target setting, participants, interventionists, and cultural competence? How can I validate these assumptions?
  - c. How will I know if these modifications are successful in adapting the intervention for use in my setting?
9. What is known about the mechanisms of change that make this intervention effective?
  - a. In what ways might cultural diversity affect these mechanisms of change?
  - b. Are these same mechanisms likely to occur in my intended setting and with the cultures of my population?
  - c. How might these similarities and differences inform the adjustments I need to make in the intervention process?
10. How will I involve members of my target population in the:
  - a. Decision about whether to adopt and how to adapt this intervention for our setting?
  - b. Collection of data on the process and outcomes of the intervention to determine how it is working and, if needed, where and what adjustments may be needed?
  - c. Interpretation of process and outcome data?
11. What formative data will be used to evaluate how the intervention is working in the new setting and with the new groups of people?
  - a. What hypotheses will help check the cultural, ecological, internal, and external validity of this transportation of the intervention to the new setting/context?

- b. What kind of data would be most informative about the mechanisms of change and how my target participants perceive the intervention, the process to evaluate it, and the interpretation of formative findings?

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## *Training Issues: Counseling<sup>2</sup>*

There is a dearth of research on multicultural training issues in the specialty of school psychology. Therefore, literature in the related field of counseling will be reviewed. Several of the studies conducted on training issues in counseling have been qualitative studies that examine current students' perspectives about multicultural courses offered and/or the training environment and how it contributed to (or hindered) multicultural competence. Tomlinson-Clarke (2000) conducted semi-structured interviews with counseling psychology graduate students four months after they had completed a multicultural counseling course and examined the environment of the training institution. Generally, the students in the Tomlinson-Clarke study had positive feedback concerning the course. They were happy about the amount of student diversity in the class. While some students felt that the class environment could have been more tolerant, many students felt that the environment was safe and supportive. However, the students did have constructive feedback. While the course itself was a positive experience, they felt that it was not sufficient. They wanted more experiences and challenges in order to increase their multicultural competence. Four major themes concerning how the course could be improved emerged from the qualitative coding of the written evaluations and semi-structured interviews. The first theme was that students want more experiences with people from different worldviews in order to challenge their own assumptions and encourage their multicultural development. The students believed that experiences with classmates was useful, but were concerned that the dearth of racial/ethnic diversity in the program, and therefore limited exposure to people who are

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<sup>2</sup> Much of the literature on multicultural competence of counselors and school counselors was previously reviewed in the author's unpublished master's thesis, Sweeney (2009).

different, may have *reinforced* rather than reduced stereotypes. The second theme had to do with the specific competencies themselves and the students' comfort level with those competencies. Students appeared to be most comfortable with, what Tomlinson-Clarke referred to as the "cognitive components of multiracial training" (p. 228), knowledge and skills, but less comfortable with awareness, which involves more self-examination. The third major theme involved the course materials. Some of the students felt similarly about the readings as they did about the lack of differing worldviews; that they actually reinforced stereotypes. The fourth and final major theme was that the students felt more comfortable talking about others than examining their own cultural self-awareness, self-knowledge, and racial-cultural development. The students felt that this was the most difficult aspect of multicultural training.

Sammons and Speight (2008) also conducted a qualitative study investigating students' thoughts about their current multicultural training. Instead of semi-structured interviews and written evaluations, participants were given open-ended prompts concerning critical incidents that they believe influenced the development of their multicultural competence. This is known as a critical incident protocol. The researchers wanted to specifically examine changes in multicultural competencies and attitudes as opposed to the critical incidents themselves. Participants were given seven prompts: 1) What specific change or changes occurred to them because of the multicultural counseling class; 2) What incident they believed was responsible for these personal changes; 3) Who was involved in the incident; 4) Which aspect of the course, if any, played a role in the incident; 5) What previous experiences might have had an impact on

the changes they described; 6) When and where the incidents responsible for their personal changes occurred; 7) When they noticed their personal changes.

There were four major themes that emerged in Sammons and Speight (2008) with regard to the type of personal change: increased knowledge, increased self-awareness, attitudinal changes, and behavioral changes. There were five themes that emerged regarding what the students attributed the change to. The majority of the students stated that interactive and didactic activities were especially influential in their personal changes. The course as a whole, instructor influence, and reflective activities also helped bring about personal change. This indicates that in relation to the course itself, activities that allow interaction with one or several people is extremely important in bringing about change. This was also reflected in the Tomlinson-Clarke (2000) and Coleman (2006) studies. Interaction with others is important when learning how to counsel those who are different from you.

It is clear that interaction is important for the multicultural training of counselors. However, there is a lack of consensus about other aspects of the course. It is also unclear how the environment of the multicultural course itself influences the development of multicultural competencies. It is also unclear how the instructor influences the development of competencies, as well as the influence of aspects of the training program separate from the course itself, such as racial/ethnic make-up of the faculty, multicultural research and personal interests of the faculty, and the training program environment and how receptive it is to student interest in multiculturalism. Clearly, more research is necessary to determine the importance of these aspects of training.

### *Training Issues: School Counseling*<sup>3</sup>

As it is highly related to school psychology, training issues in school counseling were also explored. Several studies have shown the need for more multicultural counseling training for school counselors, but few have explored what an adequate program would look like. In the 1980s several professionals wrote impassioned articles calling for counselor education programs, which include school counseling, to incorporate multiculturalism into their training (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonsalves, 1980; Ibrahim & Arredondo, 1986; Ponterotto & Casas, 1987) and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), a member organization of the ACA, published a set of multicultural competencies to be incorporated into all counselor education programs. As a response to this surge in multicultural awareness, many school counseling training programs adopted the one or two course model (Midgette & Meggert, 1991). In this model, the school counselor trainee is required to take one or two “special” courses to fulfill a multicultural requirement. Requiring one course was thought to be an adequate way to introduce multiculturalism into programs, but this way of producing culturally competent school counselors is now outdated. Stadler, Suh, Cobia, Middleton and Carney (2006) proposed an overhaul of most school counselor programs to make diversity a “core value” of the program. They proposed not only for the curriculum to change, but also to incorporate diversity into program policy through increased student interaction, increased recruitment of diverse students, and setting and continually revising multicultural goals (Stadler et al., 2006). Very few programs require their students to take more than one class or incorporate multiculturalism into every facet of the training.

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<sup>3</sup> Much of the literature on multicultural competence of counselors and school counselors was previously reviewed in the author’s unpublished master’s thesis, Sweeney (2009).

Herring (1998) asked school counselor trainees what they felt were some of the most important issues surrounding multiculturally competent training. There was a lack of consensus about what a satisfactory program should include. Some trainees believed that a focus on social change was important, while others thought that the emphasis should be on the relationship with the individual child. Still others thought that a clarification of the school counselor's role in a school with a diverse population was important to know. This lack of consensus indicates that there are a variety of needs that must be met. Dickson and Jepsen (2007) asked trainees in counselor education programs about how multiculturalism is taught in their respective programs. What the authors found is how students perceived the cultural environment of the program was a significant predictor of multicultural competence, while taking a multicultural course was not. In other words, whether or not students believed that their professors and fellow students were genuinely interested in multicultural issues was a greater predictor of multicultural competence than taking a course. This indicates that a single course may not be the best way to help students become culturally competent. The complexity and difficulty in defining multicultural competence make it difficult for individuals to agree on what is important or pinpoint how cultural competence should be taught. Herring (1998) believed that a self-examination process is important in order to determine what is most salient to each student. Dickson and Jepsen proposed a program-wide or systemic approach to multiculturalism in counselor education training programs. Both of these changes could enhance multicultural competence of the school counselor trainee.

One proposed way to increase school counselor multicultural competence is through an immersion experience. Alexander, Kruczek, and Ponterotto (2005) studied

school counselor trainees participating in such an experience in Trinidad. These students went through three phases for this experience: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation phase the students networked with counseling professionals outside of the United States, learned more than their fellow counselor trainees about Trinidad and Tobago in their courses, and participated in a series of orientation sessions. During implementation, the students attended orientation upon arrival in Trinidad, participated in experiential activities such as guidance lessons, individual counseling sessions, small group counseling sessions, and completed assignments including written case conceptualizations, interventions, oral presentations, and a portfolio. Finally, during the evaluation phase students received feedback from their international host counselors and their portfolios were reviewed. Because of the extensive process, participants in the immersion experience indicated that they were more multiculturally skilled than before going to Trinidad. However, not all training programs, students, or practicing school counselors have the resources to go to a different country and experience true immersion.

Butler-Byrd, Nieto, and Senour (2006) and Schwallie-Giddis, Anstrom, Sanchez, Sardi, and Granato (2004) both indicated that an intensive and integrative program may be necessary to meet the needs of school counselor trainees. While an immersion experience may be difficult for training programs to implement because of a lack of resources, an experiential component may help produce multiculturally competent school counselors. Specifically, Butler-Byrd et al. looked at the Community-Based Block (CBB) Program, which required its counselor trainees to “come face-to-face with the consequences of being part of a challenged community” (Butler-Byrd et al. 2006, p. 380).

While these programs did not offer the same experience as going to another country, they did provide an in-vivo experience that the authors hoped would be equally effective.

Although many trainees' reported increased multicultural competence, it is important to note that a sizable majority of the participants did not report improvement in several areas of multicultural competence, illustrating the difficulty and complexity of school counselor multicultural training.

The school counselors in the Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004) study participated in a series of seven interventions over a 9-month period. Each intervention included a didactic professional development component. They were all interactive and involved a processing component as well. Schwallie-Giddis et al. reported similar results to Butler-Byrd et al. (2006). One difference was that while the trainees felt more multiculturally skilled, they reported that they still needed to develop their multicultural skills.

Participants reported challenges such as discomfort working with linguistically and culturally diverse parents and families because they were unsure of how to act in a culturally appropriate way. Both Schwallie-Giddis et al. and Butler-Byrd et al. asked the participants for their feelings and opinions soon after completing the program. It would be interesting to see if participants' opinions change if asked several years after completing the training and working in the field.

Yeh and Arora (2003) explored continuing education for in-service school counselors. This study looked at workshop experiences for school counselors. School counselors who previously participated in multicultural workshops reported higher levels of interdependent and independent self-construal (as measured on the Self-Construal Scale; Singelis, 1994). These participants' scores correlated positively with their

universal-diverse orientation, which is the awareness and acceptance of similarities and differences between people (Yeh & Arora, 2003). Because these were workshops and not semester-long courses, it is reasonable to assume that the participants increased their awareness and knowledge of multiculturalism for school counselors, but did not increase their skills. However, it can also be assumed that raising awareness and increasing knowledge are important aspects of multicultural competence for school counselors.

Sweeney (2009) examined how the multicultural competence of school counselors is related to their multicultural training. Sweeney sent a demographic questionnaire and the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) to 999 counselors who were ACA members. Of the 307 counselors who chose to participate, 89 were school counselors. The participants were asked general demographic information as well as more specific information about their training. In order to measure the participants' multicultural competence, they were also given the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI; Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). This measure evaluates counselors' multicultural competence in the areas of Knowledge, Awareness, Relationship, and Skills. The results from the questionnaire and the MCI indicated that despite the high amount of multicultural training that the sample had received, the training did not have an impact on the participants' multicultural competence. However, in-vivo exposure, or both personal and professional exposure to people of a different culture, did appear to have an impact on the multicultural competence of the school counselors. Specifically, there were significant correlations between working with someone who is racially/ethnically different from you and MCI Knowledge (.33) and Awareness (.51). There was also a significant correlation between working with someone of a different

disability status than you and MCI Awareness (.27), as well as working with someone who is a different sexual orientation than you and MCI Skills (.23). In addition, when participants were asked on the questionnaire to add any pertinent information that contributed to their multicultural competence, there were slightly more comments about experiences that were non-professional (N=30; e.g., living with someone of a different race) than professional experiences (N=25; e.g., working with someone who practices a different religion). The results from this study indicate that it is unclear how and what type of training has an impact on the multicultural competence of school counselors.

In conclusion, many of these studies indicate that training is important in increasing school counselors' multicultural counseling competency. There is a lack of consensus as to the curriculum of these training courses (Herring, 1998). Some believe that knowledge and awareness are important and sufficient in raising one's multicultural counseling competence (Yeh & Arora, 2003; Constantine, 2002; Constantine & Gainor, 2001; Constantine & Gushue, 2003), while others believe that an experiential component to develop skills is essential (Alexander et al. 2005; Butler-Byrd et al. 2006; Schwallie-Giddis et al. 2004). Other studies imply that training does not have an impact and that exposure to and experience with people who are different is vital in developing the multicultural competence of school counselors (Sweeney, 2008). Although there have been a small number of studies examining training, more research is needed to determine the training needs of school counselors.

#### *Training Issues: School Psychology*

There has not been as much research in school psychology exploring multicultural training issues as there has been in the field of counseling in general, or school

counseling, specifically. Several articles mention that change is necessary and what changes in training might look like, but very few outline specific curricula or examine and evaluate school psychology training programs for the efficacy of their multicultural training. This section will include what authors of theoretical papers have discussed about possible changes to the school psychology multicultural training paradigm and empirical studies about current practices in multicultural school psychology training. It will also include information from papers that focus on more specific aspects of school psychology and what those authors have called for to increase the multicultural competence of different aspects of school psychology service delivery, specifically assessment, consultation, and intervention. Counseling will not be included as it is covered in the previous sections (*Training Issues: Counseling* and *Training Issues: School Counseling*).

Rogers (2005) mentioned that there is a dearth of school psychology literature on multicultural school psychology training. Therefore, she discussed pertinent findings and information from the counseling and clinical literature, including the four main approaches to multicultural training in those fields. They are the Separate Course Model, the Area of Concentration Model, the Interdisciplinary Model, and the Integration/Infusion Model. The Separate Course Model is when a training institution requires one or two courses that focus on multiculturalism and diversity. The Area of Concentration Model includes a course, but also requires the students to work firsthand with racial/ethnic minority individuals. The Interdisciplinary Model allows students to enroll in a multicultural course outside of the department that houses their program, but in a related field or specialty (e.g., the psychology department). The Integration/Infusion

Model infuses multicultural and diversity issues throughout all of the courses offered within the school psychology program. Rogers stated that it has been generally accepted that the Integration/Infusion Model is the approach that best prepares its students for working with diverse clients and that students who are trained in this way have the biggest transformations in their multicultural competence. It may be that because this approach is so successful with students in related fields, school psychology training institutions should adopt the same approach.

Rogers (2005) also discussed the content and curricula of multicultural training that could be applicable to school psychologists. In addition to the curriculum covering a wide variety of topics and concepts, Rogers mentioned four aspects of exemplary multicultural training programs, stemming from her previous research. The four aspects are employment of an integration model of multicultural training, exposure of students to a diverse clientele during applied training (practicum and internship), emphasis on diversity issues in research training, and assessment of cross-cultural knowledge on comprehensive exams. Therefore, Rogers advocated for multiculturalism to be infused throughout all aspects of a training program, as well as specific multicultural issues being addressed in course content.

Rogers (2005) published one of the only conceptual articles that specifically outlines what school psychology training institutions should do to improve multicultural training and Lopez and Rogers (2007) also mentioned the importance of meeting training needs. They acknowledged that there is a dearth of literature and that the literature that is out there has not yet been translated into practice. Gopaul-McNicol (2001) discussed the importance of school counselors and school psychologists being able to work with

culturally, linguistically, urban, and ethnically (CLUE) diverse students. While Gopaul-McNicol mentioned 15 outcome competencies (Table 2.8) that should be included in training programs, she does not talk about *how* they would be included. It is clear that although there is some theory that helps guide those who train school psychologists, much more is needed.

**Table 2.8: Major Competencies Needed for Multicultural Training (Gopaul-McNicol, 2001, pgs. 39-41; 70-72)**

Major Competency	Description
Cross-Cultural Ethical Competence	Without specialized training and expertise, working with culturally, linguistically, urban, and ethnically diverse students is unethical
Awareness of the Therapist's Own Values and Biases	It is necessary for school counselors and school psychologists to recognize the limits of their multicultural skills and refer out if necessary
Cross-Cultural Awareness	Cultural awareness and knowledge should be applied to all areas of practice including assessment, treatment plans, decisions for retention and placement, and other procedures in schools
Competence in Understanding Interracial Issues	There is a need to be aware of psychotherapeutic models that include race
Language Competencies	While it is impossible to know all languages, it is important to possess certain competencies including knowledge about differences in communication style and an understanding of how dialects may affect test performance
Acquiring Competency in the Ability to Work with Interpreters	Necessary to possess general competencies and knowledge of how to prepare a translator for psychological work with children and families
Cross-Cultural Assessment	Necessary to understand how to judge appropriateness of

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Major Competency	Description
Competencies	a measure for a particular student and recognize appropriate informal assessment measures
Cross-Cultural Counseling Competencies	Necessary to understand the values, beliefs, behaviors, customs, and expectations of families from different backgrounds and how these things may affect the counseling relationship
Cross-Cultural Issues in Conflict Resolution	Need to understand that one's worldview can affect all kinds of relationships, which can lead to conflict
Competence in Special Education Prevention	Important paradigm shift of special education teachers seeing themselves as special education prevention specialists rather than treatment specialists can be facilitated by school psychologists and school counselors
Competencies in Knowing the Bilingual Education Curriculum	Necessary to know about available and effective programs
Cross-Cultural Consultation Competencies	Should have an awareness of how a family's traditional practices may affect relationships and be ready to consult with several different kinds of community members if necessary
Cross-Cultural Research Competencies	Need to be familiar with current research pertaining to all types of culturally, linguistically, urban, and ethnically diverse groups
Competence in Empowering Families Through Community-Based Organizations	Must be able to direct families to resources outside of the school to supplement school services
Competence in Pediatric/Health Psychology	Necessary to possess awareness of effect of health issues on students and the ability to rule out medical issues in effort to prevent misdiagnosis

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In addition to the conceptual literature, there is also some empirical research on school psychology multicultural training. Rogers (2006) looked specifically at multicultural training in school psychology programs. She examined 17 programs that experts in the field determined were exemplary in their multicultural training. Of the 17 programs, 14 were doctoral-level and 3 were non-doctoral. Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with the program director, one other faculty member, and two students from each program. The participants were asked about their curriculum, recruitment strategies, retention strategies, institutional climate and resources. The interviews were then coded by multiple raters. Strong interrater reliability was demonstrated.

The results of the Rogers (2006) article demonstrated that there were several components shared by all of these exemplary programs. One common component was that nearly all of the programs utilized an integration model, which Rogers (2005) indicated was the best approach to training school psychology students to work with a diverse clientele. The majority of the programs (88%) also utilized another multicultural curriculum model, such as separate course, area of concentration, or interdisciplinary. The students in all of these programs were exposed to diverse clients in training and the majority of the programs (94%) required a specific multicultural course. In relation to research, all of the programs had at least one faculty member who was involved with multicultural research, with 94% of these professors being full professors. The same percentage (94%) was involved in diversity initiatives on the university's campus, helping to create an environment in which students felt supported when they expressed interest in diversity issues. The same percentage of programs (94%) enrolled students

who were bilingual and 82% of the programs had adjunct minority faculty. While these programs certainly are not perfect in producing multiculturally competent school psychologists, they share common philosophies and training initiatives that warrant their exemplary multicultural training reputations. In order for more school psychology training programs to be exemplary in this area, they may need to adopt some of these techniques. More research is needed to determine how other training institutions can also become exemplary.

Newell et al., (2010) took much of the work that Rogers (2005, 2006) had done and introduced the Best Evidence Model for Multicultural Training in School Psychology. The model (Tables 2.9 & 2.10) has 7 components that are based on current information on multicultural competencies and models of multicultural training.

**Table 2.9: Best evidence model for multicultural training in school psychology: Program/faculty-level (Newell et al., 2010, p. 260)**

Components	Description
1: Integration-separate course model	Separate course; integrate multicultural content into all courses; students completing multicultural cases during practicum
2: Multicultural research	Cultural considerations in research questions, conceptualization, design, and analysis; potential implications for target population; students on research team part of the process
3a: Recruitment and retention	Recruitment: develop strategies for faculty & student, document implementation of strategies; Retention: program incentives for completion, student annual reviews to include thoughts about program
3b: Faculty professional development	Community resources for presentations, trainings, and workshops for faculty; professional development via conferences; consume research related to diverse

In a review of multicultural training models, Newell et al. (2010) found the most support for the integration model. However, it is not considered to be best practice to utilize only one model, therefore they also added the separate course model to create component one. Component 2 recognizes not only the importance of having a diverse sample, but also a need to consider how the design, conceptualization, and analysis impact the research and the target population. Component 3a is related to the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff. Component 3b is also related to retention as it relates to feedback about the diversity of the program as well as faculty professional development.

**Table 2.10: Best evidence model for multicultural training in school psychology: Student-level (Newell et al., 2010, pp. 261-262)**

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Components	Description
4: Knowledge about different groups	Understanding of: historical context; group experiences, strengths, beliefs, family structures, child rearing; group beliefs about mental health & traditional healing practices; legal/ethical guidelines for service delivery; social & institutional challenges
5: Translation of knowledge to service delivery	Understanding of: cultural context of assessment, intervention & consultation; nondiscriminatory assessment; alternative assessment models; culturally appropriate intervention design & evaluation; multicultural consultation; work with interpreters; second-language development; acculturation; program evaluation; systems consultation & intervention
6: Practical experiences	Complete at least one culturally-appropriate assessment, intervention & consultation case with minority clients; review of literature for minority clients; receive individual feedback with tape supervision;

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7: Evaluation of multicultural competence	Multicultural competence should be evaluated throughout training program; evaluation should include coursework, faculty annual reviews of students, student self-reports
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Newell et al. (2010) state that knowledge about diverse groups is the “foundation of multicultural competence” (p. 266). Therefore component 4 is an essential part of a student’s multicultural competence. Component 5 helps students transfer that knowledge into emerging skills. Component 6 allows students to learn these skills in a different way and affords the opportunity for feedback and guidance through practicum supervision. This is also in line with a more recent suggestion by Lopez and Rogers (2010). They mention the importance of collaboration and partnership between the university and field supervisors in creating multiculturally competent school psychologists. Students should also be constantly evaluated by faculty and by themselves concerning their multicultural competence. With constant feedback, the students will be better able to change and refine their knowledge and skills. Component 7 is also an essential component to students’ multicultural competence.

*Training Issues: Assessment*

Training issues in assessment in school psychology have largely focused on slightly altering assessment practices in order to accommodate English-language learners (ELL’s). This was achieved by school psychologist trainees learning the Spanish versions of popular cognitive assessment tests (e.g., WISC-IV Spanish) or learning nonverbal tests (e.g., NNAT-2; TONI-4) or being trained to administer tests through

interpreters. This however, poses a number of problems. Sometimes the interpreters themselves are not well-trained. Additionally, the interpreter's dialect of the language may be different from the student's dialect. (Vasquez-Nuttal et al., 2007) There may also not be a direct translation between the English word and the word in another language, causing an issue with interpretation of results. A graduate institution would have to train their students regarding all of these issues in order for the students to be competent. Vasquez-Nuttal et al. acknowledge this difficulty, mentioning that there is a lack of education and training on the part of the examiner and that additional attention to this area of competency is warranted. This demonstrates the need for a more standardized method of training school psychologists in multiculturally appropriate assessment procedures. Before this can be accomplished, there must be some consensus about what a curriculum should include.

#### *Training Issues: Consultation*

The first component of Ingraham's (2000) Multicultural School Consultation Framework (outlined in Table 2.5) describes skills that a school psychologist should learn and develop regarding multicultural school consultation. While the domains of this component are important skills to possess, Ingraham does not describe how trainers of school psychologists should help their students develop these skills. In a dissertation study concerning culturally relevant consultation for school psychologists (Sirmans, 2004), there was consensus among the 219 school psychologists surveyed that they had received relatively little training at the pre-service level. Nearly 35% of participants had not received any training in culturally-relevant consultation. Approximately 55% of respondents received only one type of training, which for the majority of them (54.2%)

was class discussion. Only 34.2% had a specific course in their graduate training. Despite their dearth of training, the majority of the practitioners believed that culture was an influential variable and that they regularly addressed issues of culture in their consultation cases. The results of this study emphasize the need for a comprehensive working model for training school psychologist practitioners in multicultural consultation.

#### *Training Issues: Intervention & Prevention*

Similar to Ingraham (2000), Ingraham and Oka (2006) discuss several important considerations when reviewing interventions. In addition to the components discussed in *Intervention Conceptualizations* of this document and in Table 2.7, Ingraham and Oka mention several things that school psychologists should strive to do in integrating multiculturalism into the evidence-based intervention (EBI) movement. School psychologists should examine why interventions work, consider the nature of the therapeutic context, consider cultural validity, and integrate cultural diversity and methodological diversity into the EBI movement. While these are important things for school psychologists to do, there is no mention of the best way to help them develop these skills. It is important that training institutions understand the best way to help students become multiculturally competent in this area.

#### *School Psychology Training Issues Conclusion*

Although there is some research on this topic, it is clear that more is needed. There is much that is not known about training and how school psychologists become multiculturally competent. The field of counseling, in general, and school counseling, specifically, offer helpful insights about how school psychologists can improve their

multicultural training. However, while these professions have commonalities, they are not the same. There are some aspects of multicultural training that would not be helpful to counselors, but are vital for school psychologists and vice versa. In essence, school psychologists need their own research to determine their unique multicultural training needs.

### *Summary of Training Issues*

There have been many articles pertaining to multicultural training issues published in the field of counseling and the specialties of school counseling and school psychology. While these articles have been numerous and varied there are a number of similarities and general themes that emerge. Many of the qualitative articles have focused on interviewing current students (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000; Sammons & Speight, 2008; Herring, 1998; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007; Rogers, 2006). While it is important to understand how students understand their training, it is equally vital that there is an understanding of how others conceptualize their multicultural training. There is also a lack of consensus both within (Herring) and between these articles about what an exemplary multicultural training paradigm would include. Interview studies of practitioners would provide an important perspective about the validity of multicultural training practices. Yeh and Arora (2003) and Sweeney (2009) specifically mention the importance of examining the multicultural competence of in-service school counselors and school psychologists.

Another theme that arose from the studies was the importance of interaction with others who are different from oneself. Tomlinson-Clarke (2000), Sammons and Speight (2008), Coleman (2006), Dickson and Jepsen (2007), and Rogers (2006) all mentioned

that this interaction was important in classes and training institutions. Specifically, Dickson and Jepsen discussed the environment of the school, while Tomlinson-Clarke and Rogers discussed the interaction between students within a multicultural course. Butler-Byrd et al. (2006); Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004), and Alexander et al. (2005) also argued about the importance of interaction with people who are different, but they mentioned this in the context of an immersion program. While there is a lack of consensus about aspects of multicultural training, it appears that this type of interaction was stressed as important in several articles.

Issues surrounding multicultural training of counselors, school counselors, and school psychologists are a relatively unexplored area of research. While there has been some research on the topic, there is a lack of consensus about what is most important in this type of training. Additionally, much of these insights were gleaned from current students as opposed to practitioners. Clearly, more research in this area is warranted; specifically concerning those who have already graduated from their programs.

### *Conclusion*

There is a dearth of literature on multicultural competence in school psychology. While counseling, in general, and school counseling, in particular, have conducted more studies and generated more theory on multiculturalism, they too would benefit from increased attention to this issue. There are several ways in which these three fields conceptualize multicultural competence, many of which stem from the work of D.W. Sue and colleagues. In particular, counseling, school counseling, and school psychology all possess one conceptualization that includes domains of competence. It is imperative that school psychologists are trained to be competent in all of these domains. More research

is needed to determine how they can be trained. In addition to examining the specific courses that are taught on multiculturalism, additional research is needed to examine all aspects of training that may influence the development of multicultural competencies.

The current research study attempts to fill some of the gap in research on training. Because there is so little research on the topic, exploratory and qualitative research is necessary to guide future quantitative research that will be generalizable. The construct of multicultural competence is not fully understood, especially as it relates to the school psychology specialty. Qualitative research will help provide insight about how practitioners conceptualize this competence as well as how they believe they develop specific competencies.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

Researchers and scholars have called for an increase in the use of qualitative methodology in multicultural psychology (Ponterotto, 2002). It was demonstrated in Chapter II that school psychology has a dearth of multicultural literature and much of the extant literature is conceptual in nature. Therefore, there is a need for theory development in multicultural school psychology. A qualitative method that has received increased attention in the psychology literature is grounded theory (Fassinger, 2005; Pope-Davis et al., 2002; Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988).

#### *Design and Rationale*

Grounded theory is a “general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). The final result of a grounded theory study is the creation of a substantive theory; one that is “grounded” in the data that has been collected. Therefore, the purpose of grounded theory is theory generation, not theory testing (Merriam, 2002). The theory emerges from inductive inquiry and is “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Conducting an interview is a common way to collect data in grounded theory as the researcher is the “primary instrument of data collection” (Merriam, 2002, p. 142). For the current study, interviews were conducted in order to complete two research goals. The first research goal is to devise a theory of how school psychologists define their own multicultural competence. The second research goal is to generate a theory of school psychologists’ multicultural competence development.

Because there is a dearth of research on this topic, a grounded theory interview study helped to devise a theory about how this development occurs for school psychologists.

### *Participants*

A purposive sampling technique was employed to solicit participants for this study. Purposive sampling (Mason, 2002) is when participants are selected because they fit particular criteria; they are *not* selected to be representative of the general population. In this research, participants were selected according to the criteria discussed below.

There were six school psychologists who participated in this study. They all volunteered to participate in the study. The aim was to solicit participants who were able to both reflect on their multicultural training in their graduate school and their early experiences with diverse individuals in their work in schools. Therefore, only practicing school psychologists working in diverse schools, defined as having at least 50% racial/ethnic minority student population, at least 40% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches, *or* at least 20% foreign-born or immigrant student population were eligible for this study. The purpose of the current study is to formulate a theory about the development of multicultural competence in school psychologists. School psychologists who have recently graduated from their training program will be able to reflect on both their graduate school training and work experiences. Therefore, only school psychologists who are in their first five years of practice were considered for this study. Because generalization is not the aim of qualitative studies (Morse, 1994), participants were not selected for any other criteria such as race, gender, or degree level. However, this researcher attempted to create as diverse a sample as possible in order to contribute to the richness of data and reflect a wide variety of experiences.

### *Participant Description*

There were six school psychologists in three school districts who participated in the current study (discussed further in *Procedure* section). All of the districts were very large; one district had over 75,000 students and the other two had over 100,000 students each. Two of the school districts were majority minority, meaning that Caucasian students made up less than 50% of the district's student population. One district was majority Caucasian with approximately 65% of students identified as this race/ethnicity. All of the participants filled out a questionnaire about their personal demographic and training information (Appendix D). The demographic information for each participant is listed below in table 3.1:

**Table 3.1: Demographic Information of Participants**

---

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Languages</u>
ANNIE	21-30	White/ American-Indian	Female	USA	English, Spanish some Sign Lang
CAMILA	21-30	Hispanic	Female	Peru	English, Spanish
IAN	31-40	Asian	Male	India	English, some Tamil
ERICA	21-30	White	Female	USA	English
HOLLY	21-30	White	Female	USA	English

RICHARD	31-40	White	Male	USA	English, some Spanish
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As illustrated above, four of the participants (67%) were female and all of the females were in the lowest age bracket, 21-30. The two men (33%) were older, 31-40 as they had both attended doctoral-level programs. Ian, however, did not complete his degree whereas Richard finished his Ph.D. Three of the participants (50%) self-identified as White/Caucasian. One participant (17%) identified herself as White/American-Indian. One participant (17%) self-identified as Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and one (17%) checked off that she was of Hispanic/Latino origin. All of the participants who self-identified as White/Caucasian were born in the United States (67%). Two participants were born in different countries (33%). Two participants (33%) spoke more than one language fluently. In both cases, the other language was Spanish. Three participants (50%) also mentioned that they spoke some of another language, but were not fluent. During her interview, Erica mentioned that she studied French in school, but did not list it on the questionnaire as a language that she spoke.

The participants also answered some questions about their training. Results of the training questionnaire are listed below in table 3.2:

**Table 3.2: Training Information of Participants**

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<u>Training Information</u>	<u>Highest Degree</u>	<u>Specialty/Field</u>	<u>Year of Graduation</u>
ANNIE	Master's	School Psych	2008
CAMILA	Specialist	School Psych	2008

IAN	Master's	School Psych	2003
ERICA	Specialist	School Psych	2008
HOLLY	Specialist	School Psych	2007
RICHARD	Doctorate (Ph.D.)	School Psych	2007

---

Two of the school psychologists (33%) earned Master's degrees and three (50%) earned Specialist degrees. One participant (17%) earned a Ph.D. However, Ian mentioned that he had been enrolled in a doctoral program, but never finished his dissertation. He therefore received the same type and amount of training and coursework as Richard, but never completed his final research requirement. Although Annie and Ian stated that they earned Master's degrees, they both participated in internships indicating that they hold Specialist degrees as well. All of the participants earned degrees in school psychology. Three participants (50%) earned their degrees in 2008. Two (33%) completed the degree in 2007. Ian completed his degree in 2003, but did not work as a school psychologist upon graduation. He was in his 5<sup>th</sup> year of practice as a school psychologist at the time of the interviews.

The participants were also diverse in regards to the school settings within which they practiced. Some of the participants declined to reveal their schools so specific demographic information about the actual schools cannot be provided. However, information about their level and number of schools served can be included. Below is information about their schools at the time of the interview:

**Table 3.3: Participants' Current Schools of Practice**

---

School Information	Level	Number of Schools
ANNIE	Middle	1
CAMILA	Elementary	2
IAN	High	1
ERICA	Elementary	2
HOLLY	High	1
RICHARD	Middle	1

There was an even split in the amount of participants who worked at a particular level of school. Two (33%) participants worked primarily in elementary schools, two (33%) worked in a middle school, and two (33%) worked in a high school. Only the elementary-level school psychologists worked in more than one school. While Erica also served children who attended a high school, she was there very infrequently. Additionally, this school was not a part of the district that she worked in; she described it as a non-public school. Some of the children who lived within the school district boundaries went to this school because of emotional disabilities. Therefore, Erica did not work in the school but rather for some of the children enrolled in the school. Because of Erica's limited contact in that school and its unique circumstances, it was not included in the above table, but information about her experiences at the non-public school were included in Chapter IV.

#### *Procedure*

Several large mid-Atlantic school districts were targeted for soliciting participants for this study. The researcher sent an initial email to coordinators of psychological

services in three of these districts asking for if they were willing to help solicit participants. This researcher received return emails from all coordinators. A letter was then emailed outlining participant criteria (Appendix A). A nomination form (Appendix B) was also emailed to the coordinators of psychological services to nominate at least five potential school psychologists who have worked for five or fewer years as a school psychologist since graduate school and currently work in a diverse school. A diverse school was defined as having: (a) at least 50% racial/ethnic minority student population, (b) at least 40% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches, *or* (c) at least 20% foreign-born or immigrant student population. One coordinator supplied a list of “younger” school psychologists in the district. This researcher then contacted several participants until two agreed to participate. Another coordinator sent out an email to all of the psychologists in the district with information about and criteria for participation in the current study. The first two psychologists to contact this researcher were asked to participate. The third coordinator agreed to help this researcher, but did not reply to subsequent emails. This researcher then contacted coordinators of psychological services of two other school districts, both of whom did not respond. This researcher then utilized snowball sampling (Flick, 2006) to solicit the final two participants. This researcher emailed a school psychologist who was currently practicing in a school district where this researcher did not yet have any participants. Two school psychologists from this school district agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, all of the participants in this study were self-selected. They volunteered for the study. It is important to point out that the participants may be especially interested in topics of multiculturalism, which may mean that their responses are not representative of all early career school psychologists.

When she received emails of interest from potential participants, the researcher replied via email and asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. Those school psychologists who agreed to participate were screened to ensure that they met criteria for the study. One participant, Ian, had been out of school for longer than 5 years as he had graduated in 2003 (see Table 3.2), but was included because he was able to provide a rich description of his multicultural experiences in his current work and reflect on his graduate training. Additionally, this participant added diversity to the sample as a South-Asian, foreign-born male.

This researcher established a time for the initial interview via email for all participants. As a part of this email correspondence the researcher sent all participants a letter of informed consent (Appendix C) and a short survey asking about demographic information and basic questions about their multicultural training (Appendix D). After the initial interview was conducted, the researcher contacted the participant again via email to set up a second interview. Two interviews were conducted with all participants except for Ian, who participated in four interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then coded for themes. Please refer to the Data Analysis section of the current chapter for more information.

#### *Operationalizing “Diverse School”*

It was important that the criteria for “diverse school” were operationalized. What one school psychologist may consider diverse, another school psychologist may not. Additionally, it was imperative that the school psychologists participating in the current study were working in schools in which they are actually utilizing their multicultural training and potentially learning new skills because of the people that they are interacting

with. The following criteria for a diverse school were determined from census data. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 75 percent of people in the United States are Caucasian. Therefore, any school with a racial/ethnic minority population of greater than 25 percent would be considered diverse with regards to race/ethnicity. However, for the purpose of this study, it was important that school psychologists have more racial minorities in their school in order to interact with them on a more regular basis. Therefore, the school psychologists in this study would have to work in a school with at least 50 percent racial/ethnic minority population.

According to 2008 Census data, 18.5 percent of families with children under the age of 18 live below the poverty line. For the purposes of this study, school psychologists working in schools with 40 percent or more of the population receiving free or reduced-price lunches (FARMS %) were considered. As of March 2003, 11.7 percent of the United States population was people who were foreign-born (U.S. Census). Therefore, school psychologists working in schools with at least 20 percent foreign-born or immigrant population were considered for this study. If any of the schools met any of these criteria, the school psychologists working there were considered. It is important to recognize that the data related to these criteria is almost always collected in schools and is therefore more readily available. Data on immigration, sexual orientation, religion, and even socioeconomic status is often more difficult to collect because the information is more sensitive, transient, or differs depending on the region. Although school-wide data is often not available on these populations, these forms of diversity were addressed directly in the interview.

#### *Data Collection*

In the current study, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire concerning demographic and training information were used to collect data. The interviews were used to develop a theory of multicultural development of school psychologists as it relates to graduate training and early career experiences. The demographic and training questionnaire was used to obtain general information about the type of training that the participants have received. The demographic portion of the questionnaire also served as a secondary means for determining eligibility for the study. The training aspect of the questionnaire served as a primer for the interview. The answers to the questions on the training part of the questionnaire allowed for follow-up questions and clarification during the initial interview and subsequent interviews.

#### *Interview*

The primary form of data collection was a semi-structured interview with the participants. Although there was a list of questions that all participants were asked, questions were added or altered in order to clarify responses and follow-up on responses to the training portion of the questionnaire. Additionally, all subjects participated in follow-up interviews in order to clarify responses from the initial interview. The number of interviews ranged from 2 to 4. The duration of each interview was approximately one hour, with some lasting up to nearly two hours. All interviews were taped and transcribed for data analysis.

#### *Pilot Interviews*

Prior to this researcher's dissertation proposal, one pilot interview was conducted. This pilot interview was conducted with a friend of the researcher. This pilot participant had graduated from a doctoral school psychology program within the last year and was

working in a school with a primarily African-American population. The pilot participant was given the letter of informed consent, the demographic and training questionnaire, and the interview was conducted. The pilot participant did not believe that the letter of informed consent needed any changes, but suggested changes for the demographic and training questionnaire and interview.

The pilot participant suggested adding two questions to the demographic portion of the questionnaire. Questions 4 and 5 were added, asking the participants about their country of birth and number of languages spoken. The pilot participant also suggested changes to the interview. As a result of the pilot interview, the section asking each participant about their practicum and internship experiences was added. The pilot participant also suggested adding question 3, asking the participants about the grade level of their schools. The latter part of the question (3b) was added by the researcher. The pilot participant did not suggest any other major changes. After conducting the pilot interview, the researcher sent the pilot participant the new questionnaire and interview transcript. The pilot participant stated that no other changes were necessary.

This researcher's dissertation committee provided feedback that there were too many questions in the interview. They stated that the interview felt more like a survey than a semi-structured interview. The researcher pared down the number of questions and sub-questions and made them more open-ended. Depending on the response of the participant, the researcher probed for more information. Additionally, all of the subjects participated in at least one follow-up interview allowing the researcher to ask more specific and clarifying questions.

A set of second pilot interviews was conducted. The updated interview format and questions were conducted with three practicing school psychologists. All three of the second round of pilot interview participants were female. One pilot participant was Caucasian, one was Asian-American, and the third was African-American. All three women worked in “diverse schools” (operationalized in Chapter III). Two of the women had practiced for five years or fewer while the third had been working as a school psychologist for over five years. Although this pilot participant did not meet the criteria for the study, her input was invaluable as she had been involved in similar research and could provide valuable feedback to this researcher. One initial and one follow-up interview were conducted with each of the pilot participants. None of the participants suggested a change to the content or format of the questions. They felt that the interview was comprehensive and open-ended and did not require alterations.

The interview (Table 3.4) had ten main questions. The first three questions were introductory questions, designed to help the participant feel at ease. These ask for general information regarding when the participants graduated, how long they have been practicing school psychologists, and the types of schools that they have worked in. The fourth question was open-ended and was intended to get the interviewee talking about their experiences broadly. This question was also asked before introducing the concept of multicultural competence. The order of questions was selected because this researcher did not want the interviewees to base their initial answers on what they thought they should say. This researcher did not want the given definition of multicultural competence to change any of the interviewee’s responses. This question was added as a direct suggestion by a member of this researcher’s dissertation committee. The fifth and sixth

questions introduced the concept of multicultural competence. The interviewee was given the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)'s definition (originally from Davis, 1997) and asked if they agree or not. They were then asked about their own multicultural competence. The seventh question was a statement to the interviewee rather than a question. The eighth question was a direct reflection of Rogers' (2006) research on the development of multicultural competence for school psychology students. The ninth question is a reflection of this researcher's unpublished master's thesis (Sweeney, 2009). Several participants in the Sweeney study stated the importance of their non-professional lives in their multicultural competence. Additionally, this question is a "catch-all" question, allowing the interviewee to add anything that he or she was not asked directly. The tenth question is another "catch-all" question for the interviewee who forgot to state something earlier in the interview.

**Table 3.4: Interview Questions and Sub-questions**

- 
1. When did you graduate from graduate school?
  2. How long have you been a practicing school psychologist?
    - a. Did you take any time off between graduate school and practicing as a school psychologist?
  3. What types of schools have you worked at?
    - a. Please specify level (preschool, elementary, middle, high).
    - b. Please specify any special programs that you have worked in (emotional disabilities program, autism program, etc.)
  4. Let's talk about your current experience with multicultural issues in your work. Tell me about what you've encountered.
    - a. How are things going?
    - b. Are there children/families/co-workers with whom it's been especially difficult to work with?
    - c. What are you learning? What works well for you? What seems difficult?
  5. Introduce concept of multicultural competence: Provide definition orally and on separate sheet of paper for interviewee to look at from NASP website: "Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.

- a. Do you agree with this definition of multicultural competence? If not, what is multicultural competence to you?
  6. How about your own multicultural competence? What are your thoughts about it?
    - a. What competencies do you wish you had?
  7. Please keep in mind your own view of multicultural competence as well as NASP's definition in the remainder of your responses.
  8. A lot of training programs include diversity training so it would be helpful to get a better idea of how diversity and multiculturalism was integrated into your training (probe for information about coursework, practicum, environment. The following questions [a-c] may be used to gather this information)?
    - a. Did you have courses in multicultural competence? If so, what did you find valuable/not valuable?
    - b. Did your practicum and/or internship involve work with culturally diverse clients? How did this influence your multicultural competence development?
    - c. How did the environment of your program influence your multicultural competence development? What was helpful/not helpful?
  9. Since completing your training, have you had any experiences, professional or non-professional/personal, that have contributed to the development of your multicultural competence? Explain.
  10. Is there anything else concerning your multicultural competence development that you would like to include?
- 

### *Demographic and Training Questionnaire*

A secondary form of data collection was the demographic and training questionnaire (Appendix D). The questionnaire was separated into two sections: demographic and training. The first five questions of the questionnaire were demographic in nature. These questions solicited information concerning each participant's age, race/ethnicity, gender, country of birth, and languages spoken. The remaining three questions asked basic information about each participant's training experience. The first question in the training section asked about the academic degree of each participant. Differences between people of a different degree level and a different type of degree were important considerations in data analysis. Additionally, this question asked the participants about when the degree was obtained. This helped eliminate participants who

were nominated, but did not fit the criteria. The next two questions helped to control for possible additional multicultural training. Participants with additional degrees, in a related or unrelated field, may have received more training that influenced their later multicultural training and experiences.

### *Data Analysis*

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) data analysis in grounded theory primarily involves coding procedures. The process of coding involves the data being “broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). In this study open, axial, and selective coding was utilized to generate theory from the data that was collected. Below is a description of these procedures and how they were employed in the present study.

### *Coding*

*Open Coding.* Open coding is the first step in examining the data collected in a grounded theory research study. It is the part of the data analysis that “pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). During this process, the data is broken down and organized into discrete categories. It is important to mention that these discrete categories are created as a result of the researcher’s own biases and assumptions. In qualitative studies, researchers are not expected to divorce their own beliefs from the data. Rather, they question both their own and others’ assumptions about these new categories that have been created. This constant examination of the categories and the assumptions embedded in the categories will lead to new discoveries and ways of organizing the data.

In this study, the interview transcriptions from each of the participants were read and reviewed several times by this researcher. The data was organized into categories. The researcher utilized line-by-line data coding, identified repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), and using abstraction and generalization (Guignon, 1983). Using abstraction and generalization specifically allowed this researcher to “(1) divide an interview transcript into separate units, (2) remove these units from their context, (3) identify abstract and general “categories”, (4) extract the “content” from these categories, and (5) describe this content in formal terms” (Packer, 2011, p. 59). The researcher then reviewed these categories and identified the biases and assumptions that are embedded in those categories. Examining the data in this way allowed the researcher to create new categories or understand the extant categories in a different way. This allowed for a clearer explanation when discussing and interpreting the results.

*Axial Coding.* The process of axial coding often overlaps with open coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), this is to be expected and is perfectly acceptable. Axial coding is “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (p. 97). In other words, the categories created in open coding are now broken down further into subcategories. During this analysis, the categories are at times called into question and new categories emerge. Therefore, the researcher is often utilizing open coding procedures while formulating subcategories in axial coding.

For the current study, after the categories (core categories) were created in open coding, the researcher created subcategories. Abstraction and generalization were also

utilized during this phase. The subcategories (constructs and then key categories) that emerged then informed the researcher as to the accuracy of the core categories. In this way, the biases and assumptions underlying categories were constantly called into question. This allowed this researcher to create more accurate categories and subcategories and interpret them more accurately.

*Selective Coding.* Selective coding is the final step in the coding aspect of the data collection. Selective coding is “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). This is the process of using all of the data that has been collected to create a grounded theory. A core category is the central idea or concept that connects all of the other categories to create a theory that is grounded in the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that this final step is not entirely dissimilar from axial coding; however, it is performed at a higher level of analysis.

In this study, selective coding involved an examination of the core categories. Similarities and differences between the categories were considered. The constructs and key categories were also examined in this way, helping to determine their accuracy and applicability to the core categories. Overarching constructs that explicate the categories and therefore the experiences of the participants, were created. In this way, a grounded theory was created.

### *Validity*

Validity is an important consideration for any research study, qualitative or quantitative. It is necessary to verify the results by examining the data collection

procedures, data analysis, and interpretation. Researchers using qualitative methods, including grounded theory, should keep several things in mind when analyzing their results. First, would a different researcher come to the same conclusions? This helps to verify that the theory devised by the researcher is grounded in the data. Next, the researcher should ensure that the results accurately reflect each participant's depth and breadth of experiences. It is also the case that the data analysis should allow for all of the participants' experiences to be included and thoroughly described. Analysis that is too restrictive would not allow for all participants to be accurately represented. Finally, consumers of the research should be able to compare the results to other studies. In order to do so, there must be enough description to allow for comparison between studies. Creswell (1998) described eight procedures that can be employed to address these validity issues in qualitative methodology. Three of these procedures were utilized in the current research, as Creswell recommended using at least two of them. The procedures that were used in this study were identifying researcher bias, thick description, and member checking.

*Identifying Researcher Bias.* The first step that this researcher took towards reducing the threat of validity was *identifying researcher bias*. It is not possible to design a value- or bias-free study (Janesick, 1994). Therefore, it is important for the consumers of the research to understand the assumptions and perspectives that could impact the study. The main assumption that this researcher made was that multicultural competence is not a discrete skill, but rather a developmental process. This researcher believes that school psychologists will continue to develop their own multicultural competencies throughout their careers. This perspective could skew the researcher's data analysis by

paying more attention to answers that support that perspective. It is also important to point out that this researcher is an African-American female; therefore, there was a cultural mismatch between her and all of the interviewees. Both race (Twine & Warren, 2000) and gender (Arendell, 1997; DeVault, 1990; Wolf, 1996) have the ability to impact the responses of the participants and how they interpret the questions being asked. This researcher was aware of this dynamic throughout the interview and coding process and addressed it through *critical subjectivity*. This allowed the researcher to have a heightened self-awareness throughout the data collection and analysis. In addition, the remainder of the procedures to address validity also helped to address researcher bias.

*Thick Description.* It is very important for consumers of qualitative research to be able to come to their own conclusions about the results of studies. This allows for people to make their own judgments about how transferable the data is to other populations (Creswell, 1998). All of the interviews in the current study were transcribed verbatim and direct quotations were included in the Results section (Chapter IV). This allows readers of the study to come to their own conclusions about the results.

*Member Checking.* This is the process of soliciting feedback from the participants. *Member checking* allows the participants to verify the interpretation of the data. This interviewer utilized member checking in two ways. During the follow-up interviews, this interviewer asked the participants to clarify some of their responses from the initial interview. All participants participated in this form of member checking. The interviewer also sent the participants themes produced from the coding procedure and some of their quotes that contributed to those themes. They had the opportunity to communicate with this researcher if they felt that their words were misinterpreted or if

they disagreed with any of the emerging themes. All of the participants were contacted via email and were provided a document that included some of the categories and some of their individual quotes that were presented as part of that category. All of the participants were contacted twice via email except for the participants that responded. These participants wrote back to the researcher after receiving only one email. This researcher heard back from two participants, Camila and Holly. Both participants believed that their quotes and the categories that they represented were accurate. Holly expressed the desire to review some of her quotes to ensure her privacy and anonymity. This researcher sent her a rough draft of the Results chapter and the “Participant Description” portion of the current chapter. Holly provided feedback about the quotes and examples that were concerning to her. This researcher changed the examples until Holly was confident that her privacy was protected.

While all of the interviewees participated in the first form of member checking, only two of them participated in the follow-up after the interviews were completed. There are several possible reasons for this. One of the participants, Annie, was in the process of moving aboard when this researcher sent out the follow-up member checking emails. It is likely that she was unable to respond. Additionally, for all of the participants, it had been at least two months since the final interview. They may have become less interested in additional participation over time. A final possible reason for the lack of post-interview member checking is that they may have read the sample quotes and themes that this researcher sent and were satisfied with the result. However, they may have not had the time or the inclination to respond given that they may have been happy with the results and the way that they were represented.



## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

The following chapter includes the results and findings from interviews conducted with six practicing school psychologists. The chapter will begin with a general discussion of what participants experienced professionally in relation to multiculturalism. There will then be a discussion of the school psychologists' training experiences. This will include graduate school training and additional professional training experiences. Although the majority of responses focused on professional experiences, they also included personal ones that the participants felt contributed to their multicultural competence development. The next section will focus on these personal experiences. There will then be a discussion of the participants' multicultural competence conceptualization. This chapter will conclude with a conceptualization of participants' view of school psychology multicultural competence and a grounded theory of school psychologists' multicultural competence development.

#### *Core Categories, Constructs, Key Categories*

As previously mentioned in Chapter III, participants' experiences were analyzed through the grounded theory methodology of open, axial, and selective coding. The results of these categories are shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Core Categories, Constructs, and Key Categories**

Core Categories	Constructs	Key Categories
Professional Experiences	Parent Relationships	Parental Involvement
		Communication with Parents
		Understanding Families' Worldview
	Impact of Staff	Staff Pressure to "Perform"
		Multicultural Competence of Staff
		Open and Honest Conversations
	Direct Work with Students	Assessment
		Counseling/Relationships/Interventions
	Systemic Influences	National Culture/Influence
		State Culture/Influence
		District Culture/Influence
		School Climate/Culture
Training: Graduate School and Other	Courses	Amount of Courses
		Instructors
		Reading/Assignments
		Class Discussions
	Environment	Faculty
		Cohort
		Feeling of "Openness"
	Practicum/Internship	Practicum
		Internship
	Grad School: Foundational	Training vs. Experience
	Additional Professional Learning Experiences	Conferences
		Professional Development at Work
	Personal Experiences	Background/Exposure
Desire to Work in Diverse Setting		
Personal Relationships		

Three core categories emerged. The core categories are Professional Experiences, Training: Graduate School and Other, and Personal Experiences.

The Professional Experiences category was the largest core category as participants spent the majority of the interviews talking about their early career

experiences and how those experiences contributed to their multicultural competence. Within this core category, four constructs emerged. These constructs are Parental Relationships, Impact of Staff, Direct Work with Students, and Systemic Influences. Within each construct, a number of key categories also emerged.

Under the next core category, Training: Graduate School and Other, there were five constructs. These were Graduate School: Foundational, Courses, Environment, Practicum/Internship, and Additional Professional Training Opportunities. Within these constructs, there were also key categories.

The final core category, Professional Experiences, included three constructs. These were Background/Exposure, Desire to Work in Diverse Setting, and Personal Relationships. As this section was shorter than the other two, no key categories emerged from the constructs. The constructs were specific enough that they did not need to be broken down further into more descriptive key categories. The core categories and constructs are defined below in Table 4.2:

**Table 4.2: Descriptions of Core Categories and Constructs**

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Core Categories & Constructs	Description
Professional Experiences	Experiences that participants have had in their first years of practice
Parent Relationships	Direct interactions and experiences with parents of students at the participants' respective schools
Impact of Staff	School staff and how they impact multicultural issues at the participants' respective schools
Direct Work with Students	Impact of multiculturalism on assessment, counseling and informal interactions that the school psychologist has with students
Systemic Influences	Influence of the school culture, school district, and US culture
Training: Graduate School and Other	All training participants have had with respect to multiculturalism and diversity
Courses	Multicultural training as it applied to graduate courses
Environment	Environment of graduate school including faculty, cohort, and general feelings of openness to multicultural issues
Practicum/Internship	Multicultural experiences in practicum and internship
Impact of Graduate School vs Impact of Experience	How graduate school training factors into multicultural competence development
Additional Professional Learning Experiences	Other training that participants have had, including professional conferences and training with school district

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### *Professional Experiences*

Before the participants could provide a conceptualization of multicultural competence, generally, or their own multicultural competence specifically, they were primed to have a discussion about their current experiences with multiculturalism in their jobs. This allowed the participants to think about what they had encountered in their work and then have a context when describing their conceptualization of multicultural competence as well as multicultural competence training. The participants spent quite a lot of time discussing their multicultural experiences in the interviews. The description of professional multicultural experiences in this chapter is proportional to the amount of time spent on this topic in the interviews. This appeared to be very salient to the participants and necessary for the present study. Several participants mentioned that they had not thought about certain multicultural issues before or had not analyzed them with the amount of detail as was done in the interview. The participants frequently connected their responses to subsequent questions to information previously mentioned. This topic appeared to be a vital component and primer for the rest of the interview. The following is a discussion of what themes arose when the participants were asked the very general question of how things were going in their jobs in relation to multiculturalism and diversity.

### *Parent Relationships*

When asked about how things were going in their schools, almost all of the participants mentioned interactions and relationships with parents first. This was especially true when the school psychologists were asked about what was especially challenging when it came to multicultural issues in their schools. Working with parents

was an area that the participants spoke extensively about and found quite difficult. Several participants also mentioned that they did not expect or feel prepared for the challenges that they faced when working with parents who were culturally different from them.

*Parental Involvement.* This was an area that almost all of the participants mentioned as one of the things that they were learning. None of the school psychologists were prompted to talk about parental involvement, yet almost all of them discussed it as a major factor in their work. The participants also talked about different levels of parental involvement. Some of the participants talked about parental involvement with the school itself and others talked about parents advocating for their children at the district or county level. There was also a discussion of how socioeconomic status appeared to be a factor in the level of parental involvement. It appeared that race was sometimes also related to involvement, but socioeconomic status seemed to have a stronger correlation.

Camila talked about balancing the frustration of wanting parents to be more involved and understanding that their ability to be active in their child's schooling was hindered by their financial situation. She spoke about a school that she had worked at previously where she had worked primarily with the Hispanic children and their families, "we couldn't get parents to come into the school. We were constantly begging them to come in and to take on a more active role with their children. There was quite a lack of parental involvement and response. Although it's not that they didn't want to it's that they couldn't take a day off to attend a meeting, talk to teachers or counselors about grades or behavior...they couldn't; for they were in fear that they may lose their job and then not be able to feed their children."

Erica admitted that the lack of parental involvement led her to feel a certain way about the parents and how invested they were in their children's education. When asked if she saw parents who were less involved as less invested, Erica said "yes" and described why she felt that way, "sometimes I probably make assumptions when we can't get ahold of the parent, or the parent...never comes to meetings. Or there's no response and it gets frustrating. And I don't think that's me alone. I think the entire team, we all sort of start to [think], 'Well, this parent is not involved. This parent could care less.' And those are assumptions that we make, but I don't know if that's...I don't think that's unwarranted either, because that's the evidence in front of us." Erica also talked about the link between parent involvement and the ability to communicate with parents. She felt that many of the parents who did not come in for meetings were less involved in the school than the ones who were not difficult to get in touch with. Erica stated that when teachers called some parents to discuss an issue with a student the phone would often be out of order or the parent would not call the teacher back. This lack of ability to communicate with parents, combined with their low involvement led Erica and others in her school to be frustrated because "without communication...the child just continues to struggle."

Several of the participants discussed the apparent association between socioeconomic status and parental involvement. Holly spoke specifically about parents who had the resources to hire lawyers or advocate for their children beyond the school level, such as putting in a complaint to the school board. While she did acknowledge that race may play somewhat of a role, it appeared to her that socioeconomic status played a larger role. "I would say that parental involvement is definitely key and because of the Section 8 housing communities that feed into the school which are primarily African-

American, a lot of those parents don't have transportation to get here or have drug problems or addiction problems or several kids and they're trying to get jobs and...they're not able to be as good advocates for their kids. Sometimes they just don't know what to do and they just throw their hands up and they're not really there for them. But we also have some white families that in that same situation in those communities.”

Richard observed the same apparent phenomenon stating, “I would say, and I'm just thinking off the top of my head right here, the first thing that came to mind, is there is a huge, incredible difference between parent involvement... I try to work with parents, but I would say that...many of the families, I shouldn't say all, but many of the families from lower SES backgrounds are not as involved...So we have affluent and middle class and upper-middle class Black and Hispanic students, and they show up, they come to the meetings, they're very involved...And it just seems to be associated with SES more than with race and ethnicity, and again, that is just my perception.” Camila alluded to the same thing as she stated that in her current school district, which is more affluent than her previous district, the parents were more involved. Erica also stated that she saw socioeconomic differences in the amount of parental involvement. “I would venture to guess, if I had to guess, that a lot of the kids who are in that program [Talented and Gifted], have a little more money. And I say that only because I see that their parents are more involved.” The assumption made by Erica, and several of the other participants, was that financial level was directly and positively correlated with parental involvement.

Several of the participants also mentioned that the level of parental involvement had a direct impact on them and their ability to do their jobs. Several of them stated that parents would sometimes not come to special education meetings, Individual Education

Plan (IEP) meetings, or return rating scales when they were conducting assessments.

Erica expressed this concern when talking about having to hold meetings without parents present. “We've had parents where we just had to proceed with the meeting and we haven't seen the parents. If it's a re-eval[uation] and we have those time frames, we haven't seen the parent all year.” Richard expressed a similar sentiment, stating:

It's just much harder to get parents into meetings, or get them to return phone calls. And I think that's not only IEP meetings, but it's 504's. You know, it's not uncommon for us to send out meeting notices, we get to the third one and the parent still hasn't responded, we've called, we've left messages a lot of times... We've had a lot of meetings that are just paper meetings because the parent either said that they didn't want to come or they couldn't come for some reason or we couldn't get ahold of them.

*Communication with Parents.* Most of the participants discussed the difficulty of communicating with parents in their schools. Richard discussed this within the quote in the previous section, *Parental Involvement*. It appeared that the parental involvement and communication with parents were correlated. As the communication with parents increased, so too did the parental involvement. Erica described the difficulty of getting in touch with some parents in her diverse schools:

We also find that sometimes parents' phones are cut off or we have the wrong phone numbers. Sometimes I think it might even be intentional... There was one specific case this year where...I was definitely being avoided.... I documented and even put in the report how many times I tried to reach the mom... I would try...three times every day. I would leave messages.

Annie echoed a similar sentiment when talking about the African-American families in the inner-city school that she had worked at during her first year as a practitioner. She stated that it was “much harder to get in touch with them” and that she often tried to call them, but that they would not answer or return her calls. The school psychologists felt that it was difficult to forge relationships with parents because of the lack of ability to communicate.

There were also difficulties with communication concerning the school psychologists’ ability to speak the same language as the family. As previously mentioned two of the participants spoke both English and Spanish. Even with their ability to speak a language that they used frequently in their work, they still encountered families that they could not communicate with. For example, Camila spoke about a situation when she was not able to communicate with a family and the frustration that accompanied that:

I think in those rare instances, very rare actually, when I speak to a family that speaks... like last year, Turkish, stumped me. I’m sure my colleagues go through this a lot, but I rarely do... I feel fortunate that I don’t have to experience that very much but it’s a big challenge.

She recognized the challenge of the communication difficulty and was grateful that this was not an issue that she had to deal with frequently. However when she was faced with this challenge, it was an uncomfortable situation. Annie encountered other difficulties relating to the ability to speak the same language as some of her parents. While she was able to communicate well with Hispanic/Latino parents, she recognized that many of her colleagues, specifically teachers were not able to do so. Additionally, the administration in her school often utilized her as an interpreter. “They [administrators and other staff]

were always using me as the translator. I don't really think that they knew what my job responsibilities were all the time. I felt really taken advantage of." Annie found this frustrating as this was above and beyond her job description and hindered her from taking on tasks that she felt were more applicable to her as the school psychologist.

However, Annie did acknowledge the positive aspect of speaking the same language as many parents. It offered her the opportunity to forge relationships more easily with the Hispanic parents in her school. When asked if she was able to develop relationships with parents, Annie responded "Absolutely, absolutely. I can say that I was able to build relationships faster with the Hispanic parents, just because they really relied on me to communicate with the school. And they really entrusted me with their children." Ian also spoke another language, Tamil, which is a language spoken in India, where he was born. However, this was not a language that he was able to utilize professionally. While he did not feel that knowing the language directly influenced him in his professional work, having learned English as a second language did influence Ian as it helped him understand what students and families who were learning English may be experiencing.

The remainder of the three participants did not speak another language and therefore utilized interpreters on a regular basis. There was a mix of how the school psychologists felt about this. All of them found it somewhat uncomfortable, although they all mentioned that they had received some training on how to work with interpreters. They were not specific about the training that they received or whether or not they found it useful. Both Holly and Richard expressed concern that the interpreters were not

translating the exact words that they were saying. Richard was especially concerned about this when conveying scores to the parents:

I'm always concerned. Especially when we get into...particularly in [sic] assessment information, because you're going over [an] assessment, and you're going over stuff like standard scores or percentiles. Or...here's what this means, here's what our recommendations are. I'm always worried if our interpreters are conveying in exactly the way I'm trying to say it.

Holly also talked about this when talking to parents over the phone. In her district, there is a service where someone from the school calls a phone number for an interpreter and then they call the parent together. Holly mentioned that she has concerns when they are talking that her words are not being interpreted exactly and that she would have no way of knowing because she does not speak the language. "I don't know the other language, so I don't even know if what the person's interpreting is really what I'm saying."

Erica expressed concerns about the style of the interpreter. In her schools, she and other staff have to use interpreters frequently and they are not always able to get the same one. Therefore, Erica encounters several different interpreters over the course of the year and they all have different styles of interpreting.

I *hate* the one where they talk over you... [T]hat just is impossible for me. And then the one where they're taking notes isn't so bad...it's all based on their personal style. So, it depends on which translator I get.

Although all of these school psychologists had received some form of interpreter training, they still encountered interpreter issues in their work that they did not feel that they were prepared for.

*Understanding Families' Worldview.* The participants saw understanding a student's family and their access to resources as an important aspect of their jobs working in diverse schools. The school psychologists saw this as a vital part of being able to forge relationships with parents and guardians. This was also important in order for the school psychologist to provide recommendations and resources for the student and family. This understanding was also important to the participants in relation to providing accommodations for the student in school.

Annie talked extensively about the inner-city school that she had previously worked at. She believed that understanding a family's worldview at this school was crucial. She talked about the fact that many of her families lived in single-parent households, with multiple children, and the parent was often struggling to pay their bills or buy food. Annie understood that it was not necessarily the priority of the parent to spend their time communicating with the school. "I think we're trying to offer...a lot of free services and ways to help with housing and ways to help with...get[ting]...their ... primary needs met so we can work on their secondary needs." These parents needed to spend their time figuring out how to keep their housing or get food on the table for their children. When these basic needs were not being met or were in danger of not being met, Annie realized that it was difficult or impossible for them to concentrate on the secondary need of education. Ian added to this by acknowledging that some of the parents had mental health issues themselves that made it more difficult to care for their children. With these difficulties, he postulated that for these parents hearing that their children were struggling may be too much for them emotionally. He also stated the importance of

understanding that the view that many people have of life and hard work does not always apply to minority or low-SES students and their families.

Most people in higher SES see society as very affirming and anything that you do positively will be rewarded in some way. And it's worth buying into all the different types of things that are out there, but I think you...I don't have any specific incident...but as you work with families, you just see how, to some extent, it's perceived that sense of, 'Oh, I tried. I'm working hard, and society is just not allowing me to progress or providing me with the opportunities or actively making things harder for me.' And so, you kind of see where that comes from, even if you don't necessarily... You might have seen the incident or you might know the people involved and know that it's not what the student has said, as far as their accusation; but you see a little bit more where that comes from and why it's primary in the student's mind.

Holly talked about the importance of understanding what a student's neighborhood may be like. In her school, there is a problem with gangs and she felt that it was necessary to know that in order to provide the best interventions for the student. "Amongst the student population there are a lot of gangs... There's...a community-neighborhood complex within the same racial background but there's also conflict between black and Hispanic gangs." Ian echoed something similar and talked about the importance of providing resources that the students could actually utilize. He gave this example,

you have to be a little bit more aware of when you make recommendations of knowing that...this student is not going to be able to take part in certain activities.

Or maybe...you might direct a student to a public library as opposed to having books at home...that type of thing...and...facilitating that. If there happens to be a library a couple blocks down...a couple days after school you can go down there or if you need to research and you don't have a computer at home and...you don't have time in school...try and set that up...rather than having the student come up with it themselves. Being a little more direct that way. So yeah, I think that...for a higher SES student you might say these are some websites, they have a lot of multimedia type things. Not that you wouldn't recommend that to that student, but...this is maybe a time that you can use it or if you have lunch time you can come and use one of our computers because you don't have a computer at home or go to a library. Just a little more awareness of...what ability the family has to support the student and...make up some of that support if you can. Ian

Several of the school psychologists also talked about the importance of understanding the cultural background of the family and how that may impact their understanding of education and mental health. The participants also felt that understanding these cultural differences helped the facilitation of relationships with families and understanding how they might view their relationships with people in the school. For example, Annie talked about how many families in her inner-city school had been students in the same school district and, sometimes, the same school. She spoke about how that may influence their relationships with the staff.

Annie: Many of the parents would come in and say, 'I've been here all my life and I haven't moved...I went to this school' and that type of thing.

Interviewer: Right. So they know. They know...how things have worked in [the inner-city school district] and...they...have a...mistrust of the school because of their negative experiences when they were in that school.

Annie: Right.

Other participants talked about this in relation to families coming to the United States from other countries. Ian gave an example of a family that had moved to the United States from an African country. This family had several children, most of whom had been very successful in school. However, their youngest child was struggling in school academically and behaviorally. Ian talked about how there was a mismatch between the student and his family.

So...that's kind of a goodness of fit—for the...older siblings...coming to a new place and having a rigid structure might have helped them because they were able to deal with that and they were comfortable with that and they were able to go to class and get their homework and go home and sit down. A lot of the good things we want our family's home to be structure-wise...for this young man it was that rigidity or...not making any accommodations or not having the understanding probably hurt him negatively.

Ian felt that it was important to recognize this context in order to best serve this student and his family. He also brought up the importance of understanding the worldview of the family in order to explain the concept of mental health. In this particular case, Ian was trying “to educate [the] family [about]...what mental health concerns are” and explain to this family that “it's not just a choice.” Annie provided an example of when she had to do

the same thing. For a case in her current school, she “got the impression that mom felt like if [the student] worked harder then he wouldn't have a learning disability anymore.” She also talked about a family who believed that their daughter, on whom Annie had to conduct a suicide assessment, would be fine as long as she received ‘A’ grades. Richard was frustrated that many families did not take advantage of the mental health community services available to them. He found that this appeared especially true for African-Americans and Hispanics of low socioeconomic backgrounds. Ian made a statement that was illustrative of what other participants had said, “I could tell for some of the clients we had that culturally they're not oriented to mental health services or feel like that's something that's appropriate.” Understanding this and acting accordingly was an important part of the school psychologists’ professional role.

#### *Impact of Staff*

All of the participants talked about working with other staff in the school and the impact of that on their work with diverse students and families. At times, working with staff helped facilitate the work of the school psychologist. At other times, other staff in the school made it difficult for the school psychologist to function in their jobs as they would like. Additionally, the multicultural competence, or lack thereof, of the staff had a direct impact on the participants in this study. Ian made a particularly illustrative statement about working with staff: “I think...you have to know the adults too and know [that] you're doing interventions on them as well, not just on the students.” This statement was true for all of the school psychologists in this study.

*Staff Pressure to “Perform”*. Some of what the participants discussed concerning the other staff was helping them to understand the student’s and the family’s worldview.

As mentioned in the previous section, the school psychologists identified understanding families' worldview was an important part of their role while working in diverse schools. Another aspect of this was helping the other staff to also take this into consideration. One way that the school psychologists achieved this was through working with teachers during the special education referral process. Before developing appropriate interventions, many of the school psychologists acknowledged that they understood where other teachers and staff were coming from when they, according to the participants, inappropriately referred students for special education. Annie discussed this at length and provided the example of a teacher who had several students who spoke English as their second language in his or her class who were struggling,

I don't know how they're [the teachers] evaluated, but it doesn't look good when, you know, 5 of your kids are getting F's across the board. You need a reason to excuse these grades. And so that's...one reason that they refer these kids is that they sit and wait and wait and wait and wait, and they're like, 'They're still getting F's.' Not, 'What else can I be doing?' But, 'They must have a disability because they're getting these F's.' This school psychologist recognized that there were many pressures being put on teachers to perform, but that they may need to consider other things before making the assumption that a child has a disability.

Annie also spoke of the teachers not taking other factors, such as the parents' level of education into account, when considering why a student is struggling with their work.

I also think...that some teachers are more aware of taking their parent's education...into mind. They're also taking the child's education, their previous

country into mind and...whatever's going on at home...lack of direct instruction at home... And I just don't know if all the teachers are taking that into consideration. I also don't know if teachers are always taking in the amount that it takes for...Physics and Calc[ulus]. Once they reach that level they're like, 'Well, it's been seven years and they must know as much as another kid in their class.' Well, it's not true. It's just not true.

Understanding where the teachers were coming from and the pressures that they faced helped Annie decide where to focus her time and effort. Annie stated that she feels that she needed to "learn how to empower the teachers to do more interventions in the classroom before we start referring them to look at whether we need to do some more testing. I do think that they have a specific mentality. That it's very black and white." This was an intervention in and of itself that related to the school psychologist's multicultural competence.

Camila echoed a similar sentiment when talking about the frustrations that the teachers faced, especially in a district like hers that has very high expectations.

It's hard to be a school like [this with so much diversity] in [this] county, for there's still the expectations of [this] county that school, in itself, has a reputation to uphold. The teachers feel pressure to perform and they [the students] may not be getting support from home and these children are learning another language or they are refugees; there are just so many other things that your typical [more affluent part of the county] kid will not have.

Although Camila was also able to acknowledge where the teachers were coming from, she also felt frustrated by the special education referrals, "It's hard, but sometimes special

education will help them, but why slap a label on them if you don't have to and then teachers feel like you have to."

*Multicultural Competence of Staff.* Many of the school psychologists spoke both directly and indirectly about the perceived multicultural competence of the other staff in the building. Holly was very direct and honest about the lack of multicultural competence of some of the staff in her building stating, "staff members have recognized feelings of racism just amongst staff." She was able to provide the interviewer with numerous examples. The example that she spoke about to the greatest extent was the possible favoritism of administrators towards teachers who were of a similar background and race was one such similar characteristic. The principal and most of the assistant principals in her school were African-American and some of the Caucasian teachers felt discriminated against because of their race. This directly impacted the school psychologist as some of the teachers came to her to talk about their frustrations. When asked how she dealt with this, Holly stated that she tried to just be an empathic listener rather than trying to take sides. However, she did admit to the interviewer that at times she understood where many of the teachers were coming from and that there were some instances where they had a right to feel discriminated against. Holly had also felt this directly in an interaction with an African-American administrator when she first started working at the school. Holly felt that an administrator was upset with her when she suggested that a group that included an African-American co-leader. Although she feels that she has a positive working relationship with this administrator now, Holly had to learn a new way to approach administrators when proposing new interventions.

Holly also spoke about the feelings that the students had about the teachers and administrators. Many African-American students felt discriminated against by their Caucasian teachers. The students would often come to see the school psychologist and call their teacher a “White [expletive].” This was something that the Caucasian school psychologist would speak openly about the students with and the students would often tell her that they felt comfortable talking to her about it because she was not “really White.” Holly felt pride when hearing this from her students as she hoped that it broke down stereotypes and allowed her students to accept more people of different races. It also allowed her to have very honest conversations with the students that she may not have otherwise been able to have if they did not see her as a safe person to talk to. Part of this was breaking down those racial barriers. The students also felt discriminated against by the African-American administrators in relation to discipline. The African-American students felt that they received harsher punishments for the same offenses than a Caucasian student would receive. This was also something that the school psychologist discussed with the students at length.

Holly was most direct about the feelings of discrimination and racism amongst the staff in her building. However, many of the other participants in the study also spoke about their feelings concerning the multicultural competence of the other staff in their school buildings. Camila noted that the teachers in her schools were “sensitive” to the fact that the students were learning another language or that they might experience some difficulties at home. However, Camila also reiterated that the pressure that the teachers felt to perform appears to override that sensitivity. She stated, “I hear them say, ‘If they are in special education, are they going to count for...scores at the end of the year?’ But

that's just teaching in general now with NCLB [No Child Left Behind]." Camila generally felt that the teachers in her school were multiculturally competent, but that they still struggled with knowing how to help culturally and linguistically diverse students. Richard appeared to feel similar to Camila:

Generally speaking, I would say the staff here is...I don't even want to make a statement about that because I have no way of knowing, I would say that the teachers I work closely with, seem culturally competent. But...I'm sure there are teachers here who hold biases and prejudices.

While he generally felt that the staff was multiculturally competent, he also felt that there might be areas where they could improve upon this competence.

Ian also spoke about the multicultural competence of the staff in his school. He spoke more about the development and maintenance of their competence and how this was accomplished in his school. Ian did not feel that the multicultural professional development for the school staff was adequate:

It doesn't seem like there's much professional development at all and most of the times that it's...you run through a long PowerPoint in five minutes and then sign your paper that you went through the training. So I could probably, definitely say there's more...the school...staff can do.

He saw this as especially important because of the fact that he worked in a high school and because of where the students were developmentally, the staff faced unique challenges. "Kids will project their issues with multicultural issues to staff and staff needs to be aware of that. How do you not get caught up in that? And also to address their own biases." This is highly related to the issues that Holly also faced in her high school. She

talked about the fact that the students were aware of staff prejudice and biases and talked about it either with her or confronted the teachers directly.

The multicultural competence was not just related to racial or socioeconomic issues. Erica and Holly spoke about instances where they noted a lack of staff multicultural competence in relation to sexual orientation. When faced with students that have declared that they were gay or questioning, Erica noted that some staff members have made comments that indicated that they were not multiculturally competent in this area. She stated:

Some of the comments I was hearing from the adults led me to think...well, maybe there's a little less tolerance there too. And I wouldn't say they were being intolerant, but I think...they might've been a little bit ignorant... 'This kid is too young to really know.' I mean, comments like that, and comments like, 'Well, maybe he shouldn't just play with the girls.' Or 'Maybe he shouldn't act in this way, because then they're going to make fun of him.' And I felt like that was [sic]...somewhat ignorant comments on their parts.

Holly provided a specific incident where a teacher told a parent to be careful because her daughter was spending time with female students who self-identified as lesbians. As it turned out, this female student was openly gay with her peers, but did not want her mother to know. Conversely to Erica and Holly, Ian spoke positively about the multicultural competence of staff in relation to sexual orientation issues. When speaking about a male student who had dressed as a girl in his previous school, Ian generally felt that the teachers were supportive and accepting of him.

*Open and Honest Conversations.* Many of the school psychologists went further than acknowledging some of the issues with staff multicultural competence. They attempted to improve others' and their own multicultural competence by having open and honest conversations. While these conversations did not always lead directly to changes, many of the school psychologists felt that they planted seeds and opened the door for continued conversations.

Annie, Ian, and Holly spoke about their offices as being very open and allowing teachers and other staff to come in and talk about some of their frustrations. Annie stated:

It's kind of like a revolving door thing, my room is...a way to have verbal diarrhea of what's going on in the classroom or what's going on with this kid. Just to sit and listen and say, 'I completely understand how you're feeling or...that sounds so frustrating.' Like to validate their feelings. Not saying that it's okay but just saying I understand that you are feeling this way.

Holly echoed a similar sentiment in talking about the teachers who come in and are frustrated with the perceived racism of the administration or the perceptions of students that their teachers are discriminating against them. While they do not normally challenge the teachers when they come in, they open the door to future conversations and the opportunity to have more challenging conversations.

Ian took a slightly different approach to creating those opportunities for further conversations. He approached teachers in a non-threatening way, but still talked about a particular issue that may have come up. He gave the example of approaching a teacher that both staff and students had concerns about. Ian said that he was:

just trying not to pre-judge him based on what you've heard or what his background might be. Just approach him the same way. Just send an email...saying, 'Hey, I have a few questions about students. When would be a good time to meet?' And just really approach him in a collegial way. I think it turned out he was pretty much consistent with what people [we]re saying, but at least you've established a bit of a relationship as you work together.

By approaching this teacher in an open way, the school psychologist was able to begin to establish a relationship, which could lead to better outcomes for students in the future.

Annie and Holly felt that they are able to have more open and honest conversations during meetings, rather than one-on-one with a teacher. Both school psychologists provided examples of being in a meeting and making a statement that was shocking or surprising to others. For example, Holly advocated for a family that did not possess the knowledge base necessary to adequately advocate for their child. These parents did not know that the school could pay for a higher level of services and Holly pointed this out during a meeting, openly acknowledging the association of money and access to the school district's acquiescence of a more restrictive and therefore more expensive level of service. Although Holly acknowledged that while this confrontational statement may have come as a shock that it was necessary in order to move forward and help the student.

Camila spoke of working directly with teachers through consultation cases as a means to having open and honest conversations.

Consultation...goes a lot with teachers and talking to them about background or what kind of home life [the students] may [have]. The parent may be working a

lot or the parents don't speak the language. Just the different norms that a lot of families have and just making the teachers aware of that. They may be going home to not a cookie cutter type of setting.

Erica also utilized a more individual style of having conversations with teachers about concerns.

There's no hard and fast rule. I think it's more individual... When they come to a meeting usually I can tell how my relationship with them is going to be and how they might be as a teacher. But this is a little bit judgy [sic] of me, but I have noticed that some of the younger teachers are a little easier to work with, because they tend to be more willing to try different interventions and things like that. And sometimes it's the teachers that have been in the county for a really long time that I have more trouble with.

Both Camila and Erica utilized their job responsibilities to have open and honest individual conversations with teachers about children with diverse needs.

#### *Direct Work with Students*

*Assessment.* Several of the school psychologists talked about the impact of working in a diverse school on their testing. Assessment practices were affected in different ways for the different psychologists. For some, it was the amount and type of testing that they were doing. For example, Annie had previously worked in a school that was approximately 50% African-American and 50% Hispanic. In this school, she only conducted three evaluations over the course of the year. However, the amount of students in special education was relatively high in that school, therefore many of the students had already been identified. This led to Annie not doing very much testing.

However, in her current school there was a lot more diversity and many children in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. In this school, the amount of testing she was doing had changed dramatically, “I am doing a lot of bilingual testing. And it would be really easy to say...this kid's ability is this high and their achievement in English is this low so there is a gap... and because you are asking them processing questions in English that it is going to take them longer to process that information because it is their second language. So yeah, of course he is LD [Learning Disabled]. So it's hard.”

In addition to the larger assessment caseload, Annie was frustrated with trying to explain the difference between a learning disability and language acquisition. Additionally, Annie felt strongly about the English Language Learning (ELL) system in the United States.

I don't think that we have, in general in the US; I do not think that we have a good ELL program...English Language Learning program for our kids. I don't think that we've found something that works yet. I think that we've just become so inundated with all these kids that don't speak English as their first language that we're still trying to struggle...how to define...where these certain levels that they are in learning English and when it becomes a problem that they are not learning...normally in comparison to other kids their own age.

This affected her directly as it led to her doing more of a certain type of assessment and having to work with the teachers and students regardless of the eligibility outcome.

Annie, Camila, and Ian all spoke about the usefulness of having set procedures that help with bilingual testing. Both Annie and Camila worked in a district that

conducted dual language assessments prior to the psychologist performing their testing. They both found this procedure to be very helpful. Camila was especially thankful for the procedure as she had to conduct her own informal dual language assessments in her previous school district. “It’s nice that [my district] has the dual language assessments that can give us the information on individual’s language ability...In [my previous school], I had to do that myself based on informal interviews, informal, testimony, and nonverbal assessments to gather information.” Instead of having an unstructured process for determining a student’s strengths and weaknesses in language, Camila now had a structured assessment that provided her with more accurate information.

The process for obtaining dual language information was slightly different for Ian. In this district, a person from their dual language office came to the school to conduct observations and informal tests. They would then make assessment recommendations. Ian mentioned that this was very helpful and that he had learned a lot participating in this process.

I think...through a couple of bilingual evaluations I've learned quite a bit. That procedure is kind of new and in the past it was kind of a mess because we didn't have really a good procedure and we didn't really have people within the county<sup>4</sup> who were well trained. Where they were kind of doing things really informally... Especially now, this year and last year, the few bilingual evaluations it's been really helpful to know recent research and how these kinds of evaluations are being treated.

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<sup>4</sup> In this area of the country, many school districts are county-wide. Therefore, when participants refer to “the county”, they are referring to the school system.

This school district had recently revamped their procedure for dual language assessment and Ian had been in the school district long enough to witness and experience the positive effect that this had on bilingual assessments. In Ian's district there were also bilingual school psychologists who were available to conduct assessments with students as needed.

We have bilingual psychologists, so if they [people from the dual language office] recommend a psychological evaluation, there's some testing that I would do here at school. Then the bilingual psychologist would come in to the school and...cover the testing and then we would meet to go over the results and then meet as a team; where the people doing the bilingual testing are there.

Ian felt that he had very good access to bilingual assessment resources.

Erica had a very traditional school psychologist role and spent the majority of her time conducting standardized assessments. She noted several techniques that she utilized to conduct the most complete and accurate assessments. Erica said that she did not have much, or any, trouble working with the students and getting the information she needed. She stated that working with the parents was much more difficult. Erica said that she generally does her rating scales over the phone because if she sends them home, they often do not come back. She stated that this is not only helpful for attrition, but it also allows the parent to ask questions if they are confused about any of the items. Erica has also done this with parents who do not speak English and an interpreter.

Camila also spoke about the availability of a wide range of standardized assessment instruments to test speakers of other languages. She found it helpful to have these different instruments at her disposal. Additionally, she was able to look at her colleagues' old reports to see how they utilized and interpreted different cognitive

assessment tools to glean the most accurate information about students who speak different languages. Camila found that using these tests had increased her knowledge about what was appropriate for different students.

I just try to look at a lot of nonverbal cognitive assessments for students who do speak a second language. And...I have been using the DAS [Differential Abilities Scale] a lot and the Nonverbal Composite and the CTONI II [Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence-Second Edition]. I used to always be a WISC [Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children] girl, very WISC, but I have actually not used it much this year. I've gotten a lot into the DAS, the CTONI II, the Wechsler Nonverbal. So it's interesting how recently I had a kid come up and he was white and I actually gave him a WISC for some reason... I don't know why. But I do think the WISC is a little culturally loaded.

Through the opportunity to use different cognitive tests and see how they are utilized with children, Camila felt that she was able to increase her multicultural assessment competence.

Richard did not report multicultural issues or conflicts with assessment. He did not use interpreters when testing a student because his county had bilingual school psychologists who conducted assessments in different languages. Therefore, if his school team decided that a student who primarily spoke another language needed to be assessed, a bilingual school psychologist would come to his school to conduct the assessment.

*Counseling/Relationships/Interventions.* The participants learned a lot about creating relationships and counseling students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in their first few years working. A few of the school psychologists talked

about the importance of relationships and figuring out how to build rapport with children from diverse backgrounds. As previously mentioned, Holly was proud of her ability to build rapport with students and families despite her cultural differences with them. She felt that she had worked hard to build relationships with the students and that had “kind of removed the racial component” as a barrier to relationship. Holly did experience some difficulty with rapport regarding her religion. She was Jewish and did not share this information without students initiating the conversation, but responded to questions when asked. Many of her students had not known a Jewish person and knew very little about the religion. There were times when Holly felt uncomfortable because of students who wrote swastikas on their notebooks or because of comments of disbelief from students about her religion, but she still felt that this was not a significant barrier to her creating relationships with her students.

Richard was also racially and culturally different from many of his students. Although he did have positive relationships and counseled many of them, he did not always feel culturally competent working with some of his students.

I'll just be honest, sometimes I don't know if I'm the right person. I mean to some of these kids, I'm an old, nerdy, white guy, you know?... How am I going to convince...how was I going to convince that kid to not join a gang and not cut up in class. I don't look like him. I don't talk like him. I've never lived in [a city]. I've never lived in, you know. So...then I say, realistically, how effective can I be?

While Richard was able to carry out his duties as a school psychologist, he did question his effectiveness in working with students from backgrounds that were so different from his own.

Camila was culturally similar to many of her students and utilized that to build rapport and create relationships with them. “When I did do counseling it was more with the Latino students. Again, in that, I just took my own experience of being Latina.” She utilized her own personal experiences to help her professionally. Although this was something that developed during her years of training (discussed further in the *Graduate School* section), it was not necessarily something that she was trained for. This was something that Camila developed on her own as a part of her own personal and professional self-discovery.

Part of the importance of building rapport for the school psychologists was understanding the students’ worldview. This is similar to understanding the families’ worldview. The school psychologists felt it was important to understand where the students were coming from. This included, but was not limited to, knowing information about their family, their country of origin, their neighborhood, and their friends. All of this information provided the school psychologists with knowledge about some of the pressures and stressors that the students may be facing as well as its potential impact on their mental health. Ian acknowledged that this was not necessarily dissimilar from assessing any student or client, as he spoke about “assessing broadly and really asking...questions...and getting a really in-depth history.” However, there were certain things that needed to be taken into consideration when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students as several participants described in detail.

Richard discussed the importance of understanding a child's neighborhood and the experience of growing up in an area different from where they attended school. Richard's school was located in an affluent area, but many of the students who attended the school were from a public housing area and did not at all come from affluent families. Richard recognized that the experience of walking from an area of poverty to an area of significant affluence was influential in some way. He stated, "a lot of the African-American kids come from some of the other public housing area, a lot of the lower-income areas. So they have to walk from...[a poverty-stricken area] and some other places, walk through this neighborhood to get to this school, so that right there is pretty interesting to me." While he may not have known exactly how this experience affected the students, Richard did recognize that it could hold some significance in their lives and therefore influence his relationship with them or the effectiveness of interventions used with that population.

Ian also talked about the importance of knowing the background and neighborhood of the students that he worked with. He mentioned that some of the students in his school did not actually live in the county, that they used someone else's address in order to attend that school instead of the inner-city schools where they lived. Additionally, other students lived in the county, but lived far away because they were in the emotional disabilities regional program at Ian's school. This influenced the interventions that Ian would suggest for those students. He also talked about recognizing the financial situation of the family and how that might influence the student's behavior.

You just know the student doesn't have certain resources. Or if they lose for art class their drawing pad and it's like two dollars at Target. But you know it's a hardship to lose theirs—they might go the rest of the year without one.

Ian stated that he has a few of these drawing pads in his office if students lose one. For this example, in the aforementioned quote, Ian was speaking specifically about a student who had a disability and Ian acknowledged that losing things was a part of that student's disability, but losing things was also a significant hardship as the family did not have two dollars to spend on something like a drawing pad. This is an example of how the intersection of socioeconomic status and disability influence this school psychologist's choice of intervention.

Richard also discussed the importance of knowing about the experiences that students have faced and how that may affect their worldview. Because of its close proximity to a city with a high rate of violence, Richard's school had several students who transferred from schools within that city to his school. Richard mentioned that he feels the need to take this into consideration when he knows that students have lived in that city.

We get kids from [a city with a high rate of violence], I always screen to see if they've been exposed to violence. Because it's so many of them, kids that come from [a city with a high rate of violence] have seen a shooting...in their yard.... They sit here and tell me, 'Yeah, we were out one day and this guy pulled up and pulled out a gun and shot this guy and he died right there.' And I was like, "Well how far away were you?" 'Oh, 30 yards.' 'And this isn't a big deal to you?' 'Oh, no.' It's just...their life.

Additionally, there are several students in his school who have never left the immediate area or seen or experienced things that some people may take for granted. Richard provided the example of going on a field trip with some students, who are in middle school, and they saw a deer for the first time. The students did not know what it was and had to ask the teacher. This helped Richard realize that “obviously if I’m talking to a kid, I’m not going to use an example about walking in the woods or anything, because they’re not going to be able to relate to you.” This indicated to Richard the kind of examples that he could and could not use in order to be most effective when talking to some of the students at his school.

Ian also talked about the intersection of disability and gender. He worked primarily with an emotional disabilities regional program within the school. This program had approximately 40 students, but only two females. This gender inequality led Ian to make certain accommodations for the female students. “[W]e have two female students in that program out of forty students and it's a major challenge for them and I tend to be a little more accommodating to those students.” Socioeconomic issues arose when helping the males in the program understand the accommodations that Ian would provide for the females. He stated that:

most of our male students are really understanding of, I think, chivalry if you want to call it. Or just kind of understanding...female students have a little more to go through. Maybe many of them were, again kind of generalizing, many of them have been raised by their moms or...grandparent or grandmother or aunt or that way. So maybe they see what their guardian has to go through. That makes them a little more sensitive maybe.

Because of how many of the males grew up, often in female-led, single-parent households which is correlated with low socioeconomic status, they understood the differential treatment of the females in the program.

Ian also used gender and race to influence the interventions and forms of counseling that he utilized with his students. He talked extensively about the importance of teaching the students that he works with life lessons. Many of the students that he works with are male and/or African American. Ian uses this as a way to help prepare the students for life after high school. Ian described instances where a student says that they are being targeted because of their race or they are being treated unfairly because they are male. Ian tried to explain the realities of the ‘real world’ to these students:

I'm not here to disabuse them of what attitudes they have, it's just making them more functional. What's going to help you function, not just in school, but out of school? If...you get fired from a job or if you are having trouble at work, are you going to go to the boss and say that you're prejudiced against me because of X, Y or Z and storm out of there? And if so, are you going to keep that job? Or what is a better way of dealing with your concerns?

Ian wanted to help these students to be able to function outside of school. He was very honest with the students and allowed them to be frustrated about the prejudice and racism that they may face. However, the interventions that he chose and the way that Ian talked to the students about these issues was designed to help them be successful irrespective of their cultural background.

Holly recognized the importance of understanding discrimination within groups. For example, at her school, she stated that “Within [the] African-American student

population, a lot of times girls are bullied because of the darkness of their skin color.”

Holly said that they were often bullied by African-American boys and that they had self-esteem issues because of it. Typically the lighter-skinned African-American girls in the school were more popular and had more boyfriends. Holly stated that this is something that she has to deal with when the darker-skinned girls came and talked to her about it.

She also stated that she observed a similar phenomenon within Hispanic/Latina, Caucasian, and immigrant populations. Understanding this phenomenon directly influenced the interventions that Holly utilized.

### *Systemic Influences*

The participants in this study also spoke about the influence of policies, politics, and national culture on their jobs. The participants spoke about national policies, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), United States culture in general, the norms of the states and districts that they worked in, and the culture and climate of their schools. The school psychologists did not operate within a vacuum; they were influenced by things that they did not feel were under their control.

*National Culture/Influence.* A few of the participants spoke about the influence of issues on a national level. One example was the influence of No Child Left Behind, the legislation that establishes high standards for all schools and children, regardless of background or disability. Though several of the school psychologists talked about the pressure teachers feel to obtain particular scores on state standardized tests, only one, Camila, stated NCLB specifically as a source of stress in the classroom. Camila also noted that United States culture generally influences teachers. She stated that “part of our culture in America is push children to special education for that will get a child help.” It

appeared that Camila believed that part of American educational culture is to label children instead of developing interventions to help them without sending them to special education.

Richard also noted a national trend that had influenced him and his school. Though his school was located in a wealthy area, years ago, many of the wealthy students went to private school. Therefore, the population of the school was mostly students from lower-income areas. With the economic downturn of recent years, affluent families were no longer in a financial position to send their children to private school. Therefore, the school that Richard worked at was now more racially and socioeconomically diverse. Richard noted that he found it interesting that so many students of different backgrounds interacted with each other on a regular basis, which he noted was very different from his experience growing up.

Another national issue that one of the participants spoke of was the impact of the national achievement gaps between African-American and Caucasian students and between middle- to high-SES and low-SES students. Richard stated that “closing the achievement gap is something that’s on everyone’s mind.” This was an issue that was talked about informally in faculty meetings and in casual conversation, but it was something that people in Richard’s school felt pressure to correct on a constant basis.

*State Culture/Influence.* Many of the school psychologists also talked about the culture and policies of their state and the regional areas within their states. Camila had worked both in a county in the New England region as well as the mid-Atlantic region and she compared the culture of the two areas. “The other schools, and in [a city in the New England region] there were more White children...although it’s not as obvious, for

it seems people here don't see color as much as they do in [a city in the New England region]." She mentioned feeling the difference both in her professional life and in her personal life (discussed with more detail in the *Personal Experiences* section]. Erica also mentioned the difference she felt in the mid-Atlantic region as opposed to the New England region, where she grew up and attended graduate school in relation to sexual orientation. She stated that people in New England were more open and accepting of differences in sexual orientation. She also felt that people in the mid-Atlantic region were more ignorant concerning a basic understanding of sexual orientation and how it develops. Richard also attended graduate school in a different area of the country. He attended graduate school in the Southeast region of the United States, but did not mention feeling differences in attitudes regarding diversity issues between the two areas.

Ian talked about some of the resources that his state had available to the students that he worked with. The state had a multicultural association that worked directly with Latino students. They worked with the students at school and also in the community. The association provided them with resources and worked with their families. Ian saw this as an important and helpful resource that the state provided to the students at his school.

*District Culture/Influence.* The school psychologists talked extensively about the influence of their district on the way that both they and their schools operated. For some of the psychologists, it had to do with fighting against the stigmas that were associated with the school. As previously mentioned, the demographics of Richard's school had changed dramatically over the past few years. When the school had primarily minority and lower income students, it did not have a very good reputation within the district or

the community. As the population became more heterogeneous and the median income of the families rose, so did the reputation of the school. Additionally, the county opened an arts and technology magnet program at the school, which has attracted students from more affluent areas of the district. Richard believed that this also had a positive influence on the reputation of the school within the district and the community.

Holly also talked about the poor reputation of her school within the district. She stated that there were sometimes negative newspaper articles about the school, but a lack of positive press about the school. Holly's school was in a similar situation to Richard's school in that they both were improving their reputations, but they both felt that it was an uphill battle. Holly felt that while she understood where the reputation came from, she did not feel that it was truly warranted. She stated:

I think that stems from the fact that [there was] a lot of negative publicity in the news...And that stigma... we're fighting, we're actively fighting it academically; we're more rigorous than a lot of schools in the county. Test score wise, our test scores were a lot higher than a lot of schools in upper class, more White, areas.

This directly influenced the culture and climate of the school, which is discussed in the following section, but was directly related to the district and the community.

Ian also discussed the influence of the district and the community. While the school is technically located in a suburban area, it has much of the diversity one would see in an urban area. There are also many issues that the district and the community face as a result of that diversity. Ian states that his perception of what entails suburban is very different from the students that he sees within the district. While there are some very affluent areas and students who live in large houses on large plots of land, Ian also

mentions that there are also “families [who] take public transportation to go around most areas... [and] live in apartment buildings, as opposed to...single family...homes.” While Ian acknowledged some of his biases concerning what he thinks a suburban area is, he also noted that his awareness of the community of the district and its unique needs influenced him directly in his job.

*School Climate/Culture.* The participants in this study talked extensively about the impact that the climate and culture of their school had on them. Some of the school psychologists talked about the culture as it related to the adults and some talked about the culture among the students. Most of them felt that diversity and multiculturalism played a role in the culture and climate of the school

As previously mentioned, Holly talked about the feelings of separation, or favoritism, in her school and that these lines appeared to be drawn as a result of background similarity. It was perceived by teachers from administrators, by students from teachers, by students from administrators, and by her from lead teachers. It was something that she felt was very pervasive, stating that it was on “every level, every...it’s all around us.” She also stated specifically that it “negatively impacts the morale” among the teachers and staff.

Annie also talked about the negative influence that the administration had at her previous school located in the city. Despite the positive relationships that she had with her colleagues, the students, and the parents, she decided to leave her school because of the administration and the school culture that they had fostered.

They weren’t willing to do...any academic interventions after school. I wanted to...utilize...a behavior modification system that I had created. I didn’t feel like I

was appreciated at all. I did so much work and again, they were always using me as the translator. I don't really think that they knew what my job responsibilities were all the time. I felt really taken advantage of.

While some of her frustrations with the administration impacted her directly (being used as a translator), much of it had to do with the school culture and Annie's feelings that she could create change and positively impact the whole school rather than individuals.

While he remained at his school, Ian also did not like the way some aspects of the school operated. He noted the way that meetings were run was much more informal than he was used to. Ian acknowledged that part of this may be because this school was not a training environment and because of that, the level of formality was lower. However, he also stated that there may be multicultural factors in play as well. He speculated that socioeconomic status and gender played a role in this lower level of formality. He noted that he had previously worked with women and that they were generally more formal. Additionally, he conjectured that parental socioeconomic status played a role because "maybe it's a function of knowing that lower SES parents are less able to...complain or...file a complaint or...organize in some way to demand some...more responsiveness." He recognized that socioeconomic status, and the level of power that is positively correlated with it, may have influenced the way that staff treated parents and families.

Richard also spoke about the disproportionality at the school level and how that affected him in his job. At his school there was racial disproportionality in Special Education, both in current numbers and referrals, and in discipline. Because of these discrepancies, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in the United

States Department of Education. The school had to develop an action plan to try and reduce the disproportionality of the numbers. Additionally, someone had to be hired to monitor the progress of the action plan. Richard worked with administration to help review and implement the action plan. He spoke about the frustration that he and others in the school felt about this issue. In relation to the special education disproportionality, he said:

But it's very difficult, I think, for middle school. Because we at the middle school level...we don't do that many initial eligibilities for special ed. We really don't. And we're really good about, we're getting even better about...really avoiding doing any test-place type process... So kids, the grades arrive here disproportionate... They arrive here with the special education numbers the way they are.

Richard felt that it would be more effective if the NAACP and OCR targeted the elementary schools. While he felt that the elementary schools were aware of this issue, he did not feel that it was a part of his job to tell them to fix the special education disproportionality.

Richard also spoke about the frustration of discipline disproportionality, especially with respect to its effect on the administrators. While the discipline numbers in his school were clearly disproportionate, "African-Americans make up 39% of the population, but they're 68% of the total [discipline] referrals", he also realized the difficulty that this caused for administrators when students were involved in altercations.

So...imagine you're a principal and you...have a kid that comes in and...slaps another kid and you're trying to find other ways than referrals and suspensions, so

you say, 'Ok, go write this down and serve a lunch detention and you have to write an apology letter.' Well, then the parent of the kid who got slapped says, 'Are you kidding me; my kid just got slapped and this kid's back at school?' And then they usually write the office and the board, so the principal's constantly in the middle of that.

Richard recognized that the principal was in a difficult position because of pressure from OCR as well as parents. This directly affected the school psychologist as he was working with administration to ensure the success of the action plan.

There are also aspects of the school culture that were influenced directly by the students. Ian and Holly talked about the racial tensions between students. Both schools had students who were definitely gang involved and others who were suspected of being involved in gang activity. Ian talked about a situation where it was unclear whether or not the students were gang affiliated and if the related incidents had anything to do with a gang.

Earlier in the year, we had Black kids randomly go up to some Latino kids and start...not the tough gang-related kid or the possibly gang-related...but just a single kid that they were able to pick out and victimize. And I think, working back from that, there was an incident outside the school where apparently some Latino kids had jumped an African American kid. So, this was payback. Again, I don't know. Is it specifically gang-related, or is it a group of kids doing something along those lines?

Having students that are gang involved has the potential to directly influence all the students and staff in the building. However, Holly had a problem with the way that

students who were potentially gang involved were treated. She felt that they were unfairly targeted and harshly punished. The principal in her school had a zero-tolerance policy for gang affiliated students and tried to have them out of the school for the remainder of the year for one offense. Holly felt that this was discriminatory because the gang members were being more harshly punished than other students and those students were more often minority students. Holly felt that other students, such as the ones who drew swastikas on their notebooks and were Caucasian, may be just as dangerous and should be subjected to the same level of punishment as gang involved students.

Holly also talked about the school culture of openness and acceptance of gay students. She stated that among the general education population, the gay students were popular and there was a relatively large proportion of the school population that was openly gay. Although she stated that some offensive sexual orientation-related terms were used, there seemed to be greater acceptance of gay students at her school than other schools. Holly speculated that the parents and some of the teachers had a harder time with it than the students did. Despite having this seemingly open environment, some students had approached Holly to start a gay/straight alliance because there was not one at the school.

#### *Training: Graduate School and Other*

The current section will include information about the participants' formal training, which includes graduate school and other professional learning opportunities. The participants were asked about their multicultural competence development in graduate school. As previously mentioned in Chapter III, Annie, Camila, Erica, and Holly had gone through Masters/Specialist training. Ian completed his doctoral training,

but not his dissertation. Richard had earned a PhD and was a licensed psychologist. They had all completed their training in a program on the east coast of America. Annie, Camila, Ian, and Erica had attended programs in the Northeast. Holly's program was located in the Mid-Atlantic region and Richard had graduated from a program in the southeast. All of them had practiced as school psychologists for five years or fewer at the time of the interview, but Ian had been out of school for six years, as he had taken one year between graduate school and working at a school to work in an alternative setting.

The participants were asked about the multicultural courses that they took, the multicultural practicum and internship experiences that they had, and the environment of their program. Participants had mixed feelings about their time in graduate school. Some felt that it was very helpful in developing their multicultural competence while others felt that it did not provide what they needed to feel multiculturally competent. All of them felt that while diversity and multiculturalism was a part of their training that it was not necessarily viewed as an integral part of their program's training paradigm.

### *Courses*

*Amount of Courses.* All of the participants, except for Ian, took at least one multicultural course in graduate school. This included any course where multiculturalism was the focus on the class. Courses where multiculturalism was integrated but the focus was not on multicultural and diversity issues, such as consultation or assessment, were not included. However, classes such as "multicultural counseling" were included.

*Readings/Assignments.* Participants also discussed how useful they felt the courses were. They talked about the impact of the professor, the assigned readings, and the discussions that were generated during class time. Several of the school

psychologists mentioned that they thought the readings and assignments in these courses were useful. Holly stated that the readings in one of her two multicultural courses were helpful and interesting. She also talked about some of the final products of projects that she had completed for her class and how useful those projects were. Although he did not take a specific class, Ian remembered some of the assigned readings on multicultural or diversity topics and stated that they were useful. Erica also remembered a specific article that she had read in class that she found influential. Camila mentioned feeling frustrated about never being assigned some readings in textbooks that they had bought for their multicultural class and being frustrated with that because she wanted to acquire more knowledge. However, Camila also acknowledged the difficulty of gaining the most appropriate knowledge through reading, “I think it's almost impossible to write a textbook on multicultural competence.” She and the other participants saw multiculturalism and multicultural competence as dynamic (discussed further in *Multicultural Competence Conceptualization* section) and she believed that the ability to gather knowledge through a textbook would be difficult.

*Class Discussions.* While some of the participants talked about the readings, they mentioned the class discussions more frequently and with more information and detail. Annie stated that, “[diversity] was mentioned and discussed a lot” in her courses. Erica also remembered the class discussion more than any other aspect of the course and stated, “I think the most useful part of the class was the class discussion.” Not only were the discussions in Erica’s class helpful, but they generated discussions that would occur outside of the class as well. Holly remembered discussing bias in standardized assessment measures in her multicultural course. Richard talked extensively about the

discussions that were generated from his multicultural course. In addition to also discussing multicultural assessment, testing, and intervention issues, “we talked about how a lot of the studies that establish the effectiveness of interventions were done with primarily white, middle-class populations and how that doesn’t necessarily translate into working with other socioeconomic backgrounds”, there were many philosophical, political, and personal discussions that arose in Richard’s multicultural course. He recounted an example when his teacher, who was African-American, talked about an incident where her son was racially profiled. Although he did not find them as helpful, he also remembers the discussions that became political in his class. He said that they would sometimes talk about:

why one party wasn’t doing the right thing and the other party was. Or...we would start talking about issues that had implications in terms of policies at the federal level and everything. And I just, I kind of, I didn’t want to go there.

While there were aspects of the discussion in the course that he did not find useful, he did remember much of it, indicating that the discussion was influential.

*Instructors.* Participants also talked about their instructors and the impact that they had on the multicultural course. Some of the school psychologists felt that their professors were very good and helped the students increase their multicultural competence effectively. Others felt that their professors were not very good and inhibited the development of multicultural competence. Camila felt especially frustrated with the faculty member who taught her multicultural courses. He was the only minority faculty member at her school and he was Hispanic. According to Camila, he also “had mental health issues, very obvious ones.” She stated that he did not follow through with

assignments and readings and that she felt that she “missed out on the multicultural classes” because of the instructor’s difficulties. Erica also did not speak positively of her professor who taught the multicultural class. She stated that the class was taught by the “token African American on the staff” and that he made assumptions about the students in the class that she did not feel were accurate. She stated that some people in the class became upset or uncomfortable “because the professor was the only African American in the room I remember that he sometimes made generalizations about us and our experiences.” Although Erica did not feel that this was a positive experience, it generated additional conversations outside of the class and it is an experience that she remembers.

Other school psychologists spoke favorably about the professor who taught their multicultural course or courses. Holly said that she thought the professor who taught her education-related course on cultural competency “was good, she was really good.” She found the professor and what she chose for the curriculum useful. The professor was Asian and while Holly did not remember specifics about her, she did remember that the professor was effective. Richard also spoke positively about his multicultural course professor in graduate school. As previously mentioned, his professor was an African-American female who facilitated discussions and shared personal experiences that were impactful for Richard.

### *Environment*

The environment of the graduate school program also influenced the development of the school psychologists’ multicultural competence. They spoke about the diversity of their cohort and faculty, the research interests of the faculty, and the “openness” of the faculty and the other students to talk about diversity issues and have professional

multicultural experiences. These aspects of their graduate programs also influenced their multicultural competence development.

*Faculty.* Most of the participants mentioned a dearth of faculty racial heterogeneity in their programs. Annie, Ian, Holly, and Richard only had Caucasian faculty on their staff. For Holly and Richard the professors that had taught their multicultural courses were not a part of their core school psychology faculty. Camila's graduate program had one Hispanic faculty member and the others were Caucasian. Erica appeared to have the most racially diverse faculty and stated that her core program faculty consisted of "an Asian man, an Asian woman, and an African American man" and "five or six Caucasians." Some of the participants also had faculty members who were openly gay. Annie and Erica both had one Caucasian male faculty member who was gay. None of the participants noted religious diversity within their faculty. As Richard mentioned, the faculty all appeared Christian as they celebrated Christmas. There was gender diversity as most participants mentioned both men and women as members of the faculty.

*Cohort.* The cohorts of most of the participants' programs also lacked diversity. Camila mentioned some racial/ethnic diversity, but stated that most of the program consisted of Caucasian women. There was also one male in her cohort. Ian stated that there was "not very much diversity, mostly Caucasian and Asian" and very few males. He also noted that most of his cohort had attended private four-year colleges, which indicated to him that they were socioeconomically primarily middle to upper-middle class. Erica stated that there were only Caucasian students in her cohort. They had one African-American student who dropped out. Out of three males who started the program,

only one completed it. The diversity in Holly's cohort was similar and she stated that they had all "white females." Similar to Erica, two males started the program with the cohort and one dropped out so only one completed it with them. Richard stated that most of his cohort was Caucasian and he was the only male. There were two African-American women in his cohort.

Annie spoke favorably of the diversity in her cohort. She stated:

There were a lot of Orthodox Jewish [sic] and then we had a pretty high rate of Latino or Hispanic... In my cohort of maybe 30 people there were only black women and they were older, actually. The rest of us were white. But it was, for such a small group, it was...pretty eclectic.

She felt that having such a diverse cohort fostered a positive environment that allowed people to express a multitude of different opinions and perspectives.

*Feelings of "Openness"*. Despite the dearth of faculty and cohort diversity, most of the participants felt that their program had an open and inviting environment to discuss diversity issues. Many of the participants' faculty members incorporated diversity issues into their research. Annie mentioned that "all of our professors were involved one way or another in multicultural research." Erica and Holly talked about the initiative that they took to work on research projects with faculty that had a multicultural focus. Erica's professor researched nutrition in inner-city schools and Holly assisted her professor, who was bilingual, in her work at a community center in an urban, low-income, and culturally and linguistically diverse area. Although both participants felt that these were positive learning experiences, they were not a requirement. These were projects that they sought on their own.

Annie mentioned this as well as stating that while there was much multicultural research available, she could not be involved because she worked full-time in addition to attending graduate school. She felt that she could not work on a multicultural research project with one of her professors if she “wanted to keep [her] sanity.” Ian initially stated that none of his professors were involved in multicultural research, but later mentioned that one professor was involved in research that involved looking cross-culturally at academics and cognition in the United States and China. Though he was not directly involved with this research project, Ian remembered this professor bringing up the project in class in discussing what may be “a more universal learning process and [what] might be more cultural-based and why might it be more cultural.” He found this to be a helpful addition to class discussion. Richard stated that none of his professors were directly involved with multicultural research.

The participants generally stated that they felt comfortable discussing diversity issues in their classes and with members of their cohort. Richard spoke about this at length. When he talked about a political discussion that came up in his multicultural class, he mentioned that “[other members of the class] would get really angry with me. But we could debate it, disagree with each other, and then go have lunch. So it was very open; there was [sic] no hostile feelings.” He felt that the faculty members helped facilitate that environment of openness. Holly mentioned that prior to her internship year, the multicultural conversations generally focused on sexual orientation rather than race. However, when she and her cohort members were in their internship class, conversations regarding race were brought up more frequently. Erica felt comfortable talking about multicultural issues with her cohort and mentioned, also, that sexual

orientation topics were brought up more frequently. She did state that sometimes it was more comfortable to discuss particular issues outside of the classroom with just some of her cohort members rather than in front of the entire cohort and her professors.

Annie spoke favorably about her environment. She considered her cohort diverse and appreciated her colleagues' openness to provide their diverse perspectives. Annie felt that she learned a great deal from her cohort members in relation to diversity and multiculturalism. Camila also felt that her graduate program helped foster an open environment by recruiting and retaining diverse students. Although she felt that her cohort lacked diversity, she did mention that she and other minority students that she knew had received full scholarships, which was rare for her Master's level program.

I wound up getting a full ride to [my graduate school]. They usually don't do that with Master's programs and as I started asking my friends of other backgrounds, I learned that they too had full rides as well. So I thought...I got in because I was brown; and [my graduate school] really promoted it.

This served as a motivator to both attend her school and complete her program. Ian felt that diversity was something that was not given attention in his graduate program. It was not something that was discussed outside of class and neither faculty nor cohort members expressed interest in pursuing multicultural issues. Although Ian feels that he was given the foundations of multicultural competence, he did not feel that his graduate school was a place that was open to multicultural discussions.

#### *Practicum/Internship*

All of the participants talked about some of their multicultural graduate experiences in their practicum and internships. All of them worked with diverse student

populations at their practicum and internship sites. They all noted that these experiences were especially helpful in the development of their multicultural skills. Additionally, in an indirect way, their experiences increased their awareness and knowledge by exposing them to things that they did not learn in their graduate courses.

*Practicum.* Most of the participants worked on practicum sites that had diverse student populations. Holly worked in an area where the families primarily had low socioeconomic status and many spoke Spanish. This introduced Holly to a variety of experiences, including “interpreters and translating documents”, which she found to be helpful in increasing her multicultural skills. Richard also had diverse practicum experiences. During his first year practicum, he worked at an inner-city high school that was predominantly low socioeconomic status and African-American. Richard’s second year practicum was in a school that was rural and also low socioeconomic status. There were an approximate equal number of Caucasian students, African-American students, and Hispanic students. He also had a practicum in a clinic that accepted private insurance and Medicaid. Many clients were low-income and/or racial minorities. This exposed Richard to the influences of diversity issues in a clinical setting and helped him to understand what some of the families in the school where he worked may be going through when dealing with outside agencies.

Ian also had practicum experiences that were not in a traditional school setting. His assessment practicum was through a center at his University. He stated that his two clients were “a pretty impoverished minority family and then a pretty wealthy, white family,” which provided him with two very different experiences. This helped him understand what he might need to consider and how he might vary his approach for

“both...assessments and interventions.” Ian also had a practicum experience in a hospital, where he encountered not only diverse clients, but also diverse staff. The other students that worked there “were quite diverse and we would really sit and discuss cases. The conversation was really, really focused on not rushing to interventions” and taking into consideration the client and family’s background. This was helpful in Ian learning about a student’s and family’s worldview and consequently tailoring interventions so that they were the most effective for that particular family and student. Additionally, because it was a hospital, there was a large turnover of clients, which allowed Ian and the other staff to be exposed to a multitude of different students, families, backgrounds, and presenting issues. This provided a great breadth of diverse experience for Ian.

Annie also had a practicum experience where the staff was impactful for her multicultural competence. Her supervisor at the practicum site was Jewish, which helped increase Annie’s awareness and knowledge. Additionally, this practicum was at a preschool for children with disabilities, which allowed her to be exposed to a number of different levels of ability. This was a form of diversity as well and though school psychologists frequently work with children with disabilities, this allowed Annie to increase her awareness and knowledge of a multitude of disabilities and how they present at a young age.

Camila had practicum experiences that she found to be very impactful for her overall multicultural competence. Her practicum experience was in an inner-city school with a low socioeconomic status and primarily Latino population. Her supervisor was a bilingual school psychologist. Although she loved her experience there, Camila was not happy with her placement at first. She wanted to be in a wealthier, more suburban area

with children who primarily spoke English and were Caucasian. At that time she “still had no idea of what being multicultural was.” However, that experience provided her with a large amount of self-awareness and a desire to utilize her ability to speak Spanish to better serve Latino children and their families. Camila talked about the process of recognizing herself as Latina, the importance of this realization, and how she would utilize her bilingual skills professionally.

It’s a process. I had to give a portfolio presentation for the end of my second year, and it was basically on that process. I had the professors crying, and it was sort of an “aha” moment. I brought in my portfolio, every paper was great, but I spoke from my heart. I said, ‘let me tell you what I learned these last few years’ ...it was a monumental experience.

Although it was not just her practicum experience that aided this self-discovery, it was a large part of why and how Camila came to her realization. Her practicum experience was hugely influential in developing Camila’s multicultural competence.

Erica was the only participant in the study who did not believe that she had much diversity experience in her practicum. Her practicum site was in a suburban school where “[t]here wasn't a lot of diversity.” In that state, some children who lived in urban areas were bussed to the suburban school where she worked, but Erica did not have very much contact with these students. She stated that she counseled a girl who was adopted for Russia, which provided some important diversity exposure. Although she did not encounter a lot of diversity in her practicum experience, Erica felt that she was able to increase her multicultural awareness and knowledge.

*Internship.* The participants' internship experiences also greatly influenced their multicultural competence. Similar to the practicum experiences, almost all of the school psychologists completed their internships in settings where they worked with diverse populations. Only Annie and Camila did not define their internship sites as diverse. At Annie's graduate school, the students had to do their internships in private schools. Therefore, her internship was in a private, Catholic, all-girls high school. While there were some students who attended the school who were not Catholic, most of the students were Christian, mid- to high- socioeconomic status, female, and Caucasian.

Camila also felt that her internship site was not diverse. After working in inner-city schools with a bilingual school psychologist, she chose to work in an area where the families were primarily high socioeconomic status and Caucasian. While there was religious diversity in this area, many of the families were Jewish, Camila did not feel that this directly influenced her in her work. While Camila did not feel that this was a diverse setting, it indirectly influenced her multicultural competence development by reinforcing what she had previously felt during her practicum. She realized that she did not want to work with this population; she felt that she needed to work with a population where she could utilize her bilingual skills.

While Camila and Annie did not feel that their internship sites were diverse, the remainder of the participants felt that their internships afforded them the opportunity to work with diverse populations. During his internship, Richard worked in a high school that was primarily African-American and Latino and very low socioeconomic status. Additionally, the school was an alternative school; therefore the students had many behavioral difficulties. According to Richard, the school "was located in the projects.

And when I say in the projects, I don't mean near the projects; I don't mean a block away...it was in the middle of the projects." The experiences that he had there were helpful in increasing his awareness and skills. He became more aware of some of the everyday issues that the students at this school faced, such as gangs. This, in turn, had a significant impact on his thoughts about the appropriateness of the interventions that were utilized for these students. For example, he provided a detailed description of an anger-management group that he facilitated in this school and the inability to achieve fidelity for the program that he implemented. He stated:

By the third or fourth section you should be moving into the actual skills that are used in anger management. We were still talking about why it was valuable to even learn to be able to control your anger, because they didn't see that it was valuable.

The students explained to him that they knew that they could control their anger if they chose to, but they did not feel that it was helpful to them because, "you can't just walk away...because... if you act all crazy when you get all angry, people will stay away from you because they think, 'Well don't mess with them. They're crazy, they'll go off.'" This was something that greatly increased Richard's skills and awareness.

Holly worked in a variety of internship settings. She worked at an elementary school and high school that had a lot of families living in poverty and the students were primarily Caucasian. She also worked at a program for students with emotional disabilities within a middle school. This was a regional program and had students from different parts of the district. Holly reported learning a lot about the problems that were associated with poverty. She encountered families who struggled with many things such

as, “not having food, not having electricity, more drugs, more alcohol, parents that didn’t have jobs or didn’t have transportation.” She also noted differences in the staff between the schools. “The teachers seemed to be under a lot more stress in the schools that were more poverty level and the kids seemed to have more severe problems.” Working at a high school that was also low socioeconomic status, but with a primarily Caucasian population also allowed her the opportunity to make comparisons between that school and the school she was currently working at. When asked if she saw differences between the students at her internship high school and her current high school, she responded, “Not really. It...really just looking at the school and seeing like a bunch of White faces versus a mixture of faces.” She noted that there was gang activity at both schools, they were just different gangs. Additionally, there were drugs at both schools, but the type of drugs seemed to differ. While Holly was not able to make these comparisons during her internship year, because of the opportunity she had to work at a diverse school she was able to enhance her knowledge and awareness after the internship had been completed. Moreover, Holly increased her multicultural skills in working with students in poverty. She also had the opportunity to compare the school with families in poverty and more affluent families. This is where she first recognized the importance of resources and the ability to advocate for one’s children. Without this experience, this area of her multicultural competence may have developed differently or at a slower rate.

Ian had a nontraditional internship experience.

I split my internships at two locations. I worked at a hospital-based outpatient, kind of an urban hospital. So that was really dealing with impoverished families and again some of them who had a lot of resources at home and some who were

just really struggling economically, personally and every way...[T]he other internship experience was at a residential treatment center, which was again quite a mix of families. We had some...who ranged from barely middle-class to some pretty impoverished as well. And also...you really see kids interacting because they're together all day.... I was with the school program in the residential setting.

He stated that at the hospital he was exposed to much of what Holly had also encountered. He regularly interacted with families who had to deal with a multitude of problems, such as crime in their area, difficulty with providing for their children's basic needs, and the struggle of trying to keep their children safe and uninvolved in dangerous activities while living in a high-crime area. The hospital also afforded Ian the opportunity to understand the impact of family members' mental health issues on the children. Ian felt that the residential setting helped him hone his clinical skills. Part of this was taking all aspects of diversity into account when considering a student's presenting problems. Working in these two settings, especially at the hospital, also gave him the opportunity to observe the different approaches of different practitioners. He worked with another intern who was from the same community that they were working in and watching her approach with families and processing with her helped Ian to consider how his background and his approaches was influenced by his culture. This increased his self-awareness and his awareness of others' culture. It also increased his multicultural skills and knowledge.

Erica completed her internship in the same district where she currently worked; therefore she had difficulty remembering which of her experiences were from her internship year and which were from when she was officially hired as a school psychologist.

She did recall one instance that she remembered as occurring during her internship year. During a meeting she was confronted by an African-American teacher who accused her of not being able to understand a student because she was Caucasian. While this was an uncomfortable situation for Erica, it did get her to think more about what she did understand. She began to wonder if she was truly able to understand this student. She stated:

I think that I didn't necessarily...disagree with it. It made me uncomfortable because it was like such an awkward comment, but...it sort of made me think.

Well I guess, in a way it kind of took me down a level...maybe I can't understand or maybe I shouldn't expect to understand.

In that way, her internship helped increase her multicultural knowledge. Because her internship experiences were also similar to her early work experiences, it can be assumed that her internship also helped increase her multicultural skills and knowledge as well.

#### *Impact of Graduate School vs. Impact of Experience*

There was general agreement among most of the participants that graduate school helped provide the foundation for the school psychologists' multicultural competence. They felt that in graduate school they gained important knowledge and information, but that this was different from the knowledge, awareness, and skills that they developed when they began working. The exception to this general rule was practicum and internship. Participants also felt that they were able to develop awareness and skills in their internship training, but it increased exponentially during their work experience.

*Training vs. Experience.* Several of the participants spoke about the best way for them to develop multicultural competence. The school psychologists felt that it was their

experiences, as opposed to their graduate training, that contributed to their multicultural competence. When asked what helped develop her multicultural competence, Erica stated, “I don’t think it was through my training per se. I think it is through my experiences and just life experiences in general.” Camila echoed a similar sentiment, “I learned more during my practicum than my actual coursework.” Annie also said, “I think I learn by experience.” Ian felt that graduate school was helpful for his multicultural competence, but working intensified that development.

It’s a different type of mentality, and so you have to understand your prejudices and biases toward a population like that, and coming back and dealing with more urban, minority, poor kind of big city type issues. So I had done that in grad school...but...probably experiencing it more intensively here [at the high school].

Richard mentioned that simply working in a place that had a lot of diversity had increased his multicultural competence. “I would say that working in the public schools has probably increased exposure to those [diverse] populations, and therefore by necessity forced me to be more sensitive to cultural differences; which in turn has probably improved my cultural competence.” Richard compared this to private practice where he would not have been exposed to as many diverse clients and therefore he felt that his cultural competence may not have developed as much. This indicated that Richard saw exposure and experience as an important contribution to his multicultural competence. It seems clear that while graduate school courses were important for the foundation of the school psychologists’ multicultural competence, the participants believe that having experiences with different populations was absolutely vital.

#### *Additional Professional Learning Experiences*

The participants also discussed additional professional learning opportunities that they had experienced in their early career. They talked about attending conferences and workshops and participating in professional development opportunities within their schools and districts. The school psychologists felt that while some of these experiences were helpful in developing their multicultural competence, the majority were not beneficial.

Many of the school psychologists had other professional multicultural learning opportunities besides the experience of working at their jobs and graduate school training. Some of these opportunities were helpful, while others were not. It appeared that the participants would welcome professional development opportunities if they felt that they helped challenge them, teach them something new, and therefore increase their multicultural competence.

*Conferences.* Only one school psychologist, Annie talked about attending conferences as a means to increase her multicultural competence. She stated:

I went to NASP and I learned something. You know the Hispanic parents come in and trust us and are usually very engaged in their child's education—usually. But then when you sit a Hispanic parent down and you have to tell them that there is possibly a learning disability or something else going on with them, then they kind of start losing trust in the school system and that we as a school are doing everything that we can, which also might in turn decrease their engagement in school.

This was something that Annie learned from a conference that she felt increased her multicultural knowledge and awareness. There was some information that she had not

previously learned, but had encountered in her work. This conference presentation helped her understand where some of the parents that she had worked with were coming from when working with her and others in the school. Richard was the only other school psychologist who mentioned conferences. Because Richard is licensed he is required to take a course on a multicultural topic, but he stated that he has not yet taken one of these courses.

*Professional Development At Work.* Several of the school psychologists talked about professional development opportunities within their schools and districts. Ian stated that there was a multicultural committee of school psychologists who organized professional development and trainings for the psychologists in the district. Every Friday there was a different professional development opportunity within the district and Ian stated that the focus was on a multicultural issue approximately once per month. Ian felt that this was a helpful structure, but he was often unable to attend because he was busy at his school. There was also a meeting that all of the school psychologists in the district were required to attend once a month. These meetings often had a more administrative focus, but sometimes included some professional development that sometimes included multicultural topics. Ian did not remember any of these trainings specifically and did not mention any of them being helpful. Ian did note that having informal conversations with other, more experienced, school psychologists was helpful. He stated that sometimes it felt uncomfortable or awkward to approach someone informally to ask a question that he felt he should know the answer to. Ian felt that it might be helpful for the school psychology leadership to help facilitate those types of conversations by incorporating them into professional development opportunities.

Holly briefly mentioned having attended some cultural competency trainings in her district. She has found that some are helpful, while others were not. She acknowledged that the multicultural trainings in her county were improving in both quality and quantity. Camila echoed a similar sentiment. She talked about having attended a training on culturally competent approaches when dealing with bereavement. She spoke negatively about the materials that they used in the training:

One of the handouts... [it was] a NASP handout from 2003—which it isn't too far, but it is so dated. They even said, we are so sorry that some of this stuff—please don't throw it away—they are in the process of revising it. But how African Americans deal with bereavement, Hispanics deal with bereavement, Mexicans but all these things in there and there is this African American woman in there saying, 'nah this isn't true.'

She felt that the materials generalized information about each culture too much and that there should have been more emphasis on the importance of not assuming that this information applied to everyone who belonged to that culture. While Camila recognized the challenge of creating trainings for this information, she did not feel that it was helpful to present information that was not current.

Richard did not report attending any cultural competency trainings at the district level, but he had attended one at his school. He did not find it to be helpful at all. He stated:

I think the reason I found it boring is because it was targeted at a skill level that I think was...I hate saying below me, because that sounds so elitist, but it was

really targeted towards people who had probably had no prior coursework, or had never engaged in any discussion about these issues.

Richard felt that because he had already taken courses on this topic with people who were experts in the field that he had gained more knowledge than this training could offer. He felt that the training was not intellectually challenging and therefore did not feel helpful to him.

### *Personal Experiences*

Participants were also asked about their personal lives and how they may have contributed to their multicultural competence. Additionally, while talking about their professional experiences, many of the school psychologists mentioned something personal. They all felt that their personal experiences and characteristics contributed to their multicultural competence in some way. Some of the things that influenced them were things that they had some control over, such as traveling and exposing themselves to different cultures. Other things could not be changed, such as their race or where they grew up. It was clear that personal issues significantly influenced the school psychologists' multicultural competence.

### *Background/Exposure*

Several of the participants talked about where they had grown up and how that may have influenced their worldview. Camila talked about being from a suburb in the northeast and having very little diversity in her town. Most of her friends were Caucasian. Her family was one of few minority families in the area. She noted that she

felt more comfortable growing up 'colorblind.' "I personally, because I grew up colorblind, it's more comfortable. And I don't know if that's good or bad, but I just know that I grew up comfortable." She felt that she did not see color and was torn about whether or not that was a positive thing. It took her until graduate school to really understand and embrace the fact that she was Latina, Peruvian, and could speak Spanish fluently. It took her until she was an adult to realize that this was something she could and should be proud of. She recognized that she was more aware of and comfortable being around people of different cultures. She talked about the diversity of the mid-Atlantic region where she lived as opposed to the area in the Northeast that she felt was less diverse. "I like that here [in the mid-Atlantic region]...there's black, there's white, there's brown, purple, there's everything! There's everything here and I enjoy that." Because of the way that she had grown up and her self-discovery in graduate school, Camila now embraced herself and others of different cultures. She felt that this contributed significantly to her multicultural competence.

Holly grew up in an area where most people were like her. They were primarily Caucasian, upper-middle class, and Jewish. However, Holly did not embrace this. She stated that she felt different from many of the people that she grew up with and did not want the same things that they wanted. Holly knew that this is something that she had always felt, but was unsure why she was this way. While she speculated that her parents may have influenced her (her mother is a social worker), Holly felt that may not explain all of it as she and her sister were quite different. Therefore, Holly's background influenced her multicultural competence, but she was unsure of how or why.

Richard also grew up in an area where the majority of the people were like him. They were primarily Caucasian, working or middle class, and Christian. However, he did have interactions and friendships with people who were different. “I went to a high school where...it was 94% white, 95% white, and I was friends with like, the 3 black kids that went to the school. And...they used to always tell me a little bit.” He did try to expose himself to people who were different and learn from them and their experiences. However, as previously mentioned in the *Graduate School* section, Richard did acknowledge that it was sometimes difficult to understand some of the students that he has worked with because of his background. His lack of exposure to people who were different may have stifled his knowledge, but he became acutely aware of how his background may have contributed to his difficulty relating to some of his students now. In other words, Richard understands how his worldview may have influenced his professional multicultural growth.

Erica noted that she grew up in a middle class area, but was different from the people that she grew up with. There were times when she felt frustrated because of the assumptions that people made about because of her upbringing.

I'm from the suburban, primarily white area and one of the people I was working with was more inner-city and made a generalization about how I was a daddy's girl...and I was like, I grew up with a single mom...I'm not a daddy's girl.

She noted that there had been several times when assumptions were made about her and this taught her to reserve judgment about others. As previously mentioned, Erica felt that multicultural competence should be more individualized and her prior experiences of being judged may have had an influence on her feeling this way.

Annie and Ian also grew up in suburban, primarily Caucasian and middle-class areas. Similar to Richard, Ian noted that this may have influenced his worldview and therefore, his professional decision making. As previously mentioned in the *Graduate School* section, he noticed professional differences between himself and others who had grown up in different areas. Ian also talked about his experience growing up in the United States after having immigrated when he was one-year-old. He recognized that his experience of having one culture at home and a very different culture at school helped him to understand what some of his students go through. He believed that this helped him with all students, not only the ones whose parents are from different countries. Ian's experience helped increase his multicultural awareness, especially of others' worldview.

#### *Desire to Work in Diverse Setting*

Some of the participants spoke about their personal desire to work in diverse settings. Annie spoke about the desire to work in a place that pushed her out of her own personal comfort zone.

I was excited to work in an urban area. I was really excited, because for a long time I lived in my own bubble and I knew that I needed to...get out of my bubble...and be more aware. I just wanted to help and I really, really wanted to help, and I wanted to...be needed.

She felt that she needed to work in this type of setting in order to grow professionally, to increase her multicultural competence by increasing her own comfort level with diversity.

Holly was also eager to work in a diverse setting.

I really like it here...I've always been kind of geared towards working with kids who come from challenging backgrounds and challenging behavior problems. I

like working with...a lower socioeconomic status school. I requested to work in a challenging environment.

Richard felt similarly. He wanted to push himself out of his comfort zone and work with diverse populations.

I was raised...from a middle upper SES white household, in a white area. Most of my friends were white growing up. I went to a primarily white private college. I always did outreach into lower SES areas, and worked in camps and kind of...always had an interest in working with challenging populations.

Holly and Richard both recognized that there were challenges associated with working in a low socioeconomic status environment and it was something that they were drawn to.

Camila also expressed a desire to work in a diverse setting, albeit for a different reason than the other school psychologists. She felt the need to utilize her bilingual ability and help others through her linguistic skills. She also wanted to work in a place where she could relate to and understand the challenges that they were facing. She understood that all students in every setting encountered issues that they needed help with, but she wanted to feel like she was truly helping someone in need. She talked about her experience interning in a wealthy district.

I felt like I wasn't making a difference, for the kids who would get upset over things like not getting to go to their ski-house for the weekend. That didn't fulfill me; I didn't feel like I was helping, I would rather have challenges.

Her personal feelings that she was being underutilized contributed to her desire to seek out a different work setting.

### *Personal Relationships*

All of the participants talked about different relationships that they have had and their influence on their multicultural competence. This is directly in line with what the school psychologists talked about in relation to multicultural competence (discussed in the *Multicultural Competence Conceptualization* section). Most of them mentioned the importance of relationships and their impact on understanding others. Just as having professional relationships with staff, students, and parents was important for multicultural competence development, so too were personal relationships with family, friends, and significant others.

As previously mentioned, Holly felt that her mother, a social worker, may have influenced her desire to work in a low socioeconomic environment with students and families who are different from her own. Annie also felt that her mother instilled important values in her. She stated that, “my mother really, really did a good job of making me aware of...not having biases toward certain groups.” She spoke specifically about the perceptions people had about people who are deaf. Annie’s maternal grandparents are deaf and her mother spoke to her about the assumptions that people made about deaf people and to question those assumptions. Annie felt that this message translated to different populations as well.

Camila spoke about her parents in a different way. She stated that her parents appeared to want to assimilate into the culture of the United States and this led her to put less of an emphasis on her culture and her heritage.

My family was very into the melting pot. Like we are here; we need to assimilate.

So it's hard, it's hard to find a balance of coming to the US and being just

malleable and just forming yourself into an American. But what is an American?

We don't know.

This led Camila to feeling more comfortable being 'colorblind' and not allowing herself to see color, including her own. However, her parents also sent her to Peru for several summers to be with her Peruvian family and stay connected with that part of her. Camila said that she really enjoyed being in Peru and going there to be with family, but she saw it as separate from her life in the United States of America.

Ian spoke about the influence of family in a different context. Instead of speaking about his family when he was young, he spoke about the experience of growing up, becoming an adult, and starting his own family. This helped him to understand some of the stressors that the families that he worked with might go through.

You run a lot of things through your head each time your circumstances change. Starts out just being an adult and having a job and responsibilities and then...being a parent; especially when you're working with families you get an understanding of...the kinds of stresses involved in a way that you didn't know before and you had—that changes your understanding of what...an impoverished family or single-parent family might have to go through.

Ian was the only participant who had children and he was able to offer a perspective about becoming a parent that the other participants did not yet have.

Many of the participants spoke about the impact of having romantic relationships with people who were different from them in some way. Camila's fiancé was Caucasian, Erica's husband was Jewish, Holly's boyfriend was Christian, and Richard had dated women of different races. They all stated that there were things that they learned from

these relationships that related to their multicultural competence. Camila noticed that when she was in New England, she felt that more people looked inquisitively at her and her fiancé. She felt that their relationship was less accepted in that area than in the mid-Atlantic region where she currently lived. She also mentioned some apprehension surrounding their families meeting for the first time. She stated that her family was much bigger, louder and more outgoing than his family and she was worried that they would not get along or like each other. She was relieved when her feelings were unfounded and they did get along. This taught her to not make assumptions about different cultures and the differences between cultures. Although there were differences, it did not mean that there were not also similarities and the ability to get along.

Holly also talked about the intersection of her relationships and her family. She said that she had to deal with their expectations and their disappointment about her romantic choices. She stated that while she has to deal with these feelings that she also feels that she needs to make her own decisions and be comfortable with them. This has impacted Holly's multicultural competence in that she has a better understanding of some of the challenges that students or families face when they do something that is different from their culture's norm.

Holly also stated that she has learned a lot of information about Christianity and its traditions. Erica has learned similar information, being married to a Jewish person. Both school psychologists have gained knowledge from these personal relationships.

Many of the participants spoke about their friendships and how they learned valuable information from conversations or experiences that they would not have had on their own. Annie spoke about constantly asking questions of friends from different

cultures. She said that asking the questions had a positive effect on her relationships.

She stated:

because I asked questions instead of assuming I knew what was happening, I think it made us closer and made them realize that she just really wanted to know so that she could be more responsible or be more respectful or whatever. And so I think asking questions and just letting them know that I'm curious and I want to know about their culture and about how it works...just opens the line of communication even more.

This has transferred into Annie's professional life as well. This has helped her to become more knowledgeable about the cultures she does come into contact with. Additionally, it made her more confident to ask questions when she needed more information.

Annie spoke of having friends who were gay, Jewish, and several different races. She lived with and among people in college who were of many different races. This has afforded her the opportunity to ask many questions. This is something that Annie takes advantage of as she stated that she is "very nosy about different cultures." She believed that this was not only helpful to her, but also helped Annie and her friends to become closer. Professionally, this has helped Annie in her work with both the students and families.

As previously mentioned, Holly was not friends with the people in school when she was growing up who were more similar to her culturally. Instead she had many friends from diverse backgrounds growing up. "In middle school, my dad used to call my friends the United Nations because everyone was...a different culture. I've just not been attracted to people that...were stereotypically brought up like me." As she was

growing up, Holly voluntarily exposed herself to many people who were different from her and this helped to increase her multicultural competence in her adult life.

While Richard was friends with the few African-American students who went to his high school, it was college where he was really exposed to a lot of people who were different from him. He played football in college and “70% of the team was...black guys,” many of whom were from urban areas. While he did not have a lot in common with them in relation to background, he found that he got along very well with his African-American teammates. In fact, he stated that he felt that he was treated better by his African-American teammates as opposed to his Caucasian teammates of similar backgrounds. This exposure and the recognition of this differential treatment was an interesting observation and something that Richard felt contributed to his multicultural competence.

### *Multicultural Competence Conceptualization*

#### *NASP Definition*

The participants were all asked to comment on a NASP definition of cultural competence. Although APA and other salient organizations have a definition of cultural competence, it was necessary to ask the school psychologists a NASP version. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, the guidelines and conceptualizations of multicultural competence from other organizations are not sufficient for school psychologists. While there are overlapping responsibilities and duties between school psychologists and school counselors and other psychologists, school psychologists need a definition of multicultural competence that is unique to their specific job description.

*Agreement or Disagreement.* After being asked about their early career multicultural experiences, the participants were all read a National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) definition of cultural competency, which was originally taken from Davis 1997. The definition is:

“Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.” (NASP, 2003)

The participants were asked whether they agreed with the definition and, if not, how they conceptualized multicultural competence. Five of the six school psychologists agreed with the definition. Only Erica did not agree with the definition. Her interpretation of the definition was, “let's put people in a box so that we can say, in general, this is how we would treat this population of people and that's how we are going to get the better outcome. Which is, I understand sort of the whole, on a bigger level as a school psychologist anyways.” Erica’s feedback to the interviewer was that the definition encouraged school psychologists to stereotype and label people.

*Critique of NASP definition.* Although the majority of the participants agreed with the NASP definition, several of them wanted to make some comments. Some thought that parts of the definition should be clarified or emphasized. Others felt that something needed to be added to the definition to make it more complete or accurate. Specifically, Camila stated that she thought that knowledge and understanding needed to be emphasized in the definition. Annie had a different idea of what needed to be emphasized. She mentioned that she thought that a stronger statement about

interpersonal relationships and the importance of positive interactions with people from different cultures was an important thing to include. Annie also stated that she thought that the part about standards and policies should be de-emphasized. She felt strongly that cultural competence was more about interpersonal interactions saying, "I think it's more about the interactions." Holly also agreed with Annie about the area of the definition that needed to be emphasized. "[F]or me a lot of it is building relationships. Professional relationships, relationships with kids, relationships with the families; and we know that building relationships is a big part of...kids wanting to learn and learning." She used the term 'relationships' rather than 'interactions', but echoed a similar sentiment as Annie.

Ian stated that it may be helpful to add something to the definition. He believed that adding something about cultural competence being "something that...continually changes." Although he stated that this may be something that is generally understood, he felt that it may be helpful to include something about the dynamic nature of cultural competency and how one applies it depends on the individual as well as updates in the research base.

Erica provided the greatest amount of information, as she did not agree with the current NASP definition. She felt that the specialty of school psychology focused on labeling students in order for them to get the services that they needed and that the NASP definition was an extension of that.

That's one thing that I don't like about the field in general. And I understand you know that if we know...that the kid has autism these are the interventions that work for autism and blah blah blah. But the thing that bothers me is that you have to call them that in order to get the services and you know that whole piece of it,

so I don't know if it bothers me more here or if that's just something overall that bothers me.

Erica stated that she felt the definition meant, “let's put people in a box so that we can say, in general, this is how we would treat this population of people and that's how we are going to get the better outcome.” She thought that the “integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals” sounded like a stereotype and led to a student being assessed for special education and then placed there in order “to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.” Erica stated that she may have misunderstood or misconstrued the definition, but that was how she interpreted it.

This interviewer asked Erica what multicultural competence for school psychologists was for her. Erica provided her own definition:

I think it just comes down to having an understanding of where people are coming from and just then pretty much because everybody is not coming from the same background regardless of what category you would put them in. So it's more individualized in my head. So if you meet somebody—to be multiculturally competent you have to understand their personal story and personal background. I guess that would be my definition.

Erica felt that instead of trying to understand an individual through the experience of a group, she felt that it was more important to understand the individual person and their personal experience, which was similar to what some of the other participants stated.

Richard talked about each part of the definition and how he felt about each part. He commented that one part of the definition seemed ambiguous, “Integration and transformation, so it's analysis and synthesis of knowledge about individuals and groups

of people into specific standards. That's a little vague", but as he talked his way through the definition, he made sense of the previous statement.

I like it because it talks about having training standards; I guess is what they're talking about here. So, for someone to be culturally competent, what is the minimal level of competence? What do we find is the minimal level of competence? So to do that you need to have standards, so I like that.

Richard later stated that he did not feel that the definition needed any changes and was the only participant who did not provide constructive feedback about the definition. Richard also stated that he felt it was, "a very nice succinct, definition of cultural competence."

#### *Feelings About Personal Multicultural Competence*

After reading and discussing the NASP definition of cultural competence, the participants were asked how they felt about their own multicultural competence. They also talked more about what they were learning and how that may have impacted their feelings about their own multicultural competence and school psychologist multicultural competence in general. The participants were also asked if there were any competencies that they wished that they had. All of this information was considered in formulating a grounded theory of school psychologists' multicultural competence conceptualization.

*Evolving.* When the participants were asked about their feelings about their own multicultural competence, almost all of them stated that they felt it was constantly evolving and developing. Richard stated this about his multicultural competence, "It's constantly evolving... I got to continue to work to be more competent and it's evolving." Ian had a similar statement about multicultural competence, "It's just a skill that you try

to develop and keep your eyes open and be aware of yourself and you're always learning." Erica spoke about the fact that she was still in the early stages of her career and she said, "I feel like I'm still developing because I haven't had that much experience until coming here." Holly, Annie, and Camila alluded that this was something that they would be constantly working on throughout their careers. Annie said, "I feel like I am still learning and I feel like I will still be learning for the rest of my life." Camila stated something similar, "I think it's always a process and it's always growing and changing, also it's an infinite amount that one can obtain. One can only get more. I always thought I'm multiculturally competent, but it's more than that." While Camila generally felt competent, she also felt that she wanted to learn more and that there was always more for her to learn. Holly felt similarly and stated, "I'm always building more competence, there's always room to grow."

The sentiment echoed by all of the school psychologists is in line with Ian's feedback about the NASP definition of cultural competence. He felt that something needed to be included in the definition about the dynamic nature of cultural competence; that it is always changing and constantly needs to be updated. This appears to be an important theme for multicultural competence for these school psychologists.

*Self-Awareness/Self-Assessment.* The participants also spoke about the importance of being self-aware in relation to their own multicultural competence. They spoke about understanding yourself and the impact that you have on others. The participants spoke of aspects of themselves that they did have some control over, such as the words that they used and their reactions, and things that they did not have control over, such as personal characteristics like race and age.

Ian mentioned the importance of “checking in with yourself” throughout the interviews.

I think you always have to check-in with yourself and I think that's a part of any psychologist's job, regardless of the setting, self-awareness...you kind of have to trust yourself a little bit that you're being fair and as non-judgmental as you can be but that's impossible. But I think it's a process of checking in with yourself and how did I handle this situation?

These were certain questions that he continually asked himself in order to increase his awareness of his actions. Ian did not feel that it was possible to be completely unbiased, but it was something that he continually strove for. He summed up his feelings about this stating, “I think every student you are making a decision for, you have to be aware of why you are making that decision.”

Camila also spoke of the importance of self-awareness through her process of self-discovery during graduate school. Her self-discovery was discussed in more detail in the *Graduate School* section, but she talked about her feelings concerning the importance of better understanding herself.

It's hard to be a true culturally competent individual, for I had my own self-discovery in grad school, in who I was, and in being culturally competent...it was a lot of self-discovery during my internship year including during the practicum years, for I discovered that I wasn't as culturally competent as I thought I was.

She mentioned that it was important for her to know more about herself in order to grow and increase her multicultural competence. Without understanding herself, Camila did not feel that she would be able to do so.

Erica mentioned an experience that she had that made her more aware of herself and her understanding of things. Erica was often the only Caucasian adult in meetings with mostly African-American staff and parents. As previously mentioned, there was a time when a teacher said something about how she could possibly understand something because she was Caucasian. Erica now feels that she is “careful to try to be like, ‘Wow, do I fully understand where... It is something that I’m always trying to be conscious of.’” In order for her to have the best possible information, Erica felt that it was important to know what she did not know and what she still needed to learn. Additionally, she felt that she needs to understand when to reach out and gather information from others as a means of better understanding a child or a family.

Several of the school psychologists also spoke about personal characteristics that they could not control and their impact on their jobs. Annie spoke about the impact of her looks and her age on how people related to her.

[N]ot only am I young but I look very young, so I try to act older as a result of the way that I feel about my appearance. But I know that some of the parents last year really respected me because they thought that I was very open and I was very gung-ho and...more than willing to go beyond what I needed to do to help them out. But then other parents were kind of like what do you know? How long have you been working? How old are you?

She was very cognizant about her age and her looks and how people treated her because of the way that she looked. Annie did not feel that this impacted her relationships with students, but that it did influence her relationships with some parents and staff. Although Annie was Caucasian, fair-skinned and blonde, she felt that her age and youthful

appearance were more impactful in relation to how she was treated than her racial appearance.

Annie felt that her appearance could act as a barrier, whereas Camila felt that her appearance was a facilitator of her ability to create relationships. When Camila started working in schools where there was a large percentage of Latino students, she noticed something:

I see little girls look at me and stare when I walk by sometimes, and just random little Hispanic girls will smile and even wave to me in the school. That's something I always picked up on... the small children, especially the younger Hispanics ...I think they look at me and think, 'Wow! She looks like me.' And I honestly feel that every child I have encountered...I have established rapport with immediately and easily and I don't know if that has anything to do with my being from Latino descent, but it's something that I have always noticed. It's like an immediate connection. I don't know if my physical appearance makes them feel that I'm more trusting. I don't think so, but establishing rapport this has been a big facilitator.

Although in this passage, Camila was speaking specifically about students, she mentioned that this was also helpful in her relationships with parents. Because she was aware of her impact just by working at the school, Camila was able to utilize this characteristic, being Latino, to her advantage.

Holly has been faced with the challenge of feeling uncomfortable when students become aware of one of her personal characteristics. As previously mentioned, Holly was Jewish and while not all of the students at the school, or even the ones that she

worked with regularly, knew about her religion, she has had interesting and sometimes uncomfortable experiences with the ones who do.

Holly: The only time when I've had some kind of uncomfortable feelings is when my students have found out that I'm Jewish on top of being white, because they've never met a Jewish person and they've kind of... we had twin day or something and one of my students came in and said, 'It's going to be impossible for you to find a twin because there's no one else that's Jewish in this building.' They've commented..., 'Look at my hair.' They've said, 'Look at her Jewish nose' before. They're very not-PC at all. That's kind of been, more so than me being white, me being Jewish...

Interviewer: How...does that make you feel?

Holly: It makes me feel uncomfortable. It makes me kind of pause for a minute and kind of not know what to say... like the one student found out I was Jewish brought it up in a girls group...that I was Jewish in front of everyone. Because she just said, 'I just can't believe you are what you are.'

Although Holly did not feel personally threatened by these statements because she believed that they are made because of lack of knowledge rather than outright prejudice, but she felt uncomfortable. She said that while she does not "advertise" her religion, she answers questions if she is asked. Holly also worked with students who drew swastikas on their notebooks and she stated that she was very cautious about revealing her religion

to them. She was also restrained in talking about Judaism in general as she stated, “you’re not supposed to talk about religion in school.”

Additionally, she sometimes had issues regarding her religion with the staff. At her school, they did not have a specific meeting day; they held meetings on an as-needed basis. Sometimes there were meetings scheduled on days when Holly was out of the building for Jewish holidays. She has had to explain that she would not be available to participate via phone and that the meeting would have to be rescheduled. Holly noted that the other staff were generally understanding, but not necessarily aware of her need to be out of the building that day.

Ian was of South Asian descent and has been in the position where he was “not a typical individual for [an] area” where he was working. Being put in the position where he was not only a minority, but a part of a group that people in the area did not understand or have much knowledge about, allowed him to formulate an informal process of helping a client, parent, or student get to know him. He stated that he tried to introduce himself and really allow the client to get to know him. Ian stated that this was, “just another step in developing rapport.” There were also instances where Ian came into contact with students who were also South Asian, but were a different culture from him. Ian was Hindu, but was once asked by a South Asian student if he was Muslim. Ian viewed this question as this student attempting to reach out and find someone else in the school who was of the same background as him. Ian felt that when he told the student that he was not Muslim, but Hindu, that the student “was a little disappointed.” This is a form of self-awareness that Ian realized could impact his relationships with students.

*Competencies Wished For.* The participants in the study were also asked about the competencies that they wished that they had. All of the participants who did not speak another language stated that they wish that they could. Erica, Holly, and Richard said that they wished they spoke another language, specifically Spanish. Erica mentioned that she studied French, but now saw it as “useless” because she did not use it professionally. Although Ian did not use his other language, Tamil, professionally he did not mention wanting to speak another language. Although Camila was fluent in Spanish and used it profusely professionally, she did wish for more “knowledge about...different languages, not just English and Spanish.” It appeared that these school psychologists felt that language and communication were important components of multicultural competence.

Annie and Camila also discussed the desire to obtain more knowledge about and exposure to certain other populations. Annie mentioned that she would like a little more information about and interaction

with the Muslim culture...because I know that having a student identified with a learning disability is a really big blow for them. So really learning how to...help them accept their child for who they are and maybe not push their child to where their child will start shutting down... I have to learn how to interact with these parents.

Camila mentioned that she wanted more knowledge about sexuality and religion. While she felt competent working with racial and socioeconomic minorities, she did not have a lot of professional exposure to these populations and she wanted to feel more competent in those areas.

Richard mentioned wanting to increase a skill in interacting with parents. While he did not specifically state that this was directly related to multiculturalism, he alluded that this was an issue that he dealt with when interacting with parents from minority backgrounds. He stated:

I wish I was better able to persuade parents...to pursue community-based resources. Mental health, in particular... I see a lot of kids who I think have unaddressed mental health needs... [T]here are programs out there that are community-based programs that are available for kids... You know, if you're not going to do therapy...at least medication for some of the kids. So a lot of parents are resistant about that. And...I wish I had some way of persuading them that was more effective.

He was frustrated because he saw many students in his school with mental health needs that he felt were being unaddressed and those issues were affecting the students in the classroom. The issues that he spoke about were above and beyond what the school could deal with and he was concerned about several students. Richard had the desire to communicate with parents in a way that would help them understand the benefit of mental health services outside of the school.

In addition to wishing that she could speak another language, Holly felt that increasing her confidence was a competency that she wanted. "I guess it's just...the competence of just...speaking and not feeling like I'm going to be judged and considered to be racist based on terminology that I use or things like that." She provided the example that she was not sure if she should use the term "Black" or "African-American." Holly stated that she sometimes paused awkwardly during conversations so she could

think about the best term to use. She wanted to feel more confident that she was using the right term and speak fluently without the fear of being judged.

*Participants' Multicultural Competence Conceptualization: Summary and Definition*

Five of the six participants in this study generally agreed with the NASP definition of cultural competence. However, four of them also felt that some parts of the definition needed to be emphasized, altered, or that something needed to be added. One participant did not agree with the definition and offered her own conceptualization of what school psychologist multicultural competence should be. This definition incorporates the feedback of the participants into the current NASP definition of cultural competence. It emphasizes knowledge and incorporates the comments about understanding of others. It also mentions and emphasizes the importance of relationships and de-emphasizes policies, practices, and standards. The importance of self-awareness has been added in addition to the dynamic nature of cultural competence. Below is the new definition that integrates the feedback and information from the participants:

Operationally defined, culture competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people. This knowledge should be coupled with self-awareness of one's own worldview and its influence on professional decision-making to better understand others. This should be used appropriately in a variety of cultural settings in conjunction with school psychologist multicultural skills to create strong interpersonal relationships and culturally appropriate interactions in addition to informing standards, policies, and practices. It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of cultural competence

and continually integrate additional knowledge gleaned from these relationships and interactions.

*Participants' Multicultural Competence Development Conceptualization: Grounded Theory*

The previous sections provided an important primer for the current section. It was necessary to establish how school psychologists conceptualized multicultural competence. This conceptualization and all of the additional information that the participants shared contributed to the formalization of a grounded theory of school psychologists' multicultural competence development.

The participants felt that while their graduate school courses contributed to their multicultural competence, it was really their early work experiences that had defined and shaped this area of their competence. The school psychologists felt that they had a personal desire to work in diverse settings and were generally inclined to interact with people who were different from them. While they felt that their families and other early experiences may have influenced this desire, they were generally unable to pinpoint why they possessed this personal attribute. They did feel that their personal relationships helped them to continually develop their multicultural competence.

The participants generally felt that their graduate school experiences created the foundation for their multicultural competence. Most of the participants took at least one multicultural class in graduate school and all of them remembered having multicultural discussions in class. The quality of the instructor, in addition to the class discussions, appeared to be an important factor for a successful multicultural class. The actual readings were also important, but it appeared that the discussions that the class had about

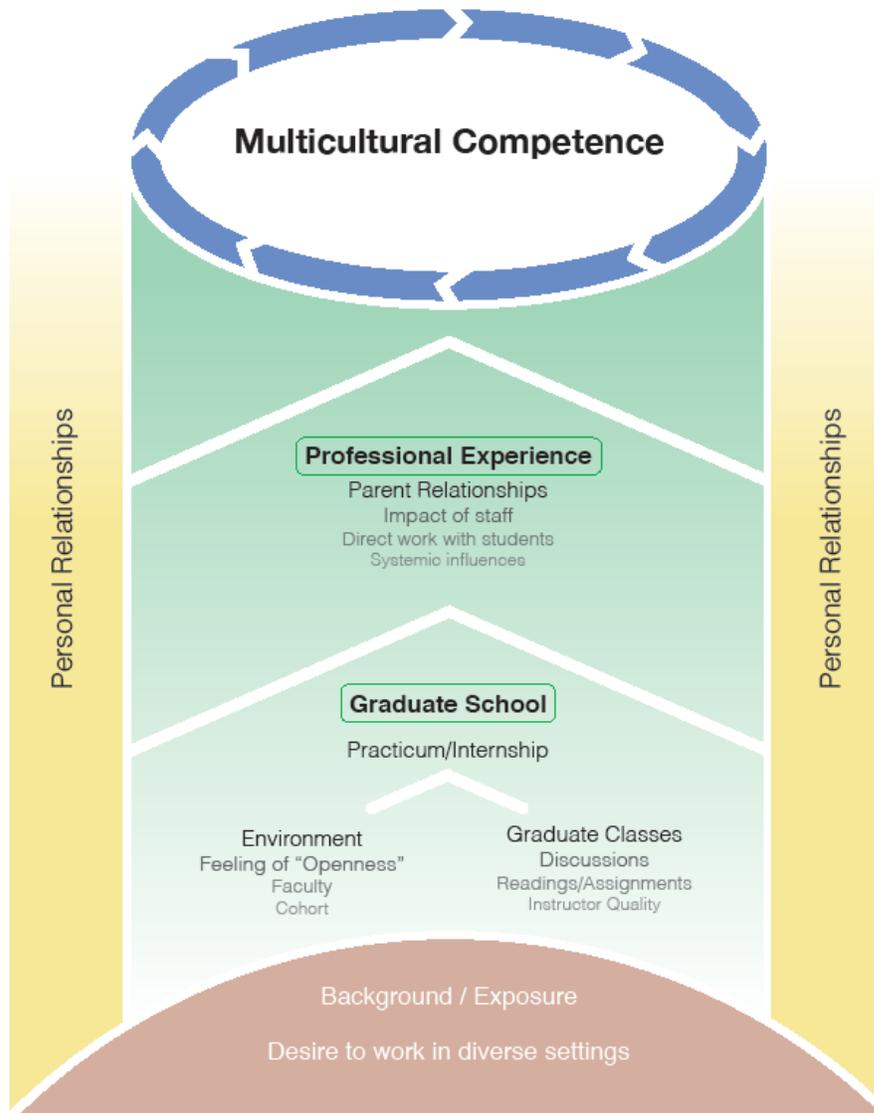
the readings were even more important. The assignments were also important and appeared to allow the students to personalize the experience that they were having in the multicultural class. Whether or not the class discussion was helpful seemed to depend on the openness of the graduate program. While diversity and faculty interest in diversity research was not necessary for creating an open environment, it appeared to be helpful.

It was clear that the practicum and internship experiences were very important for developing multicultural competence. It appeared that combining these experiences with class discussion was an important part of multicultural competence development. It seemed that some multicultural experiences occurred in practicum and internship that could not be taught and these issues should be discussed in the courses that accompany these experiences. This appeared to help the participants with their multicultural competence development.

The on-the-job experiences that the participants have had in their work had appeared to contribute to their multicultural competence development more than any other experiences. While graduate school provided the foundation of knowledge, working provided the opportunity to gather additional knowledge and apply it. It has led the participants to develop skills, create relationships, and understand the students, families, and other staff that they work in a way that they were unable to with courses, readings, and class discussions. While practicum and internship helped create the foundation for experience and problem-solving, working helped develop multicultural competence more than any other experience.

Below is a figure demonstrating the grounded theory of multicultural competence development for school psychologists according to the six participants in the current study.

**Figure 4.1: School Psychologists' Multicultural Competence Development**



Background and Exposure in addition to the participants' desire to work in a diverse setting encompass the foundation of multicultural competence development. The next step in this development is graduate school, which also contributes to the

foundation. Specifically, graduate classes and the environment of the program are more foundational. Discussion, readings and assignments, and instructor quality all contribute to the success of a graduate class. Similarly, a feeling of ‘openness’, the diversity of and research interests of the faculty, and a student’s cohort contribute to the graduate school environment. These components are listed in order of importance according to the participants of the present study. The experiences that a school psychology trainee has in graduate classes and within the environment of the graduate program influence practicum and internship experiences. Once a school psychologist ceases their training and becomes a practitioner, their professional experiences are really what elevate their multicultural competence development. The professional experiences are also listed in order of importance and include parent relationships, impact of staff, direct work with students, and systemic influences. Personal relationships occur throughout all of these levels of multicultural competence development, but are on the periphery as the participants did not stress them as very important. All of these personal, professional, and training experiences continually elevate school psychologists’ multicultural competence development. Multicultural competence is represented in the figure as a circle to symbolize its cyclical and evolving nature.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to utilize a grounded theory methodology to produce a conceptualization of early career school psychologists' perception of multicultural competence development. In addition to exploring multicultural competence development, participants were also asked to define their own personal understanding of school psychology multicultural competence. The analysis of the data of the current study resulted in a modified definition of school psychology multicultural competence as well as a grounded theory of school psychologists' multicultural competence development. The current chapter will begin with a discussion of the results reported in chapter IV in regard to the research questions. In accordance with grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the chapter will next include a re-examination of the literature and how the current study both supported and diverged from the extant research. There will then be a discussion of the study's strengths and limitations. A summary of implications for training and practice will follow. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of potential future research.

#### *Research Questions*

As mentioned in Chapter I, the goal of this study was to generate two theories regarding multicultural competence. The first goal was to conceptualize multicultural competence and the second was to devise a theory of multicultural competence development. There were two research questions that guided the formulation of these goals. They were as follows:

1. How do school psychologists conceptualize multicultural competence?

2. How do school psychologists conceptualize the development of their own multicultural competence?
  - a. Do school psychologists believe that it is their graduate training that has led them to be multiculturally competent, their work in the schools, or a combination of both?
  - b. How has their graduate training and field experience influenced their multicultural competence?

*Multicultural Competence Conceptualization*

Participants’ critique of a NASP definition of cultural competence, in addition to other comments concerning their own multicultural competence resulted in a new definition of school psychology cultural competence. These definitions are as follows:

**Table 5.1: Current and Proposed Definitions of School Psychologists’ Cultural Competence**

A Current NASP Definition of School Psychologists’ Cultural Competence	Proposed Definition of School Psychologists’ Cultural Competence
Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.”	Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people. This knowledge should be coupled with self-awareness of one’s own worldview and its influence on professional decision-making to better understand others. This should be used appropriately in conjunction with school psychologist multicultural skills in a variety of cultural settings to create strong interpersonal relationships and culturally appropriate interactions in addition to informing standards, policies, and practices. It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of cultural competence and continually integrate additional knowledge gleaned from these relationships and interactions.

It was important not to completely change the definition that was presented to the participants because five out of six of the participants stated that they agreed with the definition and generally felt that it was clear and succinct. Though they did critique the definition, only one participant advocated that the definition change drastically.

The participants generally appeared to like the first part of the definition, which is not different from the above, modified definition: “Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people.” This part of the definition is directly related to one of the Professional Experiences’ key categories of Understanding Families’ Worldview. The school psychologists recognized the importance of knowing where students and families were coming from in order to develop and sustain working relationships. As Richard stated this was the “analysis and synthesis of knowledge about individuals and groups of people”, which many participants indicated was an important skill. Erica, who disagreed with the definition and specifically the part of the definition that had to do with “analysis and synthesis of knowledge” felt that this involved utilizing stereotypes. She felt that it was more important to understand students and families on an individual level. Because the individual part of this sentence is included, it incorporates Erica’s concerns as well.

The second sentence, “This knowledge should be coupled with self-awareness of one’s own worldview and its influence on professional decision-making to better understand others”, introduces self-awareness which was an important theme throughout many of the interviews. Ian, specifically, talked extensively and repeatedly about the importance of “checking in with yourself.” He described this as continually examining the professional decisions that one makes and why one makes such decisions. Camila

spoke about how understanding oneself personally and how one's personal background and experiences influence school psychology duties. Specifically, she mentioned the ease with which she was able to build rapport with parents and students who were also Hispanic. Annie also spoke extensively about understanding how others' viewed her, referring to her youthful appearance. Holly also spoke about some of her students commenting about her "looking Jewish." Possessing this self-awareness and its impact on school psychologists' professional duties appears to be a vital aspect of multicultural competence according to the participants.

The next sentence, "This should be used appropriately in a variety of cultural settings in conjunction with school psychologist multicultural skills to create strong interpersonal relationships and culturally appropriate interactions in addition to informing standards, policies, and practices", was an attempt to de-emphasize standards, policies, and practices, as the participants did not believe that was very important, while emphasizing interpersonal relationships. When talking about their experiences with multiculturalism in their jobs, the school psychologists spoke extensively about interpersonal relationships. This indicated that this was clearly an important part of their roles. Additionally, when asked what might need to be changed about the definition, participants stated that they thought that relationships should be stressed. This also helps integrate Erica's feedback about understanding individual students and families. Cultural settings is kept in this definition and culturally appropriate interactions is added as the participants felt that having positive interpersonal interactions was necessary for building positive relationships. The concept of multicultural skills was added in order to account for the importance of possessing multicultural skills as well as awareness and knowledge.

The final sentence, “It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of cultural competence and continually integrate additional knowledge gleaned from these relationships and interactions”, incorporates the feedback that almost all of the participants provided: that multicultural competence is dynamic. The participants believed that multicultural competence is not stagnant. They felt that they always integrated new information and knowledge into their practice. According to these school psychologists, their own multicultural competence was constantly evolving.

This new definition of cultural competence is a more complete representation of the perception of what current school psychologists are experiencing in schools. It integrates information from the participants’ experiences as well as their specific feedback and critique. While this definition is an important first step in re-conceptualizing the concept of school psychology multicultural competence, it was developed from a self-selected group that was not designed to be representative of the general population of school psychologists or even early career school psychologists. It is important to point out that the participants focused more on multicultural awareness and knowledge, but less on multicultural skills. This researcher added multicultural skills to the definition in order to incorporate this important aspect of multicultural competence, but it did not come directly from the participants. More feedback and critique is needed in order to refine this definition to represent the specialty of school psychology.

#### *Multicultural Competence Development*

The next research question asked about the general conceptualization of multicultural competence development. The question asks specifically about the influence of graduate school training as well as the interaction of graduate school and

early career experiences. It seems clear that one course in multicultural competence is not sufficient to develop school psychologists' multicultural competence and that direct experiences with students, staff, and families is an essential component to this development. This section will discuss the different elements of multicultural competence development and how they appeared to influence the participants in the current study.

The culmination of the participants' conceptualization is illustrated in Chapter IV (Fig. 4.1). It appeared that there was an aspect of multicultural competence development that was inexplicable. Several of the participants spoke about their personal desires to work in diverse settings with populations who experienced challenges. However, it was difficult for them to explain where this desire came from. While personal experiences, such as exposure to different cultures, friends who were culturally different and family influenced this desire, it did not appear to account for all of it. For example, Holly mentioned that her mother, who is a social worker, may have influenced her but that her sister was very different. It appears that the baseline of multicultural competence development, the place where school psychologists start from, is undefined. However, there does appear to be a baseline from which multicultural competence develops. Both this internal desire and early experiences make up the foundation for school psychologists' multicultural competence. Therefore there are two main components to the foundation of one's multicultural competence: (a) a personal desire to work with people from diverse backgrounds and (b) early personal experiences. The first component, (a) personal desire to work with people from diverse backgrounds, was not fully understood by the participants. However, this researcher postulates that these

components are inextricably linked. It is likely that the early personal experiences that the participants had greatly influenced their desire to work with people from diverse backgrounds. Many of the participants spoke of having friends of a different culture, having romantic relationships with people of different cultures, or spoke about what it felt like to feel like a minority themselves. It is highly probable that these experiences created feelings of discord or discomfort and prompted the participants in this study to continue their growth as multicultural beings and professionals.

Graduate school contributed to the participants' multicultural competence directly. When they spoke about graduate school, they mentioned the knowledge that they gained from courses, such as learning that people from Asian cultures do not typically make eye contact or that Hispanic/Latino parents often put all of their trust in the school for their children's educational attainment. The school psychologists found this information helpful and had instances in their practice where they utilized the information. It was in this way that graduate school courses contributed to their multicultural competence. There were other mitigating factors that influenced how useful those graduate school courses were. The professor quality, the openness within the course to have frank discussions, and the quality of readings and assignments also helped determine how much knowledge the school psychologists gained in their courses. The theme of "openness" did not appear to be related to the diversity within the school psychologists' cohorts. Both Erica and Holly stated that their cohorts were not particularly diverse, but they felt that they could talk openly. This feeling coupled with graduate course content not only strengthened multicultural competence, it also helped participants in their practica and internships. The knowledge that they gained from

courses helped determine the professional choices that they would make at their training sites. Additionally, the openness that they felt in their courses probably helped them to feel more comfortable in diverse school settings. They may have felt more comfortable asking questions and analyzing the environment than they would have had their courses not included that feeling of openness. It is important that graduate school instructors help facilitate this feeling by both verbally encouraging open conversation and modeling it for students. It appears that part of this modeling for the students is associated with the general environment of the graduate program as it also directly influenced their multicultural competence. Faculty interest in diversity, faculty diversity research, cohort diversity, and a general feeling of “openness” all contributed to an environment that facilitated or hindered multicultural competence development. All of this directly influenced participants’ multicultural competence. Both the environment and the graduate school courses also influenced the participants in their practica and internships as well.

Early job experiences appeared to influence the participants’ multicultural competence more than anything else, personal or professional. This was evidenced by the amount of time the participants spent talking about their professional experiences in the interviews as well as statements they made to that effect. Many of the participants stated that they felt that job experiences contributed to their multicultural competence much more than their graduate training. Within this set of experiences, there were some things that influenced the school psychologists more than others. Parent Relationships appeared to influence the participants very much. The interactions, both challenging and

helpful, that they had with parents helped them to understand how multiculturalism and diversity relates to students' educational attainment.

It is important to point out that it appears that socioeconomic status was a much more salient aspect of diversity than race/ethnicity. Often when the participants spoke about challenges that they faced with parents or challenges that the families faced, they spoke of issues that were specifically related to low socioeconomic status. Although this correlated with race/ethnicity as the parents that they were referring to were often African-American or Hispanic/Latino, the specific challenges that these families seemed to face were more closely related to money and resources. The one exception to this general rule had to do with families that did not speak English. Most of the families that did not speak English spoke Spanish and the school psychologists had to utilize translators frequently. This was very frustrating for them and the participants worried about the accuracy of the translations that occurred in meetings with these parents. The two participants who spoke Spanish fluently recognized that this barrier to communication would be a challenge if they did not speak that language. When Camila, who was a native Spanish speaker, had the rare occurrence of having to use a translator, she found it very frustrating. With the exception of a language barrier, it appeared that socioeconomic status was a more salient aspect of diversity than race/ethnicity.

Also influential in job experiences was the Impact of Staff. The participants spoke of several challenges with regard to multiculturalism and the other staff in the school. The school psychologists talked about the multicultural competence, or lack thereof, of the staff and how that directly affected them in their work. This had the ability to help the school psychologists, such as the example of Annie who often spoke to

others in her school about the multicultural issues. She felt that she learned a lot from these discussions and the opportunity they gave her to examine particular issues in a different way. However, there were some major challenges that some participants faced with other staff, such as Holly who recognized the negative impact that unresolved racial issues had in her school. It is important to state that while some of these issues were thought of as negative or positive, they all helped develop the participants' multicultural competence.

Direct Work with Students also influenced the participants' multicultural competence under the core category of Professional Experiences. Participants felt that they learned more about the most appropriate procedures and instruments for assessment when they worked with students. This was especially true when a student did not speak a language that they did. This direct work helped the school psychologists hone their assessment skills. However, they spoke more extensively about the impact of diversity on their interventions. Specifically, Richard spoke about relating to the students that he was counseling. He recognized that he needed to speak to the students about topics that they could directly relate to and that their culture clearly influenced what they found salient. Ian also spoke about understanding what students and families had access to and resources for. Again, socioeconomic status appeared to be the most salient aspect of diversity that the participants spoke about. While their examples often correlated with race/ethnicity, the examples provided related more significantly to socioeconomic status.

Also influential to multicultural competence were the Systemic Influences related to the participants' jobs. This ranged from the American value of achievement and legislation such as No Child Left Behind to the climate and culture specific to the school

psychologists' individual schools. While these systemic influences were not as impactful as the direct contact that the participants had with students, staff, and families, it established a context within which they and others in the school practiced. Being aware of this context also contributed to their multicultural competence.

It appears that early career experiences were influential to the participants in that these experiences helped increase their multicultural awareness and knowledge. The interviewees talked about the importance of exposure, having the opportunity to learn from interactions with parents, the impact of other staff, direct work with students and understanding the impact of systems. However, the participants did not speak specifically about how these learning experiences increased their multicultural skills. Multicultural skills and how they developed and grew was not a pervasive theme throughout the interviews. This may be an area of research exploration (discussed further in *Future Research* section of the present chapter).

Personal relationships and professional conferences also contributed to the participants' multicultural competence. According to the school psychologists, these were less influential. A few of the participants stated that they learned some interesting factual information at a conference that helped increase their knowledge and/or awareness. All of the participants spoke about personal relationships. For some of the school psychologists, it appeared that personal relationships greatly influenced their multicultural competence, whereas for others it was not as important. Some of the participants spoke about generally having exposure to people who were culturally different from them in some way. Just spending time with these people seemed to increase their awareness, knowledge, and comfort level. Others spoke about utilizing

their friends by asking questions and learning about their cultures in a more direct way. The participants did not spend a lot of time in the interviews talking about these personal experiences, but all of them spoke about personal relationships, indicating its role in developing multicultural competence.

All of these factors influenced the school psychologists' multicultural competence development, which is represented as cyclical to illustrate its dynamic and ever-evolving nature. All of the aforementioned experiences increased their multicultural competence. Figure 4.1 and its explanation answer the second research question: How do school psychologists conceptualize the development of their own multicultural competence? Part A of the second research question asks about the importance of graduate school training as opposed to early career experiences. As previously mentioned, it is clear that the participants in the current study feel that their early career experiences strongly influenced their multicultural competence development. However, graduate school was helpful and the different components of graduate education were influential in varying ways. The graduate courses were helpful in developing multicultural competence. However, how helpful they were depended on a variety of factors including instructor quality, openness, and quality of the readings and assignments. The environment of the graduate program was also influential as it helped increase the school psychologists' exposure to and comfort with aspects of diversity and multiculturalism. This included faculty research, cohort diversity, and openness outside of the classroom to diversity. An additional direct way that graduate school was helpful was participating in practicum experiences that incorporated diversity. Internship appeared to be the most influential aspect of graduate school in relation to increasing multicultural competence.

While most participants felt that graduate school was helpful in increasing their multicultural competence, it is clear that early career experiences influenced this development more than anything else. Within this part of development, some experiences were more influential than others. It appears that internship was the most influential aspect of graduate training because it so closely mirrors early career experiences, but involves greater structure, supervision, and reflection. Personal experiences and relationships also appeared to positively impact multicultural competence, but to a lesser extent than graduate school or career experiences. Therefore, the answer to research question 2a is graduate school and early career experiences both influence multicultural competence. The two appear to be cumulative. However, early career experiences have a greater impact on multicultural competence development than graduate school.

Part B of the second research question asks about the influence of graduate training and field experiences on participants' understanding of multicultural competence. It is clear that field experiences have been more influential in this aspect as well. As the participants critiqued the definition of multicultural competence, they drew from their career and internship experiences much more than their graduate training. This makes sense as the definition is more directly related to skills and what is actually done when school psychologists are working than the knowledge that they possess. While the definition discusses the importance of utilizing and transforming knowledge, that knowledge can be gained in any arena. It is clear that while the participants gained knowledge in graduate school, they have had the opportunity to gather additional knowledge and awareness in their jobs. They have then used that knowledge and

awareness to directly inform their practice. This is how graduate training and field experience have influenced their understanding of multicultural competence.

*Revisiting the Literature: Examination of Unique Contribution of the Current Grounded Theory*

*Multicultural Competence Conceptualizations.* Rogers and Lopez (2002) attempted to define school psychology multicultural competence as a large number of competencies within 14 domains. These domains were: Assessment, Report Writing, Laws and Regulations, Working with Interpreters, Working with Parents, Theoretical Paradigms, Counseling, Professional Characteristics, Consultation, Culture, Academic Interventions, Research Methods, Working with Organizations, and Language. While Rogers and Lopez (2002) did not rank order these domains of competence in terms of importance, assessment and report writing are listed first. Additionally, assessment and report writing have arguably received the most attention in the school psychology multicultural literature. However, it appears that this was not the most important or salient aspect of multicultural competence to the participants in this study. The school psychologists spoke most extensively about working with parents and the importance of communication, which incorporated working with interpreters. Therefore it appears that this were two domains of competence that the participants of the current study found to be important.

The participants in the current study also talked quite a bit about consultation and professional characteristics, two additional domains of competence discussed in Rogers and Lopez (2002). As previously discussed in Chapter IV, Impact of Staff was a very salient aspect of their jobs. Within this construct, the participants spoke about

consultation. It is clear that this is an important part of their jobs and supports the importance of this particular domain of competence. Professional characteristics were also discussed when talking about the impact of other staff in their schools. The school psychologists not only spoke of their own professional characteristics, but the professional characteristics of others. It is possible that the professional characteristics domain and/or the consultation domain need to be expanded to incorporate the importance of recognizing the multicultural competence of other staff. This study provides support for these domains, but also suggests that they may need to be altered or expanded.

Understanding different aspects of culture, another domain of competence according to Rogers and Lopez (2002) was important to the participants in the present study. Understanding student's and families' culture was one aspect of this and so were the culture of their schools and the influence of United States culture. Counseling was also discussed by the participants as a salient part of their multicultural competence. Other domains that Rogers and Lopez mentioned appeared to be less important or salient to the participants, such as laws and regulations, theoretical paradigms, academic interventions, research methods, and working with organizations. Language was something that participants were cognizant of, but many did not feel competent. All of the participants who did not speak another language stated that they wish that they did.

The results of the current study support several of Rogers and Lopez's (2002) domains, but it may be helpful to expand some of them. Specifically, it appears that consultation and professional characteristics may need to incorporate information about the multicultural competence of other staff. Additionally, the competency of culture may

need to be augmented to be more inclusive of all forms of diversity such as sexual orientation and religion in addition to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language.

The domains of competence form of conceptualization may need to be reexamined as it does not recognize the importance of the *interaction* of all of these forms of competence. For example, working with parents, language, and working with interpreters are all inextricably linked. School psychologists may possess specific language and working with interpreter competencies, but if they do not also possess working with parents competencies than that practitioner cannot claim competence. Of course, it would be ideal if school psychologists had all competencies within all domains, but they also need to have an understanding of how they work together and interact in order to become truly competent. This incorporates the dynamic nature of multicultural competence development. The results of this study indicate that Rogers and Lopez (2002) need to incorporate the cyclical and ever-changing nature of multicultural competence into their conceptualization.

It may be helpful for the school psychology literature to incorporate aspects of the counselor-client match and schema conceptualizations within the counseling literature. These conceptualizations of counselor multicultural competence do not talk about specific domains or competencies as discreet and individualized. They are more general and appear to recognize the dynamic and interactive nature of multicultural competence. The counselor-client match conceptualization takes into account the specific characteristics of the counselor and the client and how these individual qualities interact. Specifically, S. Sue (1998) discusses the importance of scientific mindedness, which allows the counselor to be flexible in his or her conceptualization of the client and take

into account their own assumptions, values, and biases (D.W. Sue et al., 1992). A similar concept is also discussed in Ridley et al (1994) as purposive application of schemata.

These similar concepts allow the counselor to collect data or information about a client, but withhold judgment. This is something that the participants in the current study talked about extensively. It is important to gather information about the families that they work with, but continue to change their approach based on the information that they continually collect. In this way, the dynamic nature of multicultural competence is taken into account.

S. Sue (1998) also talked about dynamic sizing, which allows the counselor to be discriminating in determining the applicability of information about a group to their particular client. This also relates directly to the dynamic nature of multicultural competence. According to the results of this study, school psychologists need to be able to determine how different aspects of diversity and multicultural competence interact and how those interactions are applicable to them in their practice. In this way, S. Sue's counselor-client conceptualization and Ridley et al. (1994)'s schema conceptualization can be utilized to inform the multicultural competence conceptualization of school psychologists. While these conceptualizations are not directly applicable to school psychology as they do not take into account the multifaceted nature of work in the schools, aspects can be applied to the multicultural competence of school psychologists.

*Multicultural Competence Training Issues.* Gopaul-McNicol (2001) discussed specific multicultural outcomes or competencies that school psychologists should possess when they have completed their training. The author wrote about competencies related to culturally, linguistically, urban, and ethnically (CLUE) diverse students. These

competencies are: (a) cross-cultural ethical competence, (b) awareness of therapists' own values and biases, (c) cross-cultural awareness, (d) competence in understanding interracial issues, (e) language competencies, (f) acquiring competency in the ability to work with interpreters, (g) cross-cultural assessment competencies, (h) cross-cultural counseling competencies, (i) cross-cultural issues in conflict resolution, (j) competence in special education prevention, (k) competencies in knowing the bilingual education curriculum, (l) cross-cultural consultation competencies, (m) cross-cultural research competencies, (n) competence in empowering families through community-based organizations, (o) and competence in pediatric/health psychology.

The participants did not directly discuss cross-cultural ethical competence (a) as it related to them, but they did talk about it indirectly as it related to others in their schools. One may assume that the school psychologists did feel competent to work in these diverse schools even as they acknowledged that they lacked training in graduate school. Self-awareness (b) was something that several participants talked about and learned more about in their early career experiences than in graduate school. Participants appeared to define cross-cultural awareness differently than Gopaul-McNicol (2001). It appeared that the school psychologists felt that awareness (c) had more to do with awareness of the family situation and dynamic and where the student was coming from. It is possible that this should be conceptualized differently in the literature. Competence in understanding interracial issues (d) is something that the participants of the current study discussed as well. However, Gopaul-McNicol's conceptualization is limited and does not take into account other aspects of diversity that the participants also mentioned. Most of the participants learned about the importance of language (e) and working with interpreters

(f) as they were working. This was not an outcome of training for the majority of participants.

Participants spoke specifically about assessment (g), counseling (h), and consultation (l). It appeared that participants generally felt that they received an adequate foundation in these areas in graduate school. Although there were several nuances related to multiculturalism and diversity, they generally felt that they possessed these skills. One may assume that some of what the participants spoke about could also be applied to conflict resolution (i), bilingual education (k), and special education prevention (j), but the school psychologists did not speak specifically about these areas. It is unclear what they learned, if anything, about these areas in graduate school, but it can be assumed that they did not earn these competencies within their graduate training institutions. Some of the participants spoke about learning about community organizations (n) that would be helpful to the students and families that they worked with. This was also something that they learned about while working, not while in graduate school. Similarly, some of the participants spoke about research (m) conducted while they were in graduate school, but they did not talk about their familiarity with the current multicultural literature. It appeared that they were assigned multicultural readings within their separate multicultural courses, but this was not something that was stressed outside of these courses. Only one participant spoke about the intersection of health psychology and multiculturalism (o) and that was in relation to convincing parents to seek treatment for mental health issues as opposed to concern about misdiagnosis. For the majority of these competencies, it appears that the participants developed them while working as opposed to within their graduate training.

Rogers (2005) discussed the importance of exploring what is needed in a multicultural competence training paradigm for school psychologists. She talked about four different approaches to multicultural training that graduate schools have adopted. These are the Separate Course Model, the Area of Concentration Model, the Interdisciplinary Model, and the Integration/Infusion Model. Rogers (2005) advocated for training programs using the Integration/Infusion Model and Rogers (2006) noted that graduate programs with exemplary multicultural training most often utilized this model. In addition, many of the graduate programs utilized more than one type of model. Newell et al., (2010) also supports this approach to multicultural training. They advocated for a combination of the integration and separate course model as ideal. It appears that most of the participants in this study attended a program that utilized the Separate Course Model, taking one or two courses in multiculturalism and diversity. It appeared that Holly attended a program that also utilized the Interdisciplinary Model as she enrolled in a multicultural course outside of her department. Most of the participants did not feel that multiculturalism was integrated into the remainder of their classes. Ian said that many of the concepts that they talked about in other classes could be conceptualized through a multicultural lens. For example, he spoke about broadly clinically conceptualizing the client and how background, including cultural factors, is an important part of that. However, he also mentioned that multiculturalism and diversity were not stressed in his program. Therefore, it is probable that his training program did not use any of Rogers' models of multicultural and diversity training. It appears that the Integration model, advocated by Rogers and Newell et al. was not utilized in the school psychology programs attended by the participants in this study. While the literature is

telling us that the Integration/Infusion model should be utilized, it appears that this is not occurring in training programs.

Rogers (2005) also discussed the importance of exposing school psychology trainees to students and families from diverse backgrounds in their practicum and internship fieldwork. Newell et al. (2010) also supported this approach, as it encompasses two components of the student level of best practice for multicultural training. Students need to be able to transfer their knowledge about different people into effective service delivery (component 5) and they also need to have practical experiences with a variety of individuals in practicum and internship (component 6). According to the participants, these two components are inextricably linked. In order to transfer the information that they have learned in their courses to effective practice, they needed to have those supervised experiences. It appeared that the participants highly valued the opportunity to have experiences with diverse individuals and families prior to becoming school psychology practitioners.

Rogers (2005) felt that it was important for school psychology trainees to not only have these practicum and internship experiences, but to have an opportunity to discuss some of the frustrations that arise when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and families. Lopez and Rogers (2010) also advocated for this within the context of supervision. These authors believed that there needed to be more collaboration between university and field supervisors to support school psychologist trainees in their multicultural competence development. They felt that it was important for trainees to have multiple avenues to discuss issues as they arose and frustrations and that their supervisors should be in contact with each other so as not to provide conflicting or

confusing information. While this was not something that the participants spoke about directly, it is clear that they found practicum and internship to be an essential aspect of their training and therefore may have benefitted from more direct and deliberate approaches to multicultural supervision. It appears that having an opportunity to talk about multicultural issues during practicum and internship was not something that happened for all of the participants of the current study. Again, there appears to be a gap between the best practice literature and what is actually happening in training and practice.

Rogers (2005) and Newell et al. (2010) also talked about diversity in research training and assessment of multicultural competence on comprehensive exams. However, only two of the participants of the current study attended a doctoral program and only one of them graduated with his doctoral degree. The others finished with a master's or specialist degree. Therefore there was a dearth of information on research training and comprehensive exams in the current study as for the majority of participants, extensive research training and comprehensive exams were not required aspects of their training programs. Although some of the master's and specialist school psychologists in the current study were involved with research projects in graduate school, involvement in the projects was not a required part of their training. Some of the participants did mention participating in or hearing about faculty research that incorporated diversity and multiculturalism. However, all of the master's and specialist level school psychologists who participated in research noted that it was not a direct part of their training. It was something extra that they decided to do, not a program requirement. All of the participants in the current study stated that hearing about or participating in this research

was helpful in increasing their multicultural knowledge and awareness, but more exploration is needed on this particular aspect of training.

In summary, much of what the participants in the current study discussed has been mentioned in the literature. However, the way that competence has been conceptualized in the literature is different from the way that the school psychologists in this study talked about it. To the participants, it appears that school psychology multicultural competence is much more dynamic and interactive than is acknowledged in the literature. Instead of discreet domains of competence, it appears that the participants think of multicultural competence as a package. This is an important departure from the current literature and should be a part of future research (discussed further in the *Future Research* section of the current chapter). Additionally, the literature has not evolved to incorporate more empirical research on the topic of school psychologists' multicultural competence. The current study is an important starting point to developing more empirical research.

#### *Limitations*

The current study is a valuable addition to the literature as it attempts to more accurately and comprehensively conceptualize multicultural competence and multicultural competence development for school psychologists. However, there are some limitations to the study that should be considered when examining the results.

The first limitation is the pool from which the participants were selected. This researcher is located in the mid-Atlantic region and therefore only school psychologists from the immediate area were considered. The most school districts in this area are very large and encompass an entire county. Therefore, the school psychologists in the current study were practitioners within this context. While Camila had been a school

psychologist in a different area with smaller school districts, the other participants had only worked in the mid-Atlantic area. There are potential regional differences in the way that school psychology is practiced, which may mean that the results of this study are only applicable to practitioners in this area. It would be helpful to conduct additional exploratory studies in other regions of the country to examine similarities and differences of themes between regions.

Another limitation of the study was the sample itself. While this is a grounded theory study and is not meant to be generalizable, it would have been helpful to have a more diverse sample. For example, it would be helpful to determine if the same themes would emerge when interviewing an African-American school psychologist, openly gay school psychologist, or older school psychologist. It would also be helpful to vary the interviewer and determine if the same themes arose. This researcher is aware that she as an African-American may have influenced the responses of some, or all, of the participants. A different interviewer, or interviews done over the phone, may have yielded different results. Additionally, this was a self-selected group and as previously mentioned it appears that there is an unknown personal component to multicultural competence. It is possible that all of the participants possess this unknown quality and therefore the results may be skewed to reflect a particular subset of school psychologists.

Another limitation of the study was that information was not collected about participants' specific graduate programs. This researcher did not have information about whether or not the programs were APA or NASP accredited, the specific program requirements, or whether or not the master's level programs also had doctoral programs. The information gathered from the participants was opinion and was only what they

could remember. It would be helpful to compare some of that information to program information. The same is also true of the participants' schools. While the researcher knew information about some of the schools in which the participants worked, some chose not to reveal their schools. Of those who did not reveal their schools, the researcher determined that the school was diverse from the school psychology coordinator in that district. However, specific information about race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and immigrant population data of the schools was not collected.

An additional limitation was not evaluating the multicultural competence of the participants. It is likely that there were individual differences between the level of competence of each participant and this likely influenced their responses. Additionally, measuring this and comparing it quantitatively to other information such as level of graduate training, years of practice, and specific program information would have been helpful information to supplement the current exploratory data.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitation of using the current methodology. Grounded theory methodology is exploratory and not designed to generalize to a greater population. Additionally, while this researcher incorporated some aspects of validity into the study, additional methods may have been helpful. Specifically, while this researcher utilized member checking by soliciting feedback from participants, she heard back from only two of them. It would have been helpful to receive feedback from all participants.

#### *Implications for Training and Practice*

The following research has direct implications on the way in which the specialty trains their school psychologists in multicultural competence. It appears that there are

some ways in which the specialty is meeting the needs of school psychologist trainees, but changing some aspects of the training process would be helpful. Additionally, there are some ways in which school psychologist practitioners can help themselves to develop multicultural competence in their early years of practice. This section outlines some of the changes that the specialty can make to improve school psychology multicultural competence development.

*Implications for Training.*

There are several implications from this study for training multiculturally competent school psychologists. The first implication has to do with the multicultural courses that the majority of school psychologist trainees have to take in graduate school. The participants in the current study seemed to find the factual information that they gathered from those courses to be useful, therefore it appears that graduate schools should continue to offer them. However, simply offering a course is not sufficient. There are several components that need to be in place in order for school psychology graduate students to walk away from the class with the information that the class is intended to impart. These components are: (a) a competent professor, (b) a feeling of “openness”, and (c) challenging and interesting readings and assignments. Having a competent professor who challenges students without making them upset or angry and encourages a feeling of openness to talk about all issues appears to be a very important aspect of the class. Additionally, the readings and assignments should challenge and inform the students. It was helpful to one participant to complete an assignment that she felt was directly applicable to her current practice. In order for the course to really help students

and create a strong foundation of multicultural competence these components need to be in place.

It also appears that the content or emphasis of multicultural courses should change. Although all areas of diversity should be discussed and explored, examining the impact of socioeconomic status in greater depth would be an important change. The participants felt strongly that socioeconomic status of their students was more salient to their jobs than race or ethnicity. How socioeconomic status intersects with different forms of diversity may be a more helpful way to explore issues of diversity. An additional way to improve course content would be to focus more on adult interaction as opposed to child interaction. While the participants felt that they needed information and guidance in assessing and counseling students from diverse backgrounds, they felt much less prepared to work with their parents and guardians.

Additionally, school psychology trainees may benefit from learning more about how to interact with challenging school personnel or how to work ethically within a school culture and climate that does not foster multicultural competence of its employees. This researcher recognizes that all of these suggestions would result in a great amount of additional information within one course. It may be helpful to introduce some of these topics within one or two multicultural courses and then infuse them throughout additional courses by adopting the Integration/Infusion Model suggested by Rogers (2005).

It also appears that courses in school psychology courses should provide more multicultural knowledge. While the participants felt that the courses provided a good foundation, it is also clear from their responses concerning their early career experiences that they left their graduate training programs without adequate multicultural knowledge.

It may be that a more experiential component to multicultural courses is necessary. This is supported by the immersion research within counseling and school counseling (add citations). While it is important to acknowledge the difficulties of implementing an immersion experience, salient components of this can be integrated. For example, Alexander et al. (2005) took their students to a different country, but this could be expensive and a program may not be able to require it. However, Butler-Byrd et al. (2006) and Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004) utilized a similar technique by presenting students with an in-vivo experience. Both of these programs allowed school counselor trainees to work extensively with a racial/ethnic minority population. While the results of the in-vivo experience did not produce results as robust as a true immersion experience to another country, they did appear to increase the school counselor trainees' multicultural competence. The in-vivo experience could be replicated in school psychology programs. Coupled with extensive supervision and ongoing processing of the experience through the Immersion/Infusion Model (Rogers, 2005), this could provide school psychology trainees with necessary multicultural knowledge and awareness. It may also provide the groundwork for emerging multicultural skills.

It may also be helpful for different methods to be used within a course. One school psychologist suggested more case studies or having a practicing school psychologist present a case with a multicultural dilemma in a course. Additionally, school psychology trainees may benefit from more multicultural support within their practica and internships. When faced with challenging multicultural situations, it is important that they feel comfortable talking to university and field supervisors. All supervisors should be multiculturally competent, or open to talking about issues of

diversity, and should foster an environment of openness to talk about these situations. Therefore, it is not only important that the practica and internship school sites have students from diverse backgrounds, but students should receive comprehensive multicultural supervision.

Another important aspect of training was the cohort of students. The literature supports recruitment and retention efforts of diverse school psychology trainees and the results of this study reinforce that assertion. The participants who did have diverse cohorts found it helpful and believed that they learned quite a bit from the other students. Additionally, it seems clear that schools should also try to recruit and retain people who are diverse in a multitude of ways, not just race/ethnicity. It appears that the participants were attuned to all areas of diversity within their cohorts and learned from each one of them. Also, it appears that graduate schools should try to attract students who are interested in, or at least open to, diversity. It appears that a feeling of openness was important to the participants and those who attended a school with that type of environment felt more comfortable exploring topics of diversity and multiculturalism.

Along with recruiting and retaining diverse students and students interested in diversity, graduate programs should also do the same with faculty. Having the opportunity to participate in research that incorporated diversity and multiculturalism seemed helpful to the participants. Additionally, just knowing that the research existed seemed to make a difference. Whether or not they had the opportunity to participate in the research itself was not necessary for the participants in the current study to feel that faculty research interests contributed to a multiculturally-friendly graduate school environment. Knowing that they had the option of participating in the research and that

their faculty cared about diversity issues appeared to be significant for the participants' multicultural competence development as it contributed to the feeling of openness.

*Implications for Practice.*

The responsibility of the multicultural competence of school psychologists should not fall solely on the trainers. The school psychologists themselves should also be responsible. Although an aspect of multicultural competence, a personal desire to work with those who are different from oneself, is difficult to define it is possible that exposure to people who are different may increase it. As much as possible, school psychologists should try to have personal multicultural experiences. It appears that while professional experiences have had a greater impact on the participants than personal, several participants stated that personal experiences also contributed to their multicultural competence.

Additionally, although they should not be held responsible for the content and quality of the multicultural training in their graduate programs, there are ways in which school psychology trainees can provide impetus for an improvement in training. For example, school psychology trainees should try to attend a program that they believe has a feeling of openness to multiculturalism and diversity. If they feel that their program does not have this, they can help to improve the environment by initiating multicultural discussions or approaching professors to adapt current research projects to incorporate diversity. They can also request to be put in schools with diverse populations for their practica and apply to internship sites with diverse populations.

Early career school psychologists should also feel empowered to increase their multicultural competence. This should include both personal and professional

experiences as it appears that early personal experiences are associated with professional multicultural competence. It appears that on-the-job experiences are so significant in this development and school psychologists should aim to work in schools that allow for exposure to diversity. In addition, the school districts that early career school psychologists work in should provide them with supervisors or mentors that are multiculturally competent and can help them with diversity issues as they arise. Finally, early career school psychologists should develop their own personal global literacy and awareness by exposing themselves to people who are culturally different from them in their personal lives, educating themselves about global cultural events, reading culturally diverse literature, and exposing themselves to a variety of cultural experiences. Learning about and immersing oneself in cultural diversity is another way for school psychologists to expand and increase their multicultural competence.

Several groups of people are responsible for the multicultural competence development of school psychologists. Graduate program faculty, school districts, and the school psychologists themselves should all work together to produce culturally competent professionals. It has become more important than ever that this is the case.

#### *Future Research*

There are several additional areas of research that should be explored in order to continue to contribute to the school psychology multicultural literature. The first area of research involves a greater exploration of school psychologists' multicultural experiences. All of the participants spent a great deal of time talking about what they had encountered in their work and several themes emerged. Specifically, the participants spoke about their relationships with parents, how the other staff in their buildings

impacted them, their direct work with students, and systemic influences. Each of these themes should be explored in greater depth. For example, it would be an important contribution to the literature to explore how to improve school psychologists' relationships with parents as this study demonstrated the importance of this when working in diverse schools.

A theme that should be explored further is the development of multicultural skills. As previously mentioned, the participants appeared to focus on the development of their multicultural knowledge and awareness. They spoke less about specific multicultural skills and how they developed. It will be important to gather additional information and data about this vital component of school psychologists' overall multicultural competence.

There are several ways in which the aforementioned themes could be explored. The current study could be duplicated with school psychologists in different points in their careers. Therefore, the study could be conducted with early career, mid-career, and late career/retired school psychologists. Also, the study could be duplicated with school psychologists who work in diverse schools and schools that are more homogeneous. It would be interesting and informative to explore if these different types of school psychologists had similar or very different experiences with multiculturalism in their schools.

As previously mentioned in the *Limitations* section, more information from each participant about their graduate programs and schools would have been helpful. A multi-method study that incorporates exploration of themes and their integration with quantitative data would be an important addition to the literature. For example, an

analysis of program materials, such as a review of readings and assignments of the multicultural course and percentage of faculty research projects that include multiculturalism and diversity, and interviews of the school psychologist trainees of a particular program would glean important information about the effectiveness of different aspects of training. Designing a study that explores different regions of the country that include more urban populations, rural populations, and smaller school districts would be helpful as well. Recruiting a more diverse participant sample would also result in a greater depth and breadth of information.

Finally, it would be helpful to explore graduate training institutions in greater depth. A longitudinal study of graduate students within a program, in their early careers, and in their mid-careers would provide important information about the development of multicultural competence. It would also be helpful to gather more information about the perceptions of faculty about multiculturalism and diversity and how they influence students' multicultural competence. It would also be very informative to explore the effectiveness of different components of multicultural courses. Specifically, exploring which aspects of the courses are most important in helping to develop multiculturally competent school psychologists. A study should look at instructor quality, readings and assignments, and discussion quantity and quality. Examining the significance of each of these components would be invaluable to trainers of school psychologists.

Appendix A  
Director of Psychological Services Letter

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_:

This is a follow-up letter to our phone conversation about my dissertation project. Through this letter, I wish to provide more information about my proposed study. I will be supervised by Dr. William Strein, faculty member at UMD. In this research I will be exploring multicultural competence in school psychology through interviews with school psychologists. I will be interviewing school psychologists who voluntarily agree to participate in my research about their multicultural experiences in both their graduate training and early career. I need your assistance in identifying potential participants. The following are the criteria for participation in this research. The potential participant must: (1) be a practicing school psychologist; (2) have worked for 5 or fewer years as a school psychologist since graduate school; *and* (3) currently work in a diverse school (as described below). Feel free to nominate as many school psychologists as you feel fit these criteria.

I am looking to define diversity as broadly as possible. There are a number of ways in which a school can be considered diverse. I recognize that you may have data to support some of these criteria, but not all of it. Feel free to nominate school psychologists from schools that *you believe* fit *any* of the following criteria: (a) at least 50% racial/ethnic minority student population; (b) at least 40% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches; *or* (c) at least 20% foreign-born or immigrant student population. Please remember that the schools may fit *any* of the aforementioned criteria.

Enclosed is a nomination form for identifying potential participants. Please return the form in the included self addressed and stamped envelope. All participants will be informed that they were nominated for participation because they are psychologists who fit the aforementioned criteria. They will also be informed that their participation in the study is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please feel free to contact Dr. William Strein as well at [strein@umd.edu](mailto:strein@umd.edu). I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your assistance in the completion of my doctoral degree!

Samantha C. Sweeney  
UMD School Psychology Doctoral Candidate  
(202) 487 5625  
Sweeney3@umd.edu



Appendix B  
Nomination Form

Please use this form to nominate up to 10 school psychologists from your district who meet the following criteria: (1) a practicing school psychologist; (2) has worked for 5 or fewer years as a school psychologist since graduate school; *and* (3) works in a diverse school. Feel free to nominate as many psychologists as possible. Thank you so much for your assistance!

Please return the completed form in the enclosed envelope to the following address:

Samantha C. Sweeney  
1253 Walter St, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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[County to be inserted]

Names and Emails of School Psychologist who fit the aforementioned criteria:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix C  
Letter of Informed Consent

Project Title: The Development of Early Career School Psychologists' Multicultural Competence: A Grounded Theory Study

Investigator: Samantha C. Sweeney, University of Maryland-College Park, School Psychology Doctoral Candidate

Advisor: William O. Strein, D.Ed., University of Maryland-College Park

I state that I am over 18 years of age and I wish to participate in a research study being conducted by Samantha C. Sweeney of the University of Maryland-College Park, School Psychology Program.

The purpose of the following study is to explore the development of multicultural competence in school psychologists. The procedure for this research involves completing a demographic questionnaire and participation in a one to one and a half hour interview with the investigator. The interview will take place in a location that I have chosen. I understand that the interview will be audio taped and transcribed and that all information obtained from the interview and demographic questionnaire will be kept confidential. I will have the opportunity to view my responses to the questionnaire and in the interview and alter my responses.

I understand that I have been nominated to participate in this study because I fit the criteria for participation, *not* because it is considered a requirement. My participation in this research is voluntary and I may discontinue participation at *any* time and for *any* reason without consequence.

I understand that confidentiality is ensured. I will receive a pseudonym, and my real name will not be disclosed in any reporting or presentation. I recognize that all confidential materials will be kept in a locked drawer to which only the primary investigator will have access.

I recognize that I am able to contact Samantha C. Sweeney or Dr. William Strein at any time with questions or concerns:

Samantha C. Sweeney  
(202) 487 5625  
[Sweeney3@umd.edu](mailto:Sweeney3@umd.edu)

William Strein  
(301) 405-2869  
strein@umd.edu

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Signature

Date

Appendix D  
Demographic and Training Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer all questions as completely and honestly as possible. You will have the opportunity to fill in additional clarifying information if necessary. Thank you!

1. Age: Please check the applicable box

- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51+

2. Race/Ethnicity: Please check all applicable boxes

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African-American
- American-Indian/Eskimo/Aleut
- Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino Origin
- Multi-racial
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Gender: Please check the applicable box

- Female
- Male

4. Were you born in The United States of America (USA)?

- Yes
- No

If not, where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you speak more than one language?

- Yes
- No

If so, which languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

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TRAINING INFORMATION

6. Degree obtained: Please check the corresponding box of the degree that you have *most recently* completed:

- Master's Degree (M.Ed., M.A., or M.S.)
- Specialist Degree (Ed.S; C.A.G.S.; A.G.S.)
- Doctorate of Psychology (Psy.D.)
- Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
  
- Other-please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

6a. In what year did you obtain this degree (year of graduation)? \_\_\_\_\_

6b. In what field or specialty is this degree: Please check the corresponding box of the degree that you have *most recently* completed:

- School Psychology
- Clinical Psychology
- Counseling Psychology
- Community Psychology
- Other-please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional: If your degree had an area of concentration please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you have an additional degree in a related field, please specify:

- Education
- Counseling
- Social Work
- Other-please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you have a degree in an unrelated field, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

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