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Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Issues in School Settings

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Abstract

This study employed qualitative methods to analyze teacher's level of multicultural understanding and perceptions of cultural issues when discussing their culturally diverse students in the context of the consultation process. Three school psychologists in urban city high schools, engaged in audio-recorded consultation sessions with consultee-teachers who voluntarily sought services. Audio-recorded tapes of consultation sessions were transcribed and coded by two trained raters and qualitatively analyzed by co-researchers who recorded multicultural thematic issues as categories. Cultural themes and categories indicated that teachers demonstrated cultural awareness and sensitivity regarding their culturally diverse students, yet showed less developed cultural knowledge-base and skill levels. The study's methodological approach utilized a multicultural coding system that may be used to qualitatively identify cultural issues/themes of concern as a tool for assessing multicultural competency levels in consultation.

Keywords

Qualitative Methods, School Consultation, Multicultural Consultation, Consultee-Centered Consultation, Multicultural Competency, Multicultural Education, Consultation Coding System, Multicultural Competency Assessment, Audio-Recording, Teacher Perceptions, and Culturally Diverse Children

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Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Issues in School Settings

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This study employed qualitative methods to analyze teacher's level of multicultural understanding and perceptions of cultural issues when discussing their culturally diverse students in the context of the consultation process. Three school psychologists in urban city high schools, engaged in audio-recorded consultation sessions with consultee-teachers who voluntarily sought services. Audio-recorded tapes of consultation sessions were transcribed and coded by two trained raters and qualitatively analyzed by co-researchers who recorded multicultural thematic issues as categories. Cultural themes and categories indicated that teachers demonstrated cultural awareness and sensitivity regarding their culturally diverse students, yet showed less developed cultural knowledge-base and skill levels. The study's methodological approach utilized a multicultural coding system that may be used to qualitatively identify cultural issues/themes of concern as a tool for assessing multicultural competency levels in consultation. Key Words: Qualitative Methods, School Consultation, Multicultural Consultation, Consultee-Centered Consultation, Multicultural Competency, Multicultural Education, Consultation Coding System, Multicultural Competency Assessment, Audio-Recording, Teacher Perceptions, and Culturally Diverse Children

As the ethnic composition of the United States continues to increase, the prospect that more educators will work with a diverse student population is quickly becoming a reality. To date, researchers (Banks, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; McLaren, 1997; Ramos-Sanchez, Atkinson, & Fraga, 1999; Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999) have observed that there continues to be a need for multicultural-oriented competent educators in the United States. Consequently, teacher multicultural education (Banks, 2002; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001) is now assumed to be an essential component of an educators' repertoire. Many university training programs have incorporated multicultural education courses in their programs (Banks & Banks, 1995). Furthermore, numerous texts have been published on multicultural instructional strategies for teachers to utilize that serve to increase teachers' cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Moreover, as a result of multicultural education advocacy and the influx of literature available in this instructional area, an important component of any multicultural competent educator's training requires having knowledge of teaching strategies for racial/ethnic minority (Banks, 2002; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Nieto, 1999).

In this respect, multicultural competence has been defined as requiring three increasing levels of understanding: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1998; Pedersen, 1988; Sue, 2001; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Consequently, educators should be prepared to observe, discern, and discuss their culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students' problems with the required cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. It is with this foresight that the present study explored teachers' perceptions of multicultural issues relating to their (CLD) students within urban city high schools. The following inquiries were envisioned: 1) What are the general topics of concern or themes that teachers discuss or discern regarding their everyday interactions with their CLD students?, 2) Do a number of thematic categories emerge in terms of these concerns that can be linked to the theoretical research literature?, and 3) What is the level of multicultural competence reflected by teachers' perceptions of these issues (i.e., cultural sensitivity, knowledge, and skills)?

Correspondingly, an investigation of teachers' multicultural issues and/or concerns may be accomplished through the services of a school psychologist during school-based consultation sessions with consultee-teachers (Behring, Cabello, Kushida, & Murguia, 2000; Behring & Ingrahm, 1998; Erchuls & Martens, 2002; Nastasi, 2000). The accessibility of consultation services is a necessary one in order to ensure that teachers will have the opportunity to voluntarily discuss their student problems with trained practitioners. Therefore this study investigated from a qualitative perspective, the frequency and competency levels of categorical cultural themes and/or issues elicited by teachers when describing their CLD students during school-based consultation sessions between a school psychologist and a consultee-teacher. Accordingly, this process allowed a glimpse into how teachers in urban city schools described their CLD during their day-to-day consulting with school psychologists.

Method

School Psychologist Participants

Three masters level certified school psychologists participated in providing consultee-centered consultation sessions. All three were female and had consultation experience in their graduate school training as well as from 15 to 20 years of work-related experience. One was African American and two were of Latino descent.

Volunteer Consultee-Teachers

Consultee-teachers from three high schools in the East Bronx in New York City were encouraged to attend consultation sessions by a letter of invitation placed in their faculty mailboxes from the internal-based school psychologist. The sites for this investigation were chosen for their high percentage rate of racial-ethnic minority students. Consequently, these particular schools provided opportunity for consultation services to involve CLD students. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of racial/ethnic minority students in each of the three schools.

Table 1

Percentage of Racial/Ethnic Student Population in School 1, 2, and 3

White, African/American, Hispanic, Asian, and Others*				
School 1	2.1	41.7	53.7	1.4
School 2	2.0	44.7	51.5	1.8
School 3	0.2	35.1	62.5	2.2

*Others include Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives and American Indians.

Twenty-four masters level teachers participated voluntarily. Most of the teachers (60%) had between 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. Twenty-three percent had 6-10 years of teaching experience and 20% had more than 20 years of experience. Teacher gender-variable was 31.7% male and 68.3% female. Teacher-demographic ethnicity-variable was: Latino, 48.3%, African American, 10.0%, and White, 38.3%, and 3.3% in the Other category.

Audio-Recorded Rater Training and Multicultural Consultation Coding System (MCCS)

According to qualitative research methodology, the focus is on attempting to recapture reality as seen through the eyes of the participant, through processes that are inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In addition, qualitative research focuses on understanding and examining what individuals are doing, and on interpreting what is occurring by pursuing patterns, and/or themes of the participants' subjective perspectives. Suzuki, Prendes-Lintel, Wertlieb, and Stallings (1999) emphasized that qualitative methodology in research promotes the examination of multicultural environments and culturally diverse populations. These authors discussed the importance of identifying emerging cultural themes and coding these for their meaning.

There are three major components of qualitative methodology. First, there are data that can come from various sources, interviews, and observations, that are the most common of such sources. The second component consists of different analytic or interpretive procedures that are used to arrive at findings. The latter component includes techniques for conceptualizing data and is also known as the process of "coding". Written and verbal reports are the third component. Through the use of such reports, the investigator can examine verbatim interviews and extricate patterns, themes, and form categories that aid in the development of the basic knowledge emerging in the investigation.

Based on this viewpoint, the utilization of qualitative methods in this study served as an opportunity to discover and interpret the distinct culturally oriented themes that consultee-teachers verbalized when discussing their CLD students. The qualitative analysis of audio-recorded interviews was the method employed for this study (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1982; Kopala & Suzuki, 1999; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The data analysis of the consultee-teachers' cultural themes was viewed as an undertaking of inquiry pertaining to the hypothesized detection of cultural dialogues during consultation sessions. Such an analysis examined the descriptive type of each consultee-teachers' statement for their cultural content through the utilization of the Multicultural Consultation Coding System (MCCS). This coding system served to qualitatively examine teacher's multicultural competencies according to the major multicultural proficiencies cited in the literature (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1998; Pedersen, 1988; Sue, 2001; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

Two school psychology graduate students served as independent raters for the coding of audio-recorded verbatim transcriptions of the consultation sessions. Each had consultation experience from their graduate studies and school-based practicum. Raters were trained in qualitative methods and in the interpretation of cultural themes by the investigator utilizing the qualitative MCCS system (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Consequently, the MCCS was developed for this study as a tool for the investigation of consultee-teachers' multicultural competencies. The MCCS identifies the verbatim multicultural statements exchanged by consultee-teachers during consultation and measures the statements' intensity levels of cultural competency. The levels of multicultural competency were adopted from the three major multicultural proficiencies cited in the research literature as: (a) multicultural awareness, (b) multicultural knowledge, and (c) multicultural skills (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1998; Pedersen, 1988; Sue, 2001; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Thus, the competency intensity levels of multicultural statements were coded as: 0 = non-cultural statement, 1 = multicultural awareness statement, 2 = multicultural knowledge statement, and 3 = multicultural skills statement.

This verbatim coding scheme is in keeping with the established need for identifying and evaluating the communication processes that take place during consultee-centered consultation and follows analogous methods identified previously by past researchers (Bergan & Tombari, 1976; Conoley & Conoley, 1992; Zins, Kratochwill, & Elliot, 1993).

The MCCS was designed specifically for qualitative analysis and does not adhere to quantitative standards. Its theoretical foundation is based solely on the use of qualitative methods that "...refers to research that produces descriptive data: People's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In this respect, the MCCS adheres to the postulated hypothesis that presumes the discovery of multicultural themes and adopts the open coding procedures described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The utilization of such procedures assists in the discovery of consultee-teachers' culturally related concerns during conversational interactions in consultation. Furthermore, as aforementioned, it is in keeping with the recommendations made in the literature regarding the analysis of qualitative descriptions of teachers' multicultural competency levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills (Bergan & Tombari, 1976; Conoley & Conoley, 1992; Kopal & Suzuki, 1999; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Zins, Kratochwill, & Elliot, 1993).

Consequently, the open coding and category rationale described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) were modified to suit the purpose of the MCCS coding system. Strauss and Corbin explain open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data.” A category is described as a classification of concepts. This classification is encountered when specific concepts are compared and seem to comprise similar phenomena. These phenomena are then compiled into more abstract concepts called categories. For the purposes of the MCCS, *all* extracted cultural themes were identified as the existing phenomena and only classified as categories when *similar* cultural “phenomena” (i.e., themes) occurred in the data three or more times. Accordingly, the standard for identifying a cultural theme (i.e., cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills) was first employed and followed the described cultural-theme coding procedures prior to the categorization of the data. Additionally, cultural themes that were not repeated three or more times, were nevertheless deemed important and rated as minor cultural themes but not assigned as a category.

Training took place over a 4-month period, which process required the raters to read the Strauss and Corbin (1990) text, as well as other chapters taken from qualitative methodology texts (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999).

In order to attain some level of expertise, a practice condition was designated. Applying the above mentioned qualitative “discovery” and the “open coding” methods that were adopted to suit the requirements of the MCCS, raters were first presented with: (a) operational definition of a multicultural statement, (b) description of each of three hypothetical types of multicultural competency statements (e.g., multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills statements), and (c) excerpts of cultural statements that represented the three intensity levels of multicultural competency. The latter practice helped to clarify that non-cultural and multicultural statements were coded on competency intensity levels of 0, 1, 2, and 3.

Second, raters were presented with bogus practice consultation transcripts to examine for multicultural themes, applying the coding phase (i.e., the process of analyzing data). The third phase, the process of discovering categories (i.e., identifying similar cultural themes in the data and grouping them into categories), was accomplished with the investigator and a doctoral level, bilingual consultant/school psychologist through collaborative team analysis. The exercise phase on these techniques served to develop some degree of expertise prior to implementing the original coding procedure in the actual study.

Operational Definition of Multicultural Statements

A multicultural statement was operationally defined as a statement that is primarily relevant to culture, race, or ethnicity. Such statements may have components that discuss: (a) behaviors and social patterns associated with specific socio-cultural values, attitudes, and customs; (b) issues concerning socio-psychological development, reflecting the discussed students’ past history, personal experiences, and socio-cultural factors (which include racial identity, acculturation, and their impact on varied behaviors and affective states); (c) identification of specific problems and/or groups that need to be comprehended within their racial/ethnic minority context; and (d) historical factors and mainstream White group attitudes that impact upon racial/ethnic minorities and directly

or indirectly cause effects on the functioning of culturally diverse populations (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993).

Definition of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills

Teacher multicultural awareness and/or knowledge was operationally defined as a measure of: (a) specific teacher awareness of his/her own cultural biases and awareness of the need for culturally distinctive knowledge in teaching a diverse student population, (b) the culturally distinctive acquired knowledge concerning recent multicultural research literature on culturally diverse students, and (c) those skills required to integrate cultural knowledge-base factors in the problem-solving process. They are also described as the teacher's application of his/her cultural knowledge to the problem-solving process.

Categories

A category was defined as a systematic identification of common multicultural themes or patterns extracted from the verbatim teacher transcripts. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined a category as a classification of concepts that are compared with other concepts. The commonalities of these concepts are grouped together and form a more abstract concept called a category. Thus the measurement of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills was based on the frequency (how many times the theme occurred in the data) and its' competency intensity levels (i.e., 0 = non-cultural statement, 1 = multicultural awareness statement, 2 = multicultural knowledge statement, 3 = multicultural skills statement) of teachers' multicultural statements. Three or more similar cultural themes were converted into a multicultural category.

Procedures

Three school-based school psychologists in three urban city schools participated in providing consultation services to consultee-teachers. Teachers were offered consultation services by a letter that was placed (by the school-based school psychologist) in the faculty mailboxes of the three urban city high schools. This process ensured a purely voluntary participation on the part of the consultee-teachers that eventually sought consultation services.

At the inception of the first consultee-consultant consultation session, the internal-based school psychologist was instructed to ask each consultee-teacher to sign a consent form for the audio-recording of each consultation session. Consultation sessions ranged from 15 to 45 minutes.

The actual consultation process was not altered. However, prompts or probes on the part of the consultant school psychologist were factual or "culturally neutral" questions such as name of student, age, grade, academic status, and classroom behavior. Such probing was considered to be oriented toward a fairly generalized student information request and was not directed toward any particular mention of culturally ethnic issues. This was done to avoid swaying the direction of consultee-teachers' verbalizations unto cultural issues that they would *not* have originally mention had they not been prompted.

Teachers, students, and consultant school psychologists were treated according to the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the consultation ethics guidelines (APA, 1990; Cieurzo & Keital, 1999). Protection of confidentiality was assured and explained to both the consultant school psychologists and the volunteer teacher participants. Only the first names of teachers were used during the consultation sessions. For the preservation of confidentiality, fictitious names were given to the discussed students.

At the study's inception, the verbal dialogues obtained during consultation sessions were transcribed verbatim by the raters from the audio-recorded tapes and were coded on the cultural content and competency intensity levels of each consultee-teacher's statement(s) using the described MCCS coding procedures utilized in the training sessions.

In regard to the actual coding of the transcripts, a system was set up that adhered to the following procedures:

1. Each rater created a computer file. The file was labeled "Verbatim Transcripts." In the verbatim transcript file, a column was designated for coding the intensity levels (i.e., 0, 1, 2, and 3) of each consultee-teacher's statement(s) from each school. Raters were instructed to chronologically "number" (on the actual transcript) each statement made by a consultee-teacher.
3. Raters then proceeded to code the intensity level of each statement for its multicultural competency content (i.e., 0, 1, 2, and 3). Each rater scanned every teacher statement(s) of the audio-recorded transcription obtained from the three schools for cultural themes and/or issues. The raters independently coded the first six verbatim transcripts for cultural themes or issues. The latter procedure was implemented in order to attain inter-rater reliability. Raters proceeded to code the remaining transcripts independently. An inter-rater reliability of .85% was judged as acceptable proof of inter-rater agreement. A .86% inter-rater reliability was reached between the two raters.

Validity of category coding

The coding of multicultural categories was performed by an investigator and a doctoral level, bilingual consultant/school-psychologist. In order to ensure that the category-coding phase was not contaminated by experimenter bias, the bilingual consultant-school psychologist was required to: (a) learn the MCCS coding procedures, (b) review the verbatim transcript data that the raters had coded for multicultural themes and competency intensity levels, and (c) proceed to define and collaborate in the naming of categories with the investigator. The investigator followed identical procedures. Both reached complete agreement on the observed cultural data found in each of the verbatim transcripts. Additionally, both agreed in the category naming. This method is in accordance with the recommendations made by Suzuki, Prendes-Lintel, Wertlieb, and Stallings (1999) for identifying emerging multicultural themes and coding through collaborative teamwork.

Findings

The consultation sessions yielded a total of 37 interviews with 24 teachers participating from the three schools. Five transcripts described institutional policy concerns that required organizational consultation services and did not involve CLD students. These were excluded from the study's data. Ninety-four cultural themes were generated from the three schools. These sessions resulted in the accrument of 33 culturally diverse student cases from the three schools. The approximate age range of the students discussed was from 15 to 18 years of age. Of the students whose racial/ethnic identity was reported, the majority of them were African American and Latino (recent immigrants and first-and second-generation Latinos). Two were recently arrived immigrants from the Ivory Coast of Africa. Major themes and minor themes are presented below.

Major Multicultural Categories

Table 2 illustrates 19 major cultural categories that were elicited during the first and/or second consultation sessions. These categories contain the primary basis of this study's first two research questions. The first research question explored the general topics of concern and/or themes that teachers discussed in their interactions with their CLD students. The second research question promoted inquiry into the number of cultural thematic categories that emerged pertaining to these concerns, which could be linked to the theoretical research literature. With respect to the first question, the data revealed that consultee-teachers manifested several important topics that provide insight into their concerns when discussing their CLD students (see Table 2). Moreover, teachers' multicultural perceptions were similar in all three schools.

Table 2

MCCS Multicultural Categories/Themes Extracted From the Pilot Study

1. Conflicts between recently arrived adolescent immigrant student and their biological parents in host culture.
2. Conflicts of bilingual/bicultural student due to contrasting cultures of adopted parents and biological parents.
3. Educational prejudices/biases in foreign language learning from host culture students.
4. Cross cultural counseling needs of immigrant/bilingual-bicultural student.
5. Economic problems of adolescent immigrant students' biological parents in host culture.
6. Psychological/emotional symptoms of adolescent immigrant students.
7. Vocational needs of adolescent immigrant students.
8. Vocational stressors of adolescent immigrant student.
9. Racial/ethnic identity issues of adolescent immigrant student.
10. Reasons for immigration of adolescent immigrant student to host culture.
11. Cultural/ethnicity student information.
12. Educational background and current academic status in host culture.
13. First and second language acquisition of immigrant adolescent students.

14. Inappropriate criteria for assessing native language proficiency skills of adolescent immigrant students.
15. Educational needs of adolescent immigrant student in host culture.
16. Differences in linguistic skills of bilingual/bicultural students from host culture and adolescent immigrant students.
17. Special Education and the adolescent immigrant student.
18. Inclusion programs and the special education bilingual/bicultural student.
19. Screening criteria for inclusion programs and the special education bilingual/bicultural students.

The findings for the second question revealed cultural thematic categories that emerged in terms of these concerns and that could be linked to the theoretical research literature. The following section denotes the specific categorical findings that can be comparatively linked to the multicultural research literature. They are presented in order of major reoccurrence. The third question concerning the level of competencies will be discussed after the analysis of the categories and minor themes.

Categorical sets, such as Category 11(cultural/ethnicity student information) and Category 12 (educational/academic status in host culture) are significant as they can be linked to qualitative methodology literature that emphasizes the importance of understanding the multicultural historical context of the participants under study, in addition to the need for history taking when discussing CLD students in order to avoid misunderstandings in their diagnosis (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Suzuki, Prendes-Lintel, Wertlieb, & Stallings (1999). Furthermore, from a multicultural education perspective both categories demonstrate a cultural awareness of students' backgrounds and are considered an essential component of effective multicultural teaching (Banks, 2002; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999). The following are excerpts of the cultural thematic data of these categories: "He is from the Dominican Republic and has lived in rural areas all his life... doesn't have a father...and now lives with his grandmother" (Category 11).

In Puerto Rico his mother says he didn't go to school regularly...also they didn't have the money for the textbooks...there you have to buy the books...here it is different; they have a better chance to learn since they get the materials they need. (Category 12)

Category 3 (educational prejudices/biases in foreign language) and 13 (first and second language acquisition of immigrant adolescent students) revealed consultee-teachers' recognition of bilingual language processes and of an existing phenomenon of prejudicial issues in non-immigrant students' second language acquisition educational requirements. These are notable consultee-teacher concerns since bilingualism is often not reinforced and cultivated (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Hakuta & Garcia, 1989). Of particular interest is consultee-teacher's identification of biases on the part of non-immigrant students' refusal to learn a second "foreign" language. Such a cultural theme has not been mentioned before in the prejudice reduction research literature (Bustos & Flores, 2001; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993) and is significant in understanding teacher behaviors and attitudes towards non-immigrant student biases in bilingualism. It is also significant since it brings to light how certain

non-immigrant students perceive their second language acquisition educational requirements. Excerpts of the cultural themes forming these categories revealed statements such as:

The African-Americans in the class don't want to learn Spanish...they say, why do we have to learn this language....we don't need it...we don't need to learn *their* language....referring to the Dominican students in my class...they are always fighting about this and it stops the learning.... (Category 3)

It's hard for them to pick up English....most are 16 and 17 and a second language like English is hard to learn...they try but it's still a slow process. (Category 13)

Categorical sets of 10 (reasons for immigration of adolescent immigrant students), 15 (educational needs of adolescent immigrant student), 6 (psychological/emotional symptoms of adolescent immigrant students), and 4 (cross cultural counseling needs of immigrant/bilingual-bicultural student) revealed multiple immigration-related stressors involving the various reasons for immigration of adolescent immigrant students; their educational needs; and the detection of psychological/emotional symptoms leading to the cross-cultural counseling needs of the immigrant/bilingual-bicultural student. These identified stressors have been delineated by several researchers (Banks, 2002; Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Esquivel & Keital, 1990; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993; Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992) and appear to continue to challenge teachers in school settings. Themes extracted from the verbatim transcripts that describe these teacher concerns are:

Most of them tell me they came to this country to work not to study....they are really men at 17 and 18...they are ready to work and don't want to study, they want to help out their families. (Category 10)

We need to teach them how to read...some of them don't even know how to read in their own language. I have to start from scratch - mere sentences. (Category 15)

He looks depressed to me....I think he misses his country...there they had the beaches all day...the nice weather...here it's isolated....indoors all the time...he doesn't look well to me...very quiet in class, doesn't interact...rather dejected. He told me he felt like dying sometimes he's so suffocated...I'm really worried about him. (Category 6)

I told her aunt she needs counseling and I hope you will too...she is a very depressed young lady and is doing all the wrong things to fight it...anyway she is in need of direction...she is anxious all the time thinking that she is not fitting in with the class because she doesn't speak the language. I know her now she reacts if the students don't accept her,

thinks its because she is a Spanish speaking Dominican...anyway, she really would benefit if she had a nice woman counselor to talk to...you know to open up to and get support. (Category 4)

Categories 1 (conflicts between recently arrived adolescent immigrant student and their biological parents in host culture) and 5 (economic problems of adolescent immigrant students' biological parents in host culture) referring to the economic problems and conflicts between recently arrived adolescent immigrant students and their biological parents in the host culture, contributed further conformation of these stressors' potential harm on academic success and mental health (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993).

His parents are from Peru and they are strict in their discipline...they want him to get an education...the kind they never had. He isn't interested and has started to go out late. This they will not tolerate. Also, he is becoming very American. He wants the type of clothes the kids in school are wearing and I guess the liberties that most of the kids here have...very different from his country and his parents view. (Category 1)

It is my understanding that the family is in trouble...they can't find work and are now on public assistance. The entire family is living in a one bedroom apartment. Maria told me that she is ashamed in front of her peers that she can't buy soda and pizza like the rest of them do at lunchtime....they're allowed to go across the street to the pizza shop...she stays in school and doesn't go with them. It affects her peer relations. I met her mother...a pleasant woman. She shared that economically she is beginning to think coming here was a mistake. Her husband is a mechanic but he can't find work because he doesn't speak English. I feel bad for Maria. I don't know how to help her. (Category 5)

Category 17 (special Education and the adolescent immigrant student) and 19 (screening criteria for inclusion programs and the special education bilingual/bicultural students), alluding to special education and the adolescent immigrant student revealed cultural themes that demonstrated consultee-teachers' attentiveness to the issues pertaining to an overrepresentation of immigrant/bilingual students in special education. The latter is a significant confirmation of what is well documented in the research literature (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Suzuki, Ponterotto, & Meller, 2001). Themes from these transcripts were:

You know he is 18. The system will help him until he is 21 but he needs a lot of academic remediation. They have him in a self-contained class for learning disabled youths...Jose is not disabled, he's just way behind in academics. I did not help classify him but I was told that they had to classify him just so he could get the services he needs...like the smaller class room instruction and the individual attention. It's a shame he has to

go through the next few years with this classification just to get help. (Category 17)

They don't have the right tests to check for language dominance and for academic status. These young people that come don't speak our language and we need to have better ways of screening their academic status and their language proficiency. As it is Roberto has been placed in my class with all English speaking peers and I think that he really needs to be evaluated for special education services because I have seen his limitations...they are not those of a kid with a language barrier...it's more than that...but if he is classified he will have to leave this school because we don't have special education bilingual programs in this school...can you imagine how hurt he is going to be? (Category 19)

Minor Cultural Themes

A total of nine salient minor cultural themes were culled from the consultee-teacher transcriptions. Although these themes emerged with less consistency, they are nevertheless noteworthy and cover a wide range of consultee-teacher multicultural concerns that manifest multicultural awareness. The minor themes were

- Concern for potential acculturation and assimilation stressors of recently arrived immigrant adolescent students in high schools.
- The need for bilingual education programs for immigrant students whose native language differed from the majority Spanish bilingual education program(s) currently offered.
- Informational issues regarding the adoption of immigrant adolescent students by Latino families residing in New York.
- Residential needs of immigrant students remaining in New York City to finish their high school education.
- Prevalence of single parenting with the immigrant family household.
- The need for an increase in younger Latino teachers who have experienced the acculturation and assimilation process and its anticipated stressors.
- Personal hygiene customs in the country of origin, which customs are notably different from those of the host culture.
- Implications of arranged marriage(s) of bilingual student(s) to recently arrived immigrant(s).
- Unlawful objectives formed by exposure to inappropriate role models when education is not always a priority for some immigrant adolescent students.

The third research question that was directed at establishing the level of consultee-teachers' multicultural understanding and/or competency (as reflected by the accrument of their multicultural statements' intensity levels and frequency) resulted in 68 level 1 multicultural awareness statements, 25 level 2 multicultural knowledge statements, and 3 level 3 multicultural skills statements, as measured by the MCCS.

Although the MCCS was developed to solely identify multicultural themes, two additional themes were generated from the transcripts, which although not culture specific, merit mentioning because they were considered to be partially related to viable indicators of cultural problems. Accordingly, the MCCS can screen out additional information from non-cultural themes that may prove of interest to educators. One non-cultural theme addressed a teacher's sense of self-efficacy and the other referred to the utilization of prejudice prevention strategies in the classroom.

With regard to the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, a theme was generated by a young male Latino teacher that emphasized his displeasure at not having been given the opportunity to implement an effective intervention for a Latino immigrant student that had been accused of sexually harassing (verbally) two White female teachers. The Latino teacher described his frustration and inability to be efficacious in the following manner:

Emilio has been transferred...He had 12 adults in front of him charging him...first of all he should never have been approached by 12 teachers at once. I think I would have given Emilio the chance to express himself in a smaller group. Just the teacher, the counselor, and Emilio. Being from a Latin background myself I feel that I would have influenced the outcome...He is Latino and I know the struggles he has to go through...I would have addressed it to him directly. I would have told him to...if you do that again I am going to call your parents...If he did it again I would have called his parents and told them what happened and then expelled him from the academy.

An additional theme arose that presented a teacher's perspective on prejudice prevention the classroom. This particular theme implied a certain level of discomfort (for the teacher) associated with conducting prejudice strategies aimed at the reduction of prejudice for gender-identity issues. The consultee-teacher expressed her dilemma in the following manner:

He likes to sit with the girls and he enjoys girls' conversation, girls' topics...It's the way that he talks; it's the way he waves his hands, that kind of thing...He's from the Dominica Republic...most of them are Dominicans too {reference to the class composition}. Dominican machos...they call him Miguelita {the teacher further discussed a prejudice prevention intervention plan for her class proposed by the school psychologist} I like using the word prejudice for when I do this in the class because it's not only the homosexual approach; could be about nationalities, cultures...If I go by the homosexual topic they will feel like it's too direct...it may not be good for Miguel.

In summary, three things must be stated. First, given the small number of consultee-teachers' participation in the consultation sessions, an impressive array of cultural themes were generated. Secondly, several other cultural themes were generated which, though perhaps minor were nevertheless also important in their own right. Lastly, it was the intent of this study to qualitatively identify critical multicultural issues

discussed in consultative interviews by consultee-teachers and analyze the findings based on the literature's identification of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skill competency. The category formation that was amassed served to describe the kind of cultural issues predominantly perceived by teachers in the three school settings. Thus, the results adhere to the purpose of the study.

Discussion

In this examination of teachers' multicultural perceptions, three research questions were posed. The following offers some answers to these questions and some future research directions are presented.

What were the general topics of concern or themes that teachers discussed regarding their everyday interactions with their culturally diverse students *and* what thematic categories emerged regarding these concerns that can be linked to the theoretical research literature? As aforementioned, the majority of consultee-teachers multicultural themes resulted in categorical sets that focused on prior multicultural literature topics of concern regarding culturally diverse populations. This corroborative finding reinforces the view that has been discussed in the multicultural literature (Banks, 2002; Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Esquivel & Keital, 1990; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993; Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992; Suzuki, Ponterotto, & Meller, 2001).

Several comments are warranted concerning the major cultural themes. It should be noted that a small number of teachers participated in the consultation sessions. The fact that ninety-four cultural themes were generated during the consultation sessions from the three schools is impressive. Additionally, the fact that such themes were culled from three different urban city high schools indicates that within these particular schools, teachers experienced similar cultural concerns for their CLD students.

When scrutinizing the themes individually, consultee-teachers tended to verbalize cultural themes that primarily described themes that involved the discussion of cultural and ethnicity student information. This kind of information proved to rely heavily upon identifying students' country of origin and educational background and was a good indicator of teachers' awareness of the need for cultural background information of their students.

Another major theme that was noted was teachers' tendency to focus on the academic status of their culturally diverse students in their native countries. Moreover, a major cultural theme frequently noted demonstrated that teachers referred to first and second language acquisition needs of immigrant students. All of these themes imply a sense of cultural awareness on the part of the consultee-teachers in the area of the academic standing and linguistics needs of their students.

Likewise, teachers contributed other major cultural themes that implied a sense of cultural awareness and constructive knowledge-base. For example, numerous cultural themes focused on such cultural issues as: multiple immigrant adolescent acculturation stressors; linguistic skills of immigrant adolescents; cross-cultural counseling and vocational needs of adolescent immigrant students; language screening criteria and bilingual education needs; inclusion programs; and the special education of bilingual/bicultural students.

However, with regard to themes reflecting cultural skills, teachers did not significantly manifest statements that were deemed to demonstrate a degree of skills. Such skills are described as the ability to integrate personal cultural knowledge-based factors into the problem-solving process. The lack of findings in this area suggests that consultee-teachers demonstrated more multicultural awareness, somewhat lesser cultural knowledge, but were much less inclined to demonstrate multicultural skills. This is an important limitation given the high concentration of multi-ethnic student population in each of the three high schools.

As aforementioned the multicultural education literature delineates that educators are obliged to take multicultural courses in graduate school (Banks, 2002). Moreover, Ladson and Billings (1999) also described multicultural staff development training programs that are often initiated at the school level to increase teacher multicultural education competency. This could explain the array of themes that focused on multicultural concerns that are directly related to the literature (i.e., multiple acculturation stressors; issues in bilingualism; history-taking; counseling; and vocational needs of immigrant students).

In summary, it may be that the participant teachers had taken multicultural courses and had been exposed to staff development presentations on professional issues in multicultural education. Indeed, in one of the schools, the consultant school psychologist remarked, “teachers are tired of having multicultural staff development days in this school”. In this respect, teachers appear to have obtained certain levels of multicultural awareness and knowledge however the opportunity for the development of problem-solving skills may not always have been presented (Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 1995; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998). Along the same vein, Gopaul-McNicol and Brice-Baker (1998) have stressed “...a higher and more profound level of training is needed if cross-cultural competence is to be acquired” (p. 144). In this regard, the application of multicultural skills cannot take place without the opportunity to consult and implement appropriate interventions. Consequently, teachers would need to gain skills by using practices that address multicultural intervention training (i.e., collaborative, consultation, and teamwork) (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002).

If teachers in these schools resisted or failed to utilize consultation services, or were too busy to seek such services, most probably the development of skills was stagnated. This is a noteworthy speculation since it implies that teachers may need schedules that allow for the development of intervention skills. Apparently, having the multicultural awareness and knowledge to adopt modifications that inspire multicultural teaching methods may not necessarily provide growth in multicultural problem-solving skills. The findings also confirm the need for teachers to seek the assistance of consultant school psychologists when concerned about their CLD students since the goal of consultation is to increase educators’ knowledge base and to assist in developing problem-solving skills (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002; Erchuls & Martens, 2002; Ingraham & Meyers, 2000).

Moreover, there are several reasons why teachers may or may not seek consultation services and each would need to be reviewed within the distinct school environment studied. Teachers may have had strenuous schedules that did not allow sufficient time for consultation thereby limiting the quantity of consultee sessions in this study or they may have had a high sense of self-efficacy, hence not seeking consultative

advice. However, certain teachers appear to have “taken the time” from a busy schedule to seek consultation services. The latter could implicate that teachers who seek consultation are more motivated and/or devoted; less experienced and consequently need assistance; or have a “cultural awareness” pre-requisite that helps them recognize their need for further developing adequate cultural knowledge and skills for servicing CLD populations.

The third research question which was directed at establishing the level of consultee-teachers’ multicultural competency as reflected by the accrument of their multicultural statements’ competency intensity levels revealed more multicultural awareness on the part of teachers than knowledge and skills. This finding may be directly related to the aforementioned speculation that participant teachers in these schools appear to have developed multicultural competency as measured by levels 1 and 2 of the MCCS criteria but failed to develop level 3 competency skills. Again, this finding appears to suggest that although teachers may have acquired multicultural awareness and knowledge, the development of their skills may have been either neglected or stifled by different variables such as tight teacher schedules, lack of higher order practical intervention skills training, lack of administrative support for pursuing consultation services, or resistance - lack of motivation - to engage in interventions that would facilitate the development of such skills. In this respect, consultant school psychologists have an increased responsibility to promote and publicize consultation services at the school level since the intent of the multicultural consultant-psychologist is to increase consultee-teacher’s cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Ingraham & Meyers, 2000).

Commentary on the Minor Cultural Themes

Also warranting commentary are the minor themes that were extracted from the verbatim transcriptions. Although minor, such themes implied the possibility of imminent problems arising within these schools that, if left unresolved by the teachers, could escalate into major concerns. The later findings are examples of the need to solidify teachers’ perceptions and concerns into actual problem solving resolutions at the school level. Moreover, the cultural themes extracted from the consultation sessions were identical in three urban city high schools. Additionally, the concerns presented may be deemed as “culture-specific issues” that teachers often confront when interacting with CLD students.

These findings are meaningful since they suggest the continued need for observing teachers’ discussion of student problems at the school level and appear to provide a richer array of teachers’ current perspectives and issues.

Another significant finding indicated that the sample of major and minor cultural themes that were obtained demonstrate that immigrant teenagers are exposed to the reality of these cultural observations within the Morrisana section of the Bronx in New York City. It is not unreasonable to assume that these findings contribute cultural meaning that may be found in similar environments encompassing urban city high schools that are also currently experiencing an influx of immigrant students.

Correspondingly, the MCCS identification of similar major and minor cultural themes can help to affirm any important educational and social/emotional interventions

that must be implemented within each of the school districts. This would seem to be an ideal procedure to follow so as to ensure that critical cultural issues are identified and attended to within districts.

In conclusion, certain limitations in the study should be considered. The audio-recording of the consultation sessions may have served to inhibit certain consultee-teachers from divulging their true feelings regarding certain student issues. Nevertheless, the need to spontaneously audio-record teachers' verbal cultural statements made it more difficult to control for this limitation. Such limitation may have contaminated certain areas of the consultation sessions, although it is hoped nevertheless that the consultative process permeated with the professional rapport and trust that is necessary for adequate consultation interaction.

Another limitation that may be queried is the small teacher sample studied that might be characterized as small, restricted, and therefore statistically unrepresentative. However, research that probes into consultee-teacher verbalizations in the consultation process can be best obtained through qualitative methods that do *not* incorporate statistical procedures; since the qualitative study of verbal exchanges identifies distinct topics of concern. Such processes can expose the worldview of the consultee-teachers and provide mutually exclusive information pertaining to the "local" school environment. Furthermore, a large scale sample would not have absorbed the actual understanding and affective experience of the participants.

Implications for Future Research

In future studies aimed at the qualitative analysis of teachers' verbal exchanges within the consultative process, it might be advisable to subsequently include the findings (e.g., the cultural themes identified in the MCCS system) as part of a small-group discussion and obtain teacher input on useful strategies and/or interventions. The latter would provide a set of goals aimed at meeting the culture-specific needs of the CLD student(s) and/or "local" school and home environment. In this regard, anecdotal information from consultee-teachers manifesting their interests and experiences would not only help to enhance teachers' cultural awareness and knowledge but would eventually lead to more advantageous outcomes for students of racial/ethnic cultural backgrounds within the actual school. Additionally, the application of the interventions suggested may be instrumental in the augmentation of teacher's multicultural skills.

In addition, rather than use psychometric scales that examine teacher efficacy when dealing with their culturally diverse student populations, the utilization of a qualitative "coding" system that identifies major multicultural competencies (such as the MCCS described in the literature) during the consultation process appears to be more effective in determining CLD students needs at the actual school level. Moreover, the MCCS appears to provide a richer array of teachers' current school-based issues and needs.

Finally, it is important to note that the cultural thematic analysis in this study revealed significant categorical information that would need to be compared to similar educational settings. Additional studies need to be replicated in different urban city schools that have a high concentration of ethnic student diversity. It would be necessary to differentiate the various categories extracted in several districts concurrently with the

frequency of their occurrence, in order to identify critical cultural issues that are of major concern in the combined districts studied. Furthermore, the frequency of such extracted categories and how critical each might be is an area in which the MCCS's qualitative methods may prove to be beneficial for school districts endeavoring to address any cultural "stressors" identified within their CLD student population. Lastly, certain extracted cultural categories could be added to the current literature, thus aiding in the identification of supplemental multicultural education knowledge.

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Dr. Martines has made dozens of presentations both national and international in the field of multicultural competency. She has conducted many multicultural research and competency studies, including interventions, learning disabilities, special education, and evaluation of handicapped children, specializing in both qualitative (interviews, transcription, pattern analysis), and quantitative analysis of data using statistical techniques. Today, she continues at Montclair State University to teach a wide variety of courses. Most importantly, she teaches core courses to school and clinical psychologists in training, including multicultural competency, and supervises their internships.

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