ABSTRACT
                This paper discusses a program designed to assist counseling
students to improve cross cultural communication skills that will enable them
to use interviewing techniques with individuals from diverse cultures.
Research suggests that such a program is needed since many students have not
had significant experiences in interacting and communicating with people from
different backgrounds. The program offers an open-ended approach with
continual opportunities to refine and enhance skills of students, building on
the demonstration videos of previous students. The structured interview
process described offers an integrative, flexible, and developmental model
for enhancing cross cultural communication. The model offers the possibility
of involving counselors in training at all levels of experiences. (Contains
12 references.) (JDM)

TRAINING COUNSELORS TO RELATE IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY USING THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROCESS

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Introduction

Many students have not had significant experiences in interacting with, and communicating with people from different backgrounds (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991). Thus, many students may have a significant impediment to overcome in order to open themselves to the cross-cultural experience of their future clients. The purpose of this research is to assist counseling students to improve cross-cultural communication skills that would enable them to use interviewing techniques with individuals from diverse cultures. This approach is open-ended with continual opportunities to refine and enhance skills of students, building on the demonstration videos of previous students.

Project Objectives

Specific objectives were identified for this project. They included the following: 1) develop skills in cross-cultural interviewing among counselors, teachers, and others, 2) develop communication skills between and among people from different cultural backgrounds, 3) present opportunities for interviewees to express their concerns as they attempt to adjust to the dominant culture, 4) provide an arena for dialogue between people from diverse cultures, and 5) develop demonstration videotapes of cross-cultural interviews to be used in a variety of settings where cross-cultural concerns are evident (Kasambira & Rybak, 1996).

Develop Cross-Cultural Interviewing Skills

Evaluating the effectiveness of comprehensive multicultural training courses, D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991) found, in general, that the courses did help students to increase their levels of multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills. Merta, Stringham, and Ponterotto (1988) described a cross-cultural experience that was processed in a class setting as valuable in increasing counselor sensitivity to other cultural perspectives. Anderson and Cranston-Gingras (1991) reported on a relatively brief program in which multicultural awareness can be developed. Yet, the need for quality therapeutic approaches which help guide counselors in overcoming cross-cultural obstacles has been identified (Berg-Cross & Zoppetti, 1991). This research was directed toward developing a clear blueprint for assisting students in refining their multicultural communications abilities.

Develop Cross-Cultural Communication

Mack et al. (1997) conducted a study of campus ethnic climate relations and found differences among ethnic group perceptions. Blacks tended to experience the interracial campus climate as hostile while, in general, Whites held a more positive perspective. The study also found that Asians were the least comfortable in cross-cultural situations while Latinos and

97

2

Whites were the most comfortable.

Expressing Acculturation Concerns

Persons making a transition from a home culture to a less familiar culture experience considerable stress in learning to adapt to alien norms and expectations (Zapf, 1991). Where learning a new language of the host culture is involved, the interview session presents an opportunity for the interviewee to practice conversational skills with someone who is willing to take the time to listen, to probe for meaning, and to understand.

Provide Arena for Diversity Dialogue

Berg-Cross, Starr, and Sloan (1993) remarked on a trend toward divisiveness and animosity among racial and ethnic groups on college campuses in the United States. These authors suggested that corrective interventions must include the identification of intergroup commonalities as well as a respect for differences. Ultimately, a polycultural identity may be forged by individuals so they are able to relate meaningfully to others of various backgrounds. Through this process, the individual's human tendency toward a false sense cultural specialness (Hoare, 1991) is challenged.

Develop Demonstration Videotapes

Instruments such as the Cross-Cultural Competency Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R) (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991) have been developed to assess the cross-cultural competence of counseling. Demonstration videotapes offer students a chance to critique the cross-cultural interviews of others and themselves.

Procedures

The project developers structured this research using procedural steps which appeared to work effectively. The procedural steps included: 1) identification and recruitment of interviewers and interviewees, 2) meet with and explain procedures to all participants as one group, 3) conduct videotaped interviews in pairs, 4) frequently review and discuss results as a group, and 5) modify techniques to refine cross-cultural communication skills.

Recommendations

As a result of this work, eight specific recommendations are offered for replicating this effort. These recommendations include: 1) begin with skilled or advanced-level counselors, 2) seek out underserved populations, e.g., international students, and other individuals from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds, 3) vary the composition of the interviewer-interviewee pairs, 4) keep notes of each group meeting as records of the proceedings, 5) conduct frequent meetings of current participants, 6) critique candidly the videotaped interviews with all participants partaking, 7) provide/recommend resource materials such as Culturgrams (David M. Kennedy Center, 1993) and videotaping facilities, 8) make sure all equipment is available and in good working condition to avoid frustrations.

Results

The final result of this project is to provide resources for counselor educators who are involved in preparing counselors sensitive to the dynamics of cultural differences and able to

work with those differences. Additionally, interviewers not only gain an opportunity to learn more deeply about one or a few other cultures, but they also develop more generalizable skills in learning how to work with cultural differences. They were afforded an opportunity to begin developing self-confidence about dealing with cultural differences along with the newly acquired counseling tools. Throughout this project, a lower level of self-defensiveness and an increased openness to feedback were encouraged as model for increasing both self-awareness and usable skills for counselors.

Other results include an increased sensitivity to concerns of individuals who are in a minority status. Ways of addressing those concerns can then be developed, e.g., psychoeducational and support groups to address the issues particular to diverse groups of people.

Implications

Results from this research could be used for purposes such as: 1) provide counselor inservice training activities, 2) curricular improvement of multicultural or multiethnic education courses, 3) orientation programs for American host families of international students, 4) international student service offices training activities, 5) incoming college professor and instructor orientation programs, 6) student activities orientation programs, 7) for new and transfer student orientation activities (university experience courses), and 8) staff development, e.g., university, education, human service agency, industry, and government.

Conclusion

The structured interview process described offers an integrative, flexible, and developmental model for enhancing cross-cultural communication. The model offers the possibility of involving counselors in training and others at all levels of experience. For example, even though novice counselors were not used in the early stages of development of this model, they could easily take part in live observation, operation of video equipment, and participation in the critiques of completed videotaped interviews.

Future research and experiences with this model may show its degree of efficacy for various populations and particular contexts. The model is very much based on a practice, evaluate, modify/improve feedback cycle for a given situation. Additional research may help point the way to further refinements and best use of the model.

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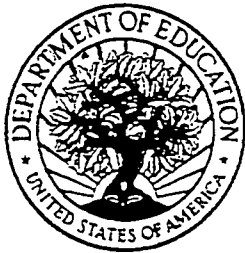
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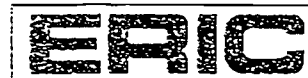
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