

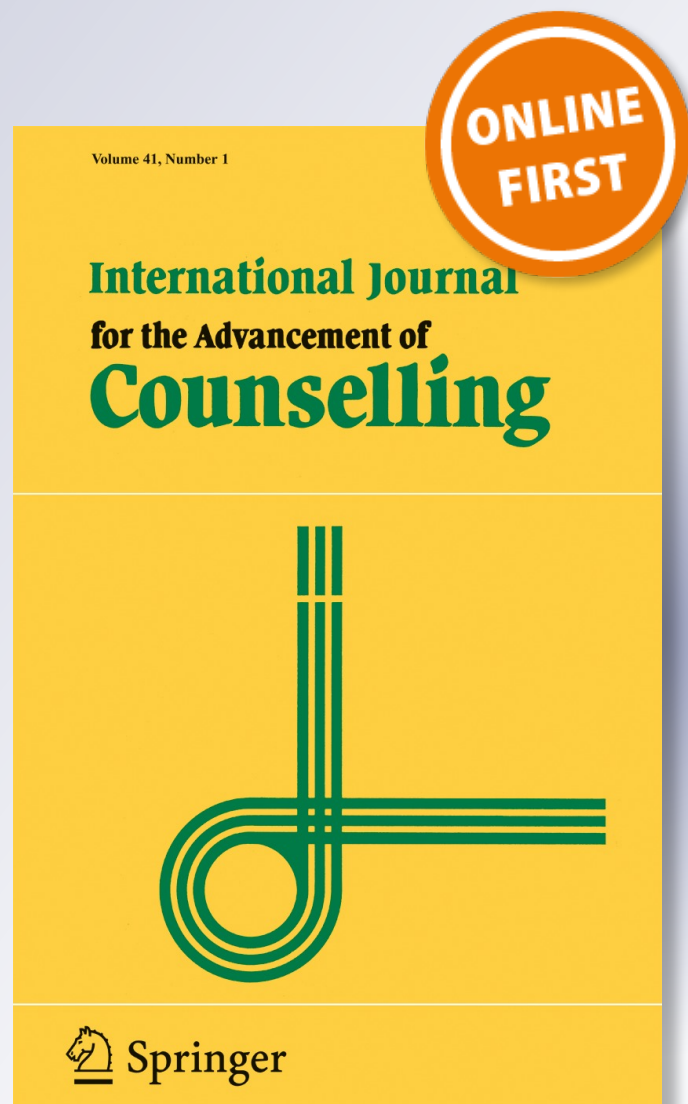
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Leon Rodgers & Charné Furcron

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Multicultural Competence: Exploring the Link between Globalization, Select Demographics, and School Counselors' Self-Perceptions

Leon Rodgers¹  · Charné Furcron²

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Abstract

This study investigated the self-reported multicultural competence of school counselors employed within an urban, socioeconomically blended public school district in the Southern United States (U.S.). Participants completed two instruments: a demographic questionnaire and the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey-Revised (MCCTS-R; Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999). Results revealed that four of ten demographic variables demonstrated significance in relation to self-reported multicultural competence. Future research recommendations include, studying a larger population, incorporating qualitative elements, considering racial identity development in relation to self-reported multicultural competence, and comparing MCCTS-R self-report scores with independent observer ratings of demonstrated multicultural competencies in response to case vignettes or video recorded student-school counselor situations (e.g., individual or group counseling).

Keywords School counselor · Immigration · Migration · Racism · Multicultural competence

Introduction

As a result of established and emerging immigrant communities with active transnational ties, escalating cross-racial interaction, and transformative social and political factors linked to globalization, demographers readily concede that America's ethnic composition is in flux and undergoing sustained, historic change (Pew Research Center 2015). With the worldwide acceleration of movement across borders, sociologists describe globalization as a process of transnational human linkage that facilitates the dissemination of transcultural information

✉ Leon Rodgers

¹ Columbus, USA

² Atlanta, USA

(Tomlinson 1999). To this end, globalization possesses the inherent capacity to enrich cross-ethnic consciousness by enabling the convergence and integration of multicultural knowledge (Waters 2001). In 2014, for the first time, the numbers of ethnic/multiethnic minority students enrolled in K-12 public education in the U.S. surpassed those of White students (Maxwell 2014). Coinciding with America's transformation, broad consensus affirms that multicultural competency is indispensable to the delivery of effective school counseling services; e.g., psychosocial assessment, case conceptualization, and intervention strategies (Sue and Sue 2015).

Based on population numbers gleaned from intercensal and decennial data, and extrapolated forward using predictive analytics, the U.S. is more ethnically diverse than at any other time, a direction demographers envisage will persist (Frey 2014a). When juxtaposed with 2010 U.S. census data, archival census figures affirm interethnic marriage and immigration as crucial determinants responsible for America's changing ethnic and racial composition (Colby and Ortman 2015; Wang 2012). Given the growing body of peer-reviewed research devoted to exploring various aspects of multicultural competency, the goal of this study was to expand school counselor knowledge and self-awareness.

The U.S., which accommodates 19% of all worldwide migration, remains the preferred destination for migrants (i.e., people searching for work) and refugees (i.e., people seeking permanent residence due to humanitarian crisis, political instability, sectarian violence, etc.) (United Nations 2015a). According to data extracted from the most recent year for which U.S. Census figures are available, 10.4 million immigrants were attending K-12 public schools in the U.S. in 2010, accounting for one-in-five students; moreover, according to 2010 census data, one-in-four children under age 18 live in a family with at least one foreign-born parent (Grieco et al. 2012; U.S. Census Bureau 2014a, b, c).

Using direct and indirect methods to collect, enumerate, and analyze population data obtained from developed and developing countries (i.e., vital statistic registries and historical and momentum demography; Kertzer 1997; Wachter et al. 1978), we relied upon an aggregation of available population data composed from a combination of sources. Based upon demographer projections, the U.S. foreign-born population is expected to grow four times faster than the native-born, reaching 15.8% of the total population by 2030; 17.1% by 2040; and 18.8% by 2065 (Colby and Ortman 2015; Frey 2014b; Ortman 2013; United Nations 2015a). Since movement from Mexico to the U.S. is the most popular bilateral migratory path between any two countries in the world, Hispanics are projected by 2050 to comprise 26% of the general U.S. population (Colby and Ortman 2015; Oleaga 2014; United Nations 2015a, b).

Subsequent to *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) - the landmark Supreme Court decision that rendered anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional - the U.S. has experienced a steady rise in interethnic marriage and childbirth (for this study, the terms interethnic, multiracial, multicultural, interracial, intercultural, and cross-cultural are synonymous and interchangeable) (Johnson and Kreider 2013; Livingston 2017). However, even with waning taboos ascribed to the abrogation of miscegenation laws, regulatory dynamics linked to acceptance and proliferation can still be influenced by a litany of factors, including, but not limited to, religious beliefs, ethnonationalism, familial suasion/duress, community mores, residential proximity, and assimilation (Qian and Lichter 2007; Wang 2012). In 2015, interethnic marriage reached an unparalleled high of 17% of the U.S. population; by comparison, the share was 0.7% in 1970 and 9.5% in 2010 (Johnson and Kreider 2013; Livingston 2017; U.S. Census Bureau 1998).

As the U.S. experiences a circumspect, inescapable journey towards increased pluralism, social psychologists agree that an evolving societal transformation of such impact will fundamentally change—from the perspective of ethnic identity; social customs and beliefs; and enculturation—how school counselors conceptualize the helping relationship; e.g., acculturation (i.e., between group exchange of meso social structures); human development; cross-cultural consciousness; verbal/nonverbal intercultural communication; and assimilation (i.e., minority group absorption by dominant culture) (Sue and Sue 2015).

Multicultural competence postulates as indispensable the need for school counselors to regularly assess with granular objectivity not just their ability to communicate effectively with ethnic and multiethnic populations, but their ability to also evince a defined, measurable level of self-awareness that identifies and repudiates xenophobic and ethnocentric inspired concepts, beliefs, and practices (e.g., ideological adherence to essentialized notions of race-based superiority; systemic racism indicative of exclusionary practices propagated by governmental institutions; and discursive bigotry facilitated through racialized code words) (Bonilla-Silva 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-perceived multicultural competence of public school counselors employed within a psychographically diverse, socioeconomically blended school district in Georgia, U.S. (Ross 2006). Since multicultural awareness is not static or a direct result of an isolated, discrete learning experience, the acquisition of multicultural competency represents a dynamic process that requires ongoing remediation; e.g., the ability to relativize information and integrate emerging worldviews (Sciarra 1999). Given that multicultural competency extends beyond conventional, superficially derived knowledge, school counselors must be willing to adopt learning goals amenable to empirical analysis (Sue and Sue 2015).

Method

Population

The population for this study was school counselors with a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling practicing in psychoeducation, elementary, middle, or high school settings. While participants were heterogeneous, the convenience pool ($n = 109$) was nonetheless a purposive, non-probability sample unable to be claimed as representative of Georgia or elsewhere. Participants were solicited using a roster obtained from the district-wide Director of Guidance and Counseling. An explanatory email invitation was sent to prospective participants, with all approached agreeing to participate.

Instruments / Procedures

We used two instruments to collect data: a demographic survey and the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey-Revised (MCCTS-R; Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999). The demographic survey was created by the researchers to collect the following participant data: gender; ethnicity/race; highest degree earned; name of institution/year

master's degree awarded; school counselor experience; work setting; time spent interacting with ethnic/multiethnic students; U.S. region where formative years were spent; number of ethnic/multiethnic friends; and number of multicultural training experiences.

The MCCTS-R (used with permission of one of the developers: Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, PhD, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Counseling and Human Services) is a 32-item, self-rating scale that assesses competence across three factors: multicultural terminology ($\alpha = .97$, 4 items), multicultural knowledge ($\alpha = .95$, 19 items), and multicultural awareness ($\alpha = .85$, 9 items) (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999; Holcomb-McCoy 2005). Each MCCTS-R item uses a Likert-type response key; i.e., 1 = not competent; 2 = somewhat competent; 3 = competent; and 4 = extremely competent (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999).

Prior to data collection, approval was granted by the school district's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After completing informed consent—which addressed anonymity, confidentiality, data security, and how to obtain study results—paper reproductions of both instruments were administered before the start of a scheduled departmental staff meeting. Retrieved data were stored in an Excel spreadsheet then exported into SPSS for analysis. Relative to conducting the research, ethical standards created by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2016) and the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014) were adhered to as stipulated.

Research Hypotheses

This study tested several hypotheses in null form (H_0). It was hypothesised that each of the following would not have a statistically significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence: (1) Graduating from a counselor education program accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP); (2) Ethnicity/race; (3) Gender; (4) Work setting; (5) Years of school counselor experience; (6) Amount of at-work time spent interacting with ethnic/multiethnic students; (7) U.S. region where formative years were spent; (8) Number of ethnic/multiethnic friends; (9) Number of multicultural training experiences; and (10) Level of education.

Results

Participants' Background Characteristics

The study sample consisted of 73 women (67%) and 36 men (33%). Ages ranged from 25 to 61+, with most participants self-identifying as age 31–40 ($n = 32$, 29.4%), followed by 51–60 ($n = 31$, 28.4%), 41–50 ($n = 28$, 25.7%), 61+ ($n = 14$, 12.8%), and 25–30 ($n = 4$, 3.7%). The majority of participants identified as either White ($n = 69$, 63.3%) or Black ($n = 24$, 22.0%), with a comparative number self-identifying as Hispanic ($n = 6$, 5.5%) and “Some Other Race” ($n = 10$, 9.2%). Most spent their formative years in the Southern U.S. (61.5%), worked at a high school (37.6%), and had 11–15 years of school counselor experience (30.3%). All held master's degrees in school counseling, while 38.5% were also education specialist (Ed.S.), which is a terminal professional degree offered in the U.S. that is designed to provide additional knowledge, training, and application theory

beyond the master's degree in school counseling. Most had completed one multicultural training experience (33.9%), while almost as many had no such experience (32%). Sixty-nine had received their master's degree from a CACREP accredited program, while 40 had not.

Data Analysis

No study participants were required to be removed from the data set due to incomplete or omitted dependent variable data. Composite scores were computed for multicultural awareness (range: 1.89 to 3.89; $M=2.79/SD=0.44$), multicultural terminology (range: 2.00 to 4.00; $M=3.01/SD=0.51$), multicultural knowledge (range: 1.42 to 3.95; $M=2.57/SD=0.51$), and MCCTS-R combined (range: 1.84 to 3.72; $M=2.69/SD=0.42$). Standardized values for these variables were examined for values exceeding ± 3.29 standard deviations from the mean (Stevens 2009). All scores fell within the acceptable threshold. No univariate or multivariate outliers were detected, and no data needed to be removed due to outlier responses (Stevens 2009).

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of composite MCCTS-R scores. Alpha coefficients were evaluated using guidelines recommended by George and Mallery (2003), where $\alpha \geq .9$ is excellent; $\alpha \geq .8$ is good; $\alpha \geq .7$ is acceptable; $\alpha \geq .6$ is questionable; and $\alpha \geq .5$ is poor/unacceptable. The results for multicultural awareness ($\alpha = .83$) and multicultural terminology ($\alpha = .89$) were good, while the results for multicultural knowledge ($\alpha = .93$) and MCCTS-R combined ($\alpha = .94$) were excellent.

Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated significance for multicultural terminology ($p < .001$) and multicultural knowledge ($p = .009$), suggesting that the assumption of normality was not met for these variables; however, the MANOVA is a robust statistical analysis for violation of this particular assumption when the sample size is large ($n > 50$) (Stevens 2009). Also, an analysis of multicollinearity identified correlation coefficients ranging from .27 to .66. Although the correlations were statistically significant, none of the coefficients were greater than $>.80$, suggesting that multicollinearity was not evident between the variables (Stevens 2009).

An analysis of each MCCTS-R survey item revealed the following: item 7 (I can discuss my family's perspective regarding acceptable and non-acceptable codes-of-conduct; $M=3.06$), item 10 (I can define prejudice; $M=3.01$), and item 12 (I can define stereotype; $M=2.99$) had the highest scores, whereas item 8 (I can discuss models of White Racial Identity Development; $M=1.99$), item 20 (I can discuss within group difference among ethnic groups; $M=2.22$), and item 26 (I can discuss research regarding mental health issues among culturally/ethnically different populations; $M=2.25$) had the lowest scores (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999).

With regard to reporting the hypothesized fit of data collected for this study, we opted to present hypothesis findings in a nonsequential numeric format, reporting statistically significant hypotheses first (i.e., hypothesis 2, 6, 8, and 9), followed by retained hypotheses that failed to reach significance (i.e., hypothesis 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10).

Hypothesis 2 Findings

Hypothesis 2: Ethnicity/race would not have a statistically significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on ethnicity/race, with four responses: Black/African American; Caucasian/White; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; and other race/ethnicity (Cohn 2015). Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met.

The results of the combined MANOVA were statistically significant by ethnicity/race ($F(9, 250.83) = 2.76, p = .004$; Wilk's Lambda = .80; partial eta squared = .074). When analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(3, 105) = 5.73, p = .001$; partial eta squared = .141); multicultural terminology ($F(3, 105) = 3.24, p = .025$; partial eta squared = .085); multicultural knowledge ($F(3, 105) = 5.80, p = .001$; partial eta squared = .142); and MCCTS-R combined ($F(3, 105) = 7.31, p < .001$; partial eta squared = .173) were significant. Tukey's post hoc test revealed that when compared to White school counselors (awareness/ $M = 2.68$; terminology/ $M = 2.91$; knowledge/ $M = 2.43$; and MCCTS-R combined/ $M = 2.56$), Black school counselors had significantly higher awareness ($M = 3.05$), terminology ($M = 3.23$), knowledge ($M = 2.84$), and MCCTS-R combined scores ($M = 2.95$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected: Black school counselors perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than White school counselors ($p = .004$).

Hypothesis 6 Findings

Hypothesis 6: Amount of at-work time spent interacting with ethnic/multiethnic students would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a statistically significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on at-work time spent with ethnic/multiethnic students (involving four responses: 0–10%, 11–20%, 21–30%, and 31–40%). Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met.

The results of the combined MANOVA were significant by at-work time spent interacting with ethnic/multiethnic students ($F(9, 250.83) = 3.22, p = .001$; Wilk's Lambda = .77; partial eta squared = .085). When analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(3, 105) = 4.43, p = .006$; partial eta squared = .112); multicultural knowledge ($F(3, 105) = 5.75, p = .001$; partial eta squared = .141); and MCCTS-R combined ($F(3, 105) = 5.01, p = .003$; partial eta squared = .125) were significant; however, the univariate test for multicultural terminology was not ($F(3, 105) = 0.19, p = .906$; partial eta squared = .005).

According to post hoc analysis data (involving Tukey's test), school counselors who spent 31–40% of at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students had significantly higher multicultural awareness scores ($M = 3.22$) than those who spent 0–10% of at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students ($M = 2.60$). Furthermore, school counselors who spent 31–40% ($M = 3.18$) of at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students had significantly higher multicultural knowledge scores than those who spent 0–10% ($M = 2.57$), 11–20% ($M = 2.60$), or 21–30% with ethnic/multiethnic students ($M = 2.77$). Moreover, when compared to school counselors who spent 0–10% ($M = 2.57$) or 11–20% ($M = 2.60$) of at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students, those who spent 31–40% had significantly higher MCCTS-R combined scores ($M = 3.18$). Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected: school

counselors who spent 31–40% of at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than those who spent less than 31% of at-work time with such students ($p = .001$).

Hypothesis 8 Findings

Hypothesis 8: Number of ethnic/multiethnic friends would not have a statistically significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on the number of self-reported ethnic/multiethnic friends, involving four responses: 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, and 10 or more. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met.

The overall MANOVA was significant by number of ethnic/multiethnic friends ($F(9, 250.83) = 5.09, p < .001$; Wilk's Lambda = .67; partial eta squared = .127). When analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(3, 105) = 9.06, p < .001$; partial eta squared = .206); multicultural terminology ($F(3, 105) = 3.28, p = .024$; partial eta squared = .086); multicultural knowledge ($F(3, 105) = 15.48, p < .001$; partial eta squared = .307); and MCCTS-R combined ($F(3, 105) = 17.09, p < .001$; partial eta squared = .328) were significant.

Study participants with 10 or more ethnic/multiethnic friends had significantly higher multicultural awareness ($M = 3.06$); multicultural knowledge ($M = 2.96$); and MCCTS-R combined scores ($M = 3.01$) than participants with 1–3 (awareness/ $M = 2.58$; knowledge/ $M = 2.25$; MCCTS-R combined/ $M = 2.42$) or 4–6 such friends (awareness/ $M = 2.72$; knowledge/ $M = 2.46$; MCCTS-R combined/ $M = 2.59$). The univariate test for multicultural terminology was also significant ($F(3, 105) = 3.28, p = .024$; partial eta squared = .086); however, a pairwise comparison using Tukey's test indicated that there was no significant difference between dependent variable groups by multicultural terminology. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected; school counselors with 10 or more ethnic/multiethnic friends perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than those with 1–3 or 4–6 such friends ($p < .001$).

Hypothesis 9 Findings

Hypothesis 9: Number of multicultural training experiences would not have a statistically significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on multicultural training experiences, involving five responses: none; one; two; three; four or more. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met.

The overall MANOVA was statistically significant by number of multicultural training experiences ($F(12, 270.16) = 1.96, p = .028$; Wilk's Lambda = .80; partial eta squared = .071). When considered separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness was significant ($F(4, 104) = 2.50, p = .047$; partial eta squared = .088); however, Tukey's post hoc analysis revealed that no mean pairs were significantly different, based on a critical q value of 6.29. Furthermore, the univariate test was not significant for terminology ($F(4, 104) = 1.84, p = .127$; partial eta squared = .066), knowledge ($F(4, 104) = 2.06, p = .091$; partial eta

squared = .073), and MCCTS-R combined ($F(1, 107) = 1.98, p = .103$; partial eta squared = .071). Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected; there were significant differences in self-perceived multicultural competence depending on number of multicultural training experiences ($p = .028$).

Remaining Hypothesis

The null hypotheses for the remaining six hypotheses were retained (i.e., hypothesis 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10).

Hypothesis 1 Findings

Hypothesis 1: Graduating from a CACREP- accredited program would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, with two responses: yes and no. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, which indicates that the assumption of equality of error variance was met. The MANOVA was not statistically significant ($F(3, 105) = 0.34, p = .794$; Wilk's Lambda = .99; partial eta squared = .010).

Furthermore, when analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(1, 107) = 0.06, p = .802$; partial eta squared = .001); multicultural terminology ($F(1, 107) = 0.19, p = .661$; partial eta squared = .002); multicultural knowledge ($F(1, 107) = 0.59, p = .446$; partial eta squared = .005); and MCCTS-R combined ($F(1, 107) = 0.31, p = .580$; partial eta squared = .003) were not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .794$).

Hypothesis 3 Findings

Hypothesis 3: Gender would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on gender, with two responses: male and female. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, which indicates that the assumption of equality of error variance was met. The MANOVA was not statistically significant ($F(3, 105) = 1.03, p = .381$; Wilk's Lambda = .97; partial eta squared = .029).

Moreover, when analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(1, 107) = 0.67, p = .416$; partial eta squared = .006); multicultural terminology ($F(1, 107) = 1.14, p = .289$; partial eta squared = .011); multicultural knowledge ($F(1, 107) = 2.35, p = .128$; partial eta squared = .021); and MCCTS-R combined ($F(1, 107) = 2.26, p = .136$; partial eta squared = .021) were not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .381$).

Hypothesis 4 Findings

Hypothesis 4: Work setting would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on work setting, with four responses: elementary, middle, high, and psychoeducation school/program. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, which indicates that the assumption of equality of error variance was met. The results of the MANOVA were not statistically significant ($F(9, 250.83) = 0.39, p = .941$; Wilk's Lambda = .97; partial eta squared = .011). When analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(3, 105) = 0.18, p = .913$; partial eta squared = .005); multicultural terminology ($F(3, 105) = 0.12, p = .950$; partial eta squared = .003); multicultural knowledge ($F(3, 105) = 0.88, p = .455$; partial eta squared = .024); and MCCTS-R combined were not significant ($F(3, 105) = 0.65, p = .585$; partial eta squared = .018). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .941$).

Hypothesis 5 Findings

Hypothesis 5: Years of school counselor experience would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on years of experience, with five responses: 0–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–20, 21 or more. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, indicating that the assumption of equality of error variance was met. The MANOVA was not statistically significant ($F(12, 270.16) = 1.03, p = .421$; Wilk's Lambda = .89; partial eta squared = .039). Also, when analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(4, 104) = 1.09, p = .364$; partial eta squared = .040); multicultural terminology ($F(4, 104) = 0.82, p = .514$; partial eta squared = .031); multicultural knowledge ($F(4, 104) = 1.98, p = .103$; partial eta squared = .071); and MCCTS-R combined were not significant ($F(4, 104) = 1.81, p = .132$; partial eta squared = .065). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .421$).

Hypothesis 7 Findings

Hypothesis 7: U.S. region where formative years were spent would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on U.S. region where formative years were spent, with four responses: north, south, east, and west. Levene's test for dependent variables was not significant, which indicates that the assumption of equality of error variance was met. The MANOVA was not statistically significant ($F(9, 250.83) = 1.74, p = .080$; Wilk's Lambda = .86; partial eta squared = .048). Furthermore, when analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(3, 105) = 3.44, p = .020$; partial eta squared = .089); multicultural terminology ($F(3, 105) = 1.39, p = .251$; partial eta squared = .038); multicultural knowledge ($F(3, 105) = 1.76, p = .159$; partial eta squared = .048); and MCCTS-R combined were not significant ($F(3, 105) = 2.35, p = .076$; partial eta squared = .063). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .080$).

Hypothesis 10 Findings

Hypothesis 10: Level of education would not have a significant effect on school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence.

A between-groups MANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in multicultural terminology, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and MCCTS-R combined depending on level of education (i.e., type of degree), with three responses: master's, education specialist (Ed.S.), or doctorate (Ph.D. or Ed.D.). While Levene's test was met for multicultural awareness ($p = .608$), multicultural terminology ($p = .926$), and MCCTS-R combined ($p = .450$), the test for homogeneity of variance specific to multicultural knowledge was significant ($p = .023$), which indicates that the assumption of equal variance was not met; however, the MANOVA is robust against violations of assumptions, especially when the sample size is large ($n > 50$) (Stevens 2009).

The MANOVA was not statistically significant ($F(6, 208) = 0.77, p = .596$; Wilk's Lambda = 0.96, partial eta squared = .022). Furthermore, when analyzed separately, the univariate test for multicultural awareness ($F(2, 106) = 0.03, p = .971$; partial eta squared = .001); multicultural terminology ($F(2, 106) = 0.53, p = .588$; partial eta squared = .010); multicultural knowledge ($F(2, 106) = 0.78, p = .460$; partial eta squared = .015); and MCCTS-R combined were not significant ($F(2, 106) = 0.29, p = .753$; partial eta squared = .005). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected ($p = .596$).

Discussion

Juxtaposed against divergent and often polarizing societal norms, global homogenization, cultural heterogenization, and ethnopluralism (Wang 2005), research reviewed by Atkinson (2004) and Sue and Sue (2015) reaffirms that school counselors practicing with inadequate multicultural competency are, in essence, providing ineffectual services.

Furthermore, research appears to indicate that social and cultural group membership (i.e., racial identity) can influence how respondents react to survey items (Tourangeau et al. 2001), which is why we argue that school counselors who live and work in locations with sustained cultural diffusion and a vibrant, interactive multicultural presence might be more inclined to adopt broad-minded concepts regarding diversity (and presumably demonstrate higher levels of self-reported multicultural competence) (Atkinson 2004).

Relative to multicultural competencies identified by Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999), participants in this study self-reported as being most competent in the area of multicultural terminology ($M = 3.01/SD = 0.51$) and least competent regarding multicultural knowledge ($M = 2.57/SD = 0.51$). Moreover, an analysis of individual MCCTS-R survey items found that participants self-reported as being least competent for (1) discussing models of White racial identity development ($M = 1.99$); (2) discussing within-group differences among ethnic groups ($M = 2.22$); (3) discussing research regarding mental health issues among culturally/ethnically different populations ($M = 2.25$); and (4) articulating differences between verbal and nonverbal behavior among Blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and Whites ($M = 2.29$) (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999). In contrast, participants self-reported as most competent for (1) discussing family of origin perspectives regarding acceptable/nonacceptable codes-of-conduct ($M = 3.06$); (2) defining discrimination ($M = 3.06$); (3) defining prejudice ($M = 3.01$); and (4) defining stereotypes ($M = 2.99$) (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999).

In addition to repudiating habituated and noxious concepts that advance implicit bias, school counselors must regularly self-assess their cross-cultural knowledge and resolve identified deficiencies. When developing a remedial plan, counselor educators suggest a multi-pronged approach that involves experiential/immersive learning; reflective supervision; guided self-analysis (e.g., psychotherapy: humanistic, existential, narrative, etc.); and targeted mentoring (Sue and Sue 2015). Affirming the importance of ongoing professional development, in this study, school counselors with three multicultural training experiences self-reported as having higher levels of multicultural awareness ($M=3.00$) and knowledge ($M=2.75$) when compared to those with no such training (i.e., awareness: $M=2.69$; knowledge: $M=2.38$).

Since peer-reviewed literature posits racial identity as a filter through which perception can be influenced—especially when linked to perpetuating erroneous and bigoted notions of privilege and superiority based on ethnicity and race (Helms 1990), understanding racial identity formation is essential to initiating and sustaining cross-cultural alliances (Helms 1990). In this regard, research reviewed by Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) appears to suggest that regular contact with ethnic/multiethnic people can increase self-perceived multicultural awareness via a factor they refer to as “life experience” (p. 299). In support of this belief, we found that participants with 10 or more ethnic/multiethnic friends also had significantly higher MCCTS-R combined scores than participants with 1–3, 4–6, or 7–9 such friends. Although this finding lacks generalizability, does not provide evidence of neither presumptive nor actualized multicultural competence, and offers only limited empirical data to support the premise advanced by Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999), it would seem to indicate, however, that regular contact with ethnic/multiethnic people does possess the potential to increase self-reported multicultural familiarity and related knowledge through contextual learning (Atkinson 2004).

Juxtaposed against how having ethnic/multiethnic friends can as a corollary benefit increase multicultural knowledge, this study found that participants who spent more at-work time with ethnic/multiethnic students also had significantly higher MCCTS-R combined scores. Perhaps greater multicultural awareness is incidental to accumulated cross-cultural familiarity. Such a finding would appear to support the notion that proxy variables correlated with self-perceived multicultural awareness are favorably disposed to experiential influence (Sciarra 1999).

In light of previous research devoted to examining the relationship between ethnicity and multicultural competency, this study found that when compared to White school counselors, Black school counselors self-reported as having significantly higher levels of multicultural awareness, multicultural terminology, and multicultural knowledge. When weighed from the contextual perspective of social and political disenfranchisement, perhaps—based in part on heuristic and experiential endeavor—Black school counselors in this study self-perceived as being better prepared to meet the socioemotional needs of ethnic/multiethnic minority students. Thus, as a corollary effect of prejudicial community and familial standards combined with inimical societal assumptions, peer-reviewed literature affirms as reasonable to infer that someone who spent their formative psychosocial years in the Southern U.S. as a non-minority (i.e., someone who reports exclusively as White, non-Hispanic) might be predisposed to not having adequate cross-cultural knowledge, sensitivity, awareness, and related interpersonal skills (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Quinn 1954).

In that essential processes linked to socialization (e.g., schemata/script formation, relational self-construals, etc.) take place during the impressionable years of early childhood (Mandler 1984), this study endeavored to explore what if any influence geographical region of the U.S.

where participants spent their formative years might have on the acquirement of favorable or unfavorable attitudes regarding ethnicity and race. When contemplated as a plausible hypothesis, coming-of-age in a location where overt and subliminal messaging imbued with racist ideology is endemic could conceivably lead to the adoption of pernicious, insular beliefs (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Quinn 1954). With regard to the Southern U.S., racism remains conspicuously entrenched, as evidenced by ongoing exclusionary practices intended to perpetuate racial segregation (Chen 2016; Nissim 2003; Quinn 1954). For example, in an attempt to skirt federal desegregation law, beginning in the late-1960s, scores of public schools in Georgia stopped sponsoring “proms” (as an alternative, local communities held two unofficial proms: one for Whites—at a private, undisclosed location—and one for ethnic/multiethnic minority students) (Franco 2011; Corbett 2009; Nissim 2003). Since 2013, however, this once ubiquitous practice is now confined to a few rural locations (Chen 2016).

Limitations and Future Research

A few methodological limitations in the study should be noted. First, this study was limited by the convenience selection of participants; given that multiculturalism is a complex, multidimensional construct amenable to measurement, using a randomized selection procedure, and then measuring independent/dependent variable interaction, may have strengthened generalizability. Second, this study relied on self-report data, so bias and inaccuracy relative to actualized, presumptive, or self-proclaimed competence may be present. Also, study participants could have differed in a number of unknown ways due to extraneous, confounder stimuli (e.g., apathy, religion, etc.), and any effect manipulation attributable to this type of bias was not controlled for or counterbalanced, thereby restricting data analysis, interpretation, and extrapolation (King and Bruner 2000; Stevens 2009).

In addition to confounding effects associated with ontology (i.e., reconciling assumptions about how culture-specific knowledge is obtained) and epistemology (information cogency; i.e., untangling opinion from fact), human subjects research is fraught with inevitable limitations, and this study was not immune to intervening variable contamination linked to cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, region-specific sociocultural artifacts, and ethnic absolutism (BonJour 2010; Gilroy 1990).

Equally important to understanding generativity is the role culture plays in determining individual beliefs (Case et al. 1989). Thus, when effectuated by an aberrant interpretation of sociocultural generativity, which is then consciously or unconsciously internalized by way of proximity and sustained exposure (e.g., persistent agentic and communal persuasion to accept perspectives antithetical to societal standards) (Case et al. 1989), we argue that spending formative years in the Southern U.S. could enable intergenerational transmission of culture-specific artifacts and precepts endemic to that geographical region (e.g., explicit/implicit racial bias) (Darder and Torres 2004; Franklin and Higginbotham 2011).

Historically identified as a nativist, insular bastion of racial intolerance, we argue that the precedent-setting groundwork for the enduring, modern-day manifestation of racist ideology conspicuous to the Southern U.S. derives its basis or origin from lingering vestiges ascribed to slavery—a legally sanctioned institution peculiar to the Southern U.S. from 1619 to 1867. (Franklin and Higginbotham 2011). As a once fervent defender of the transatlantic slave trade, the Southern U.S. remains collectively and defiantly consigned to embrace contemporaneous traditions, beliefs, and practices unhelpful to facilitating positive race relations (Chen 2016; Franklin and Higginbotham 2011). Thus, when deliberated from a perspective that considers

historical and contemporary evidence relative to U.S. race relations by region, we contend that formative years in the South could conceivably lead to sustained exposure to overt and subliminal messaging imbued with pernicious and bigoted attitudes, ideas, and predispositions regarding non-White ethnic minority groups (Bonilla-Silva 2013).

There are several recommendations for future research. First, instead of utilizing a single cohort school district, one recommendation would include a target population comprised of all current public, charter, and private school counselors practicing, for example, in Georgia. Second, since this study relied on self-report data, and given the internecine social and political climate currently enveloping issues related to race (i.e., physical characteristics) and ethnicity (i.e., nationality, culture, ancestry, and language) (Bonilla-Silva 2013), participants may have felt compelled to conceal their true beliefs (Tourangeau et al. 2001). Therefore, another recommendation would be to incorporate a qualitative component (i.e., open-ended, exploratory questions) to address social desirability and bias. Also, to achieve a more accurate measurement of applied competence within a multicultural context, future research could utilize a qualitative-quantitative design that compares self-report MCCTS-R scores with independent observer ratings of demonstrated multicultural competencies in response to case vignettes or video recorded student-school counselor situations (e.g., individual or group counseling). In that self-report instruments can enable dissimulation, use of a redundant, cross-verification design (i.e., compare and contrast structured and unstructured responses) might improve data reliability by ferreting out contradictions (Tourangeau et al. 2001). Finally, future studies should explore causality; i.e., the effect of racial identity development on self-reported multicultural competence (Helms 1990).

Conclusions

School counselors in the U.S. are finding it increasingly necessary to deliver services that are unique to students' cultural orientation, ethnic heritage, and racial identity. As a corollary of evolving socioracial factors among American children, the multiethnic population is the fastest growing group—a shift that is expected to continue (Colby and Ortman 2015; Maxwell 2014; Ortman 2013). In that school counselors—like other practitioner groups—are susceptible to implicit bias originating from irrational beliefs inspired by narrowly construed Western-European precepts (Wang 2005), the assumption is clear: apart from contemplating self as a racial being, school counselors must also acknowledge the contextual importance of various transactional dynamics when interacting with multiethnic students.

Prompted by factors related to escalating globalization, which is partly responsible for fluctuations in the racial and cultural makeup of the U.S. (Waters 2001), the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA), steadfastly concedes that school counselors must possess proficiency in the area of multicultural knowledge, terminology, and awareness—a developmental process that requires consistent training and frequent self-assessment (Sue and Sue 2015).

In the best practices domain of school counseling, the literature identifies three essential dimensions regarded as indispensable to actualizing multicultural competency (Sue and Sue 2015). First, competent school counselors accept that they are the byproduct of intergenerational, environmental, and sociocultural conditioning; they are aware of their assumptions (i.e., beliefs regarded as true due to insufficient information) and presumptions (i.e., beliefs regarded as true due to misinformation) (Lum 1999). Second, competent school counselors are

deliberate in their effort to appreciate the worldview of culturally different students (Sciarra 1999). In this regard, self-awareness achieved through introspection can provide the groundwork to mediate the gap between academic preparation, presumption, and realized competencies (Sciarra 1999). Third, competent school counselors recognize that traditional counseling methods may not be effective when working with students from different cultures (Lum 1999). Since multicultural competence represents a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning, competent school counselors are in a perpetual state of exploration, actively seeking to identify useful intervention strategies for working with multicultural students (Sue and Sue 2015).

Based on a confluence of known and unknown factors (e.g., ignorance and inexperience), participants in this study differed widely in self-reported multicultural competence. According to the literature, differences in self-perceived competence correlate closely with variances in performance ability influenced by factors linked to vernacular region (i.e., people interconnected by cultural indoctrination, beliefs, heritage, and common in-group identity specific to a geographical location, e.g., the Southern U.S.) (Helms 1990).

According to the literature, incompetent individuals lack what cognitive psychologists variously describe as metacognition, metacomprehension, metamemory, or self-monitoring skills; i.e., the ability to identify and evaluate real or presumptive competence in self and others (Brown 1986; Klin et al. 1997). Because of this, we argue that multiculturally incompetent school counselors are cognitively unaware of their deficiencies, which can contribute to either overestimating or misrepresenting purported or presumptive abilities relative to specific AMCD standards and domain criteria (i.e., multicultural terminology, knowledge, and awareness) (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999), especially since incompetent individuals lack the metacognitive skills to realize, evaluate, and self-correct performance deficits (Brown 1986; Klin et al. 1997).

Since metacognition is essential for the requisite higher-order critical thinking needed to realize multicultural incompetence through self-appraisal and social comparison - i.e., the ability to evaluate one's performance by comparing self with others (Brown 1986; Festinger 1954) - the literature suggests that one way to help incompetent school counselors realize their multicultural incompetence is to make them competent. To this end, the literature contends that educative experiences augmented with regular assessment involving validated instruments similar to the MCCTS-R (Holcomb-McCoy and Myers 1999) can improve presumptive or actualized competence and related cross-cultural knowledge and awareness by improving the metacognitive skills needed to self-evaluate and remediate performance deficits linked to multicultural incompetence (Festinger 1954; Sue and Sue 2015).

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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