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Minority Counselor Multicultural Competence in the Current Sociopolitical Climate

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MINORITY COUNSELOR MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE CURRENT

SOCIOPOLITICAL CLIMATE

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MINORITY COUNSELOR MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE CURRENT

SOCIOPOLITICAL CLIMATE

Kathleen Brown
Old Dominion University, 2020
Director: Dr. Jeffry Moe

A key component of professional orientation in the field of mental health is the ability to provide counseling that is culturally competent. Counselor preparatory education, ethical codes, professional organizations and regulating bodies recognize cultural competence as a cornerstone of clinical practice. It is especially important during a time in which cultural and racial minorities combat a tumultuous sociopolitical climate. American society has seen an exponential rise in anxiety, depression, and helplessness secondary to the 2016 Presidential Election. For minority counselors, providing multiculturally competent counseling in the face of extreme oppression, and during a period of apparent resurgence in overt systemic injustices, may prove daunting. This dissertation examined how the current sociopolitical climate has affected minority counselors' ability to deliver culturally competent counseling via a phenomenological examination of their lived experiences. Descriptive narratives of eight minority clinical mental health counselors from geographically and culturally diverse areas were captured and thematized. Findings of this dissertation study indicated five (4) key themes: impact and importance of minority membership on identity, increase in awareness, atmosphere created by the current administration, and educational and training needs. Clinical implications, educational considerations, and future directions for research are discussed.

This dissertation is dedicated to my brother, Ryan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe immense thanks to the Department of Counseling & Human Services at Old Dominion University and to my dissertation committee members for their guidance and support: Dr. Jeff Moe, Dr. Garrett McAuliffe, and Dr. Judith Dunkerly-Bean. To my committee chair, Dr. Moe, I am forever indebted to you for your constant support, words of encouragement, and patience as I maneuvered through this dissertation process. To my doctoral cohort, there are not enough words to express my appreciation for you all. Over the past three years you have become a constant in my life and I could not imagine traveling this journey without you. In you, I know I have made a bond of friendship for life.

To my study participants, thank you. This study quite literally would not be possible without the time, courage, and passion you shared with me. It is my hope that your stories and experiences will contribute to the growth and advancement of multicultural awareness in the counseling field.
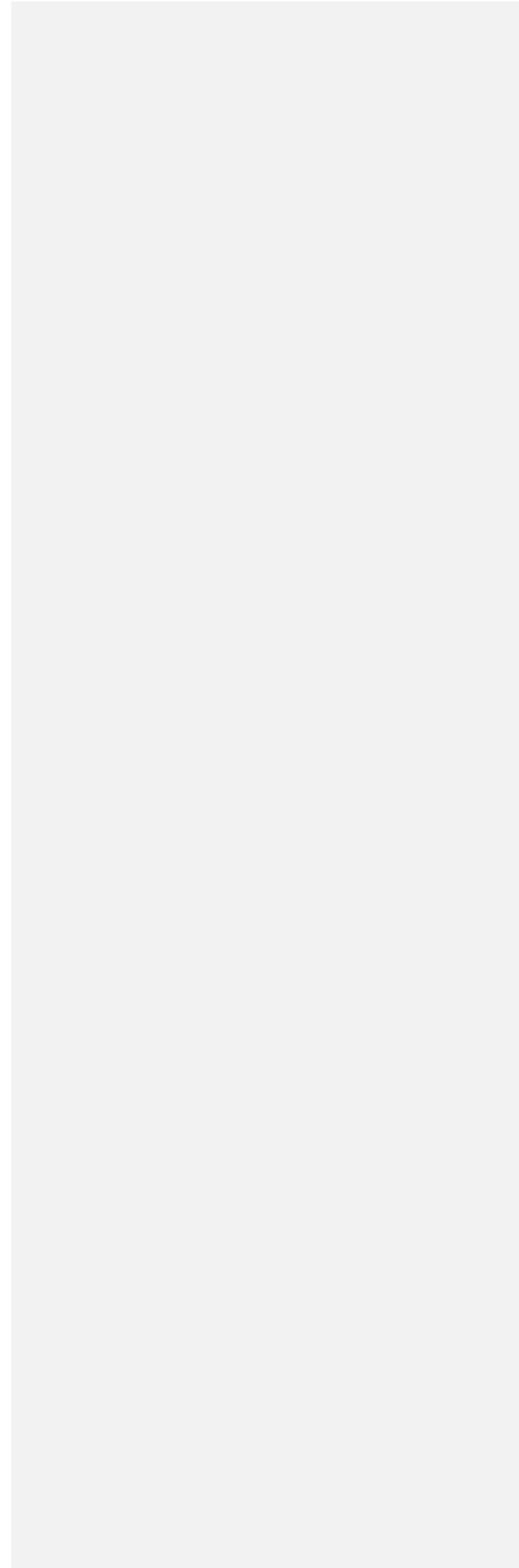
Last, but not least, my deepest gratitude for my friends and family. To my parents, thank you for always supporting my dream and encouraging me to persevere despite all odds. To my children, your company on this journey and your faith in me has meant more to me than you will ever know.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Society places a multitude of expectations upon clinical mental health counselors in regard to their education and the care that they provide to clients. It is assumed that a counselor will venture into the practicing world with a professional orientation comprised of competence and knowledge in many areas of treatment (Neukrug, 2017). One of the most integral components of this aptitude is the ability to provide counseling that exudes multicultural competence. In addition to societal expectations for their role, there are standards for clinical mental health counselors enforced by guiding bodies such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), The Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). These guiding bodies govern the competencies by which all counselors in the United States are expected to practice.

Background

Multicultural counseling competencies were first created in 1992 with the objective of assisting in the development of multiculturally capable counselors who could then provide effective and ethical counseling services to clients of culturally diverse backgrounds (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Mio, Barker-Hackett and Tumambing's (2012) definition of multicultural competence outlines what these skills should encompass, including (a) developing an awareness of one's own cultural values and biases, (b) learning to value others' worldviews, and (c) developing a set of culturally appropriate interpersonal skills (pp. 3). To expound, it is important to understand how one interprets their own culture in order to develop a greater

awareness of its impact on our interpretation of other's culture (Friedman, 2017). This is especially important during a time in which cultural and racial minorities combat a tumultuous sociopolitical climate. Further, it is important to strive to understand, not fear, cultural and worldview differences in order to develop a new perspective that moves beyond tolerance (Russell-Chapin, 2017). Tolerance itself typically lends to more negative definitions that imply simply putting up with someone or something. In order to exude cultural competence, one must learn to appreciate and be inclusive of all cultures (de Guzman, Durden, Taylor, Guzman, & Potthoff, 2016). Lastly, utilizing active listening when communicating with those that identify differently than oneself, offering empathy, and engagement are cornerstones of culturally appropriate interpersonal skills (de Guzman et al, 2016). The aforementioned skillset is of utmost importance for a clinical mental health counselor. However, providing multicultural competent counseling in the face of extreme oppression, and during a period of apparent resurgence in overt systemic injustices, may prove daunting to counselors, particularly those with membership in marginalized populations.

Purpose of the Study

There exists in society systemic forms of injustice that continue to permeate the daily lives of marginalized individuals. For the purposes of this study, systemic injustice is defined as oppression or aggression that is expressed through sociopolitical means via policies, practices, and economic and political structures which place minority racial and ethnic groups at a disadvantage in relation to the racial or ethnic majority (Clair & Denis, 2015). Social and economic circumstances may be linked, often negatively, to an individual's mental health continues to increase in acceptance (Balfour et al., 2014). For marginalized individuals, these social factors are further wrought by policies and politics that may prove biased or unfair

(Balfour et al., 2014). The weight that external factors contribute to minority mental health may not be readily understood by counselors. Because of this, the researcher aspired to aid counselors' understanding of the impact of systemic injustice not only upon client needs and concerns, but upon the minority counselor as well. Furthermore, the researcher sought to examine counselor self-efficacy in understanding and implementing multicultural competent counseling amidst a tumultuous sociopolitical climate. The researcher examined this possible need by utilizing an ecological systems theory and Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies Framework.

Qualitative Paradigm Phenomenological Framework

The researcher utilized a qualitative paradigm when conducting this study. More specifically, the researcher adopted a phenomenological approach. In order to richly illustrate the experiences of clinical mental health counselors, particularly those that identify with membership in a marginalized population, a qualitative paradigm with a phenomenological methodology is most fitting.   Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative research does not exemplify significance in numbers but "rather in themes that emerge from narratives indicative of common human experiences" (Coyle & Tickoo, 2007, pp. 205).

Qualitative Paradigm

The researcher utilized a qualitative method of research. Qualitative methodology is gaining increased momentum and visibility amongst researchers especially when attempting to capture real-life experiences (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Qualitative methods allow the research to survey situations utilizing open-ended questions and permit exploration via complex questions

(Coyle & Tickoo, 2007). It is for this reason that the researcher selected this methodology to highlight the lived experiences of counselors in the current sociopolitical climate.

Phenomenology Framework

Phenomenology is the prospective most often associated with qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Through the phenomenological approach, researchers seek to appreciate significance in lived circumstance and glean new insights. The benefit of phenomenological methodology in exploring counselor cultural competence is that it considers all facets of the counselors' experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study is the Ecological Systems Theory. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) formulated the Ecological Systems Theory to explain how the inherent qualities of an individual and their environment interact to influence growth and development. This theory highlights the significant effect of multisystemic experiences upon the client. Similarly, just as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model represent impactful environmental levels on individuals, the principles upon which the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) aided the researcher in recognition of factors that influence multiculturalism and social justice for both counselor and client (Ratts et al., 2016).

Ecological Systems Theory

As can be seen in Figure 1, the ecological systems model consists of four environmental levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory stipulates that every level, whether it be the immediate setting of the microsystem or the community setting of the exosystem, represents an important component of

an individual's environment. This theory is important in conceptualizing the impact that

reciprocal interactions have on human development and their respective meaning making and

worldview. Undoubtedly, the environment in which people live, work, and thrive also have

significant influence upon mental health. This environment includes both tangible and intangible

aspects, like safety and security (Balfour et al., 2014). Balfour et al (2014) further suggests that

the current political, social, economic, and environmental setting, as well as the historical context

of a country, shape the conditions in which people live. This knowledge is important when

considering the cultural backgrounds of both marginalized clients and counselors alike during

this time in the nation's history.
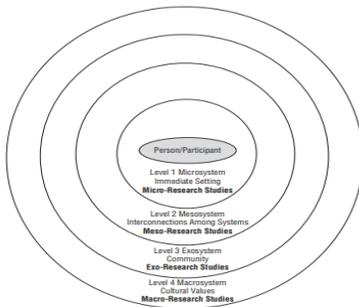
FIGURE 1: A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF BRONFENBRENNER'S (1979)
ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS MODEL AND LEVELS OF RESEARCH

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies

Within Figure 2 the intersection of identities and the multitude of ways that power,

privilege, and oppression manifest in the counseling relationship are illustrated. The core tenet of

this model is that multicultural and social justice competence begins with counselor self-

awareness. Therefore, from this framework one can see the overlap in counselor worldview and

its influence on their ability to provide multicultural competent counseling. A counselor's awareness of their own worldview, as well as the worldview of other cultures, enables effective cross-cultural relationships and communication (Baruth & Manning, 2016). The researcher utilized both aforementioned models to guide the synthesis of information and data gathered from clinical mental health counselors within the current study.
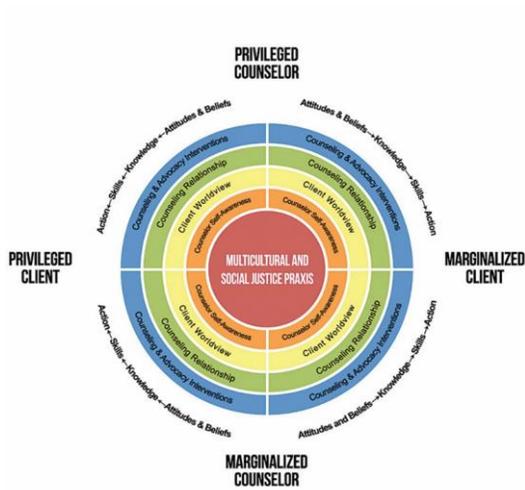
Figure 2: MSJCC Framework

Operational Definitions

This study utilizes terms specific to cultural competence and considerations given the current societal climate in the United States, these terms include the following:

1. **Sociopolitical:** of, relating to, or involving a combination of social and political factors (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

2. **Cultural competence:** understanding the cultural identity of a client, how this identity may impact the counseling relationship, and the unique issues and experiences a client may face due to their cultural identity (Neukrug, 2017).

3. **Systemic injustice:** oppression or aggression that is expressed through sociopolitical means via policies, practices, and economic and political structures which place minority racial and ethnic groups at a disadvantage in relation to the racial or ethnic majority (Clair & Denis, 2015).

4. **Political anxiety:** the increase in feelings of anxiety felt by individuals, regardless of political affiliation, specifically following the 2016 Presidential election.

5. **Counseling self-efficacy:** beliefs about one's ability to effectively counsel a client (Larson & Daniels, 1998).

6. **Marginalized:** relegated to a marginal position within a society or group (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the current study. It began with a brief background and overview of the problem followed by the purpose of this current study. The research paradigm, design, and theoretical framework were explored. The chapter ended with a description of terminology pertinent to the study. The following chapter will provide a more in-depth literature review followed by the methodology.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to support and illustrate the importance of multicultural competent counseling, it is critical to first review standards and literature that provide scaffolding for this concept. Firstly, the researcher will discuss systemic injustice via the lens of racial aggression, immigration, and LGBTQ issues. The research will then further address systemic injustice in relation to counseling. Next political anxiety and its potential impact upon counselor cultural competence, identity and self-efficacy will be relayed. Lastly, the researcher will outline some of the current standards and guidelines that drive the expectations for multicultural competence in counseling. The current study will then be situated within the context of the literature presented.

Systemic Injustices

As previously stated, systemic injustice is defined as oppression or aggression that is expressed through sociopolitical means via policies, practices, and economic and political structures which place minority racial and ethnic groups at a disadvantage in relation to the racial or ethnic majority (Clair & Denis, 2015). Studies have found that social inequality today is at a particularly high level in comparison to previous years (Ingraham, 2018). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations' (FBI) 2017 Uniform Crime Reporting Program, hate crimes in the United States increased by 17% from the previous year's statistics (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2018). Of these hate crimes, those motivated by ethnicity and/or sexual orientation comprised 75.4% (FBI, 2018). De Guzman et al (2016) further illuminates the reality of potential inequalities that current institutional policies manifest for marginalized populations. It can be inferred, then, that the current societal climate is one that is emboldening the "-isms"

and potentially creating an environment wrought with metaphorical and literal hurdles for minority persons.

In a 2019 study on stress in America conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), one quarter of adults surveyed identified discrimination as a major form of stress in their daily lives (American Psychological Association, 2019). More specifically, an overwhelming majority (greater than 60%) of those that identified as individuals of color or as a member of the LGBTQ community reported discrimination as a hindrance to their ability to live a "full and productive life" (APA, 2019, pp. 4). Individuals that are contending with marginalization, inequality and discrimination are made more susceptible to mental health deterioration as a result (Balfour et al., 2014). Brandon Hamber (2009) describes a concept called political traumatization in which exists a broad misrepresentation marked by "rhetoric of dehumanization, deceptive public discourse and lies, and exclusionary language aimed at creating a lack of social belonging" that could potentially manifest itself in other, threatening ways (Hamber, 2009, pp. 25). Moreover, Lorenc, Clayton, Neary, Whitehead, Petticrew, Thomson and Cummins (2012) suggest that this type of detrimental traumatization, especially if led to exposure to violence or the threat of violence, is associated with poorer psychological health.

Racism

A widely accepted and utilized definition by Wilson (1999, pp.14) defines racism as an "ideology of racial domination" based upon the belief in a race's cultural inferiority subsequently resulting in poor treatment of that group. In 1998, President Clinton's Race Advisory Board found that (a) racism is one of the most divisive forces in our society, (b) racial legacies of the past continue to haunt current policies and practices that create unfair disparities between

minority and majority groups, (c) racial inequities are so deeply ingrained in American society that they are nearly invisible, and (d) most White Americans are unaware of the advantages they enjoy in this society and of how their attitudes and actions unintentionally discriminate against persons of color (Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race, 1998). Still, over 20 years later, racism persists and can appear in blatant overt actions, or be delivered via everyday microaggressions. These everyday actions, words, and/or environmental infrastructures amongst various groups in which a power differential exists are often minute, common, and sometimes ambiguous (Williams, 2019).

Microaggressions can look like avoiding eye contact with an individual of color in a coffee shop, telling a racially charged joke in the workplace, or assuming someone's intelligence based upon their vernacular. Due to this often subtle nature, microaggressions may go unchecked in daily interactions. However, this is detrimental to marginalized individuals as it perpetuates the inequities that exist in overt terms (Wing Sue et al., 2007). Furthermore, if microaggressions are perpetuated by care providers such as doctors, nurses, and counselors, for example, it could prove a barrier to care for members of marginalized communities (Torino, 2017). It is possible for individuals within the racial minority to sustain a lasting ill-effect to their mental health from a traumatic racial victimization. This ill-effect may include, but not be limited to, symptoms of depression and anxiety and low regard for self (Okazaki, 2009). This lived experience extends to the immigrant population as well.

Immigrants

The current administration has issued executive orders that have shifted the manner in which the U.S. implements immigration policy. The number of unauthorized immigrants now labeled for deportation has increased exponentially (Gostin & O'Cathaoir, 2017). Due to the

heightened prevalence of policing immigrants, many in the LatinX and Muslim communities are adapting to a level of distrust in navigating institutional relationships in everyday life (Crus et al., 2018). It could be inferred that this fear of deportation may naturally lead to a level of anxiety and potential hypervigilance amongst those in immigrant communities. For example, Artiga and Ubri (2017) report undocumented parents expressing fear of being deported and thus separated from their legal-status children. If these parents are, in fact, detained and deported it could lead to tragic, and potentially irreversible, consequences for the mental health of their children (Gostin & O'Cathaoir, 2017). The spillover consequences of the current societal climate impact another minority population; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community.

LGBT Community

The experiences of stigma-related bias, discrimination and oppression are commonplace in the lives of LGBT individuals (Kelleher, 2009). It is something that has become entrenched in the fabric of many laws in the United States. Bernstein (2018) argues that law can be attributed with the normalization of gender views, sexuality and relationships. Many states have laws protecting business owners' right to refuse service to LGBT individuals on the basis of religious beliefs (Burke & Kazyak, 2019). Furthermore, until 2015 same-sex marriage was considered illegal in the United States. These considerations impact all who identify as LGBT.

The youth who identify within the LGBT community is especially vulnerable, with many experiencing harassment and victimization in school, home, work and community settings (Rivers, 2001). This victimization may be promoted by a view of heteronormativity in which there exists a common assumption that individuals identify as heterosexual (Bernstein, 2018). Within the LGBT community exists an increased vulnerability to a wide range of physical

health, mental health, and social difficulties (Austin et al., 2009). The adverse social conditions that LGBT persons frequently experience, and the heightened psychological distress endured by these individuals, leaves them more likely to attempt and complete suicide than those that do not identify as a part of the LGBT community (Kelleher, 2009). These negative outcomes may increase due to the discrimination, marginalization, and isolation that are often associated with being an LGBT individual (Remadefi, 2008).

Multicultural Competence in Counseling

In an ever-changing society, multicultural competence among counselors must progress to continue to meet the needs of culturally diverse clients and the social justice concerns that can profoundly impact mental health (Ratts et al, 2016). Lee (2008) states that in order for a counselor to proclaim to possess multicultural competence, they must have a firm understanding of history, current cultural climate, and the social movements that shape it. Furthermore, when considering history, a multicultural competent counselor does not view their own cultural history, values, language, or traditions as superior to that of others. Rather, a culturally competent counselor maintains an open mind and a desire to understand the cultural norms and history of their clients without attempting to impose their own values upon them (Sue & Sue, 2007; Sommers-Flanagan, 2015). The imposition of a counselor's culture upon a client ultimately does not serve the client. The very definition of multicultural competence incorporates approaching the counseling process from the context of the client's culture in order to provide effective counseling and intervention practices (Sue, Arrendondo & McDavis, 1992; Sue & Sue, 2007).

Understanding the impact of oppression and social injustices is a critical building block of multicultural competent counseling. Oppression often manifests in the form of many forms of

systemic oppression including, but not limited to; racism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism (Ratts et al., 2016). Understanding a client's worldview also means understanding the current cultural climate in which we live. For example, Ahmed, Wilson, Henriksen, and Windwalker-Jones (2011) impart that counselors must seek to garner knowledge about the multitude of political perspectives and influences that exist in order to operate from a point of increased empathy and understanding with their clients. In attending to a client's experience of oppression, multicultural competent counseling serves as a means by which the counselor may empower their client. With this empowerment, clients can then feel supported in their identification and motivation through the deleterious impact of aforementioned "-isms" and systemic injustices of daily life (Lee, 2008).

Political Anxiety

The increase in outrage-based media outlets on both ends of the political spectrum assists in the spread of political rhetoric as well as the exposure of systemic injustices in recent years (Sobieraj, Berry, & Connors, 2013). Misperception, misunderstanding, and generalizations can lead to, or perpetuate, biases which subsequently may contribute to a feeling of anxiety surrounding current politics (Weeks, 2015). For the purposes of this study, political anxiety is defined as the increase in feelings of anxiety felt by individuals, regardless of political affiliation, specifically following the 2016 Presidential election. After the 2016 Presidential election, 26 % of Republicans surveyed by the American Psychological Association identified the current political climate as a source of stress, while 72 % of Democrats identified this as a stressor (APA, 2017). Similarly, in the APA's most recent survey on stress in America, a majority of Democrats (71%) identified the upcoming Presidential Election as a major source of stress, while only 48% of Republicans felt the same. Past studies have suggested that although societal events

are unlikely to spur new mental disorders, their likelihood to trigger or worsen conditions in those with existing diagnoses is valid (Smith, 2017). Although it is not identified as an official mental health diagnosis, political anxiety should be legitimately considered by clinical mental health counselors both in regard to their own feelings as well as the presenting concerns of their clients.

After the last Presidential Election, those residing within the United States awoke to a vastly different political climate. For some this change may have been met with elation, but for members of marginalized populations the shift was not as positively perceived (Keller, 2019). For example, members of the LGBTQ community reported more symptoms of depression and anxiety after the most recent election and they account significantly higher levels of stress related to their sexual orientation, and daily discrimination and microaggressions (Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2018). DePaulo (2018) shares that both clients and counselors have reported an increase in symptomatology related to anxiety, depression, sleep issues, and intrusive thoughts since the 2016 Presidential Election. Some anxiety could also be induced by the consideration that counselors' and clients' political perceptions do not align. A 2018 study showed that an increased amount of counselors have disclosed their political affiliation to their clients further suggesting that the current political climate is present in the therapeutic space therefore may affect the therapeutic process and relationship (Solomonov & Barber, 2018).

Standards and Guidelines for Multicultural Competent Counseling

Since their emergence and recognition, multicultural perspectives have become embedded into many aspects of the counseling profession (Ratts et al., 2016). Multicultural competence and appreciation for diversity serve as tenants for many of the standards and guidelines of clinical mental health education, practice, and professional organizations. For

example, the creation of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) in 1972 led to the operationalization of Multicultural Counseling Competencies which act as a standard for the counseling profession (AMCD, 2016).

According to the organization website, the mission of the AMCD is to: (a) recognize the human diversity and multicultural nature of our society, (b) to enhance the development, human rights and the psychological health of ethnic/racial populations and all people as critical to the social, educational, political, professional and personal reform in the United States and globally, (c) to identify and work to eliminate conditions which create barriers to the individual development of marginalized populations, (d) to develop, implement and/or foster interest in charitable, scientific and educational programs designed to further the interests of marginalized populations, (e) to secure equality and access of treatment, advancement, qualifications and status individuals and families in counseling, wellness and mental health work, (f) to publish a journal and other scientific educational and professional materials with the purpose of raising the standards of all who work in providing counseling, wellness and mental health (AMCD, 2016, pp.1). The AMCD seeks to encourage all counselors to promote awareness and acceptance of all cultures in order to bridge the gap and breakdown barriers that exist between marginalized populations and the dominant population.

To further emphasize the importance of multicultural competence within the counseling profession, the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) highlights the many ways that cultural awareness and diversity must be considered when providing counseling. The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) stress multicultural considerations regarding discrimination, interventions, supervision, education, training, and counseling on the internet. In this code of ethics it is directed that counselors may not discriminate against future or current clients due to

membership in any cultural group. Counselors must infuse multicultural competency into their training, education, and supervision practices. Counselors must also give considerations to the impact of assessment techniques across varied cultural populations. Lastly, accessibility, whether online or in-office, to persons with disabilities must be maintained (ACA, 2014).

Further, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2016) specifically shapes expected standards for educating future counselors. CACREP clearly outlines the core areas of counseling curriculum that are required of all entry-level, counselor education graduates. One of these core areas is "Social and Cultural Diversity" (CACREP, 2016). Within this core area it is expected that education regarding the following topics shall be addressed: (a) multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally, (b) theories and models of multicultural counseling, cultural identity development, and social justice and advocacy, (c) multicultural counseling competencies, (d) the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, (e) the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients, (f) help-seeking behaviors of diverse clients, (g) the impact of spiritual beliefs on clients' and counselors' worldviews, and (h) strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (CACREP, 2016). These, and the standards and guidelines previously described regarding multicultural competent counseling, are expected of, and accessible to, any and all clinical mental health counselors. Combined, they should provide a strong foundation for a counselor to synthesize a strong multicultural competent identity from which to provide culturally alert counseling and culturally sensitive interventions.

Current Study

A 2015 survey of the diversity of the psychology workforce revealed that only 14% of the workforce is represented by those identifying as a racial minority (APA, 2018). This speaks to the staunch underrepresentation of minorities in the field and the lack of heterogeneity in service delivery. This also suggests that the overwhelming voice illuminated in current research is that of the racial majority. There exists a gap in the research of lived experiences of minority counselors in the context of the current sociopolitical climate. DePaulo (2018) addresses client and counselor experiences post 2016 election, but moreso conveys the discomfort felt by white counselors rather than by all counselors. The current research also focuses mainly on the feelings evoked and experiences reported by current or future clients, not counselors (Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2019; Keller, 2019; Torino, 2017; Keller 2019). There also appears to be a lack of qualitative inquiry in relation to this topic.

Exploring the ability for a counselor to bracket their own biases, add political affiliation as a cultural component for consideration, and continue to provide counseling that aligns with multicultural counseling competencies is a phenomenon that is lacking in the current research. This research is needed and relevant as a new election year is approaching and bringing with it the potential for even greater increased anxiety. The current study aimed to examine counselor self-efficacy of their perceived multicultural competence when working with individuals from diverse and marginalized groups in the face of a potentially intense sociopolitical climate. Thos dissertation study was designed to answer the following research question:

Research Question: How has the current sociopolitical climate affected minority counselors' ability to deliver culturally competent counseling?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodology regarding how the researcher explored the perceptions of clinical mental health counselors regarding their own cultural competence in counseling. Specifically, the following section discusses the methodology for this dissertation study to include research design, participants, sampling method, procedures, data analysis techniques. The qualitative approach that the researcher embraced is phenomenological in nature and its rationale will be offered in this chapter.

Purpose

In the years following one of the most contentious presidential elections in recent U.S. history, many counselors have observed an increase in clients' reported feelings of anger, anxiety, and depression (Spangler, Thompson, Vivino & Wolf, 2017). Simultaneously, counselors are now faced with tempering their own reactions to the current sociopolitical climate as well as their clients' reactions to it. Exploring the ability for a counselor to bracket their own biases, add political affiliation as a cultural component for consideration, and continue to provide counseling that aligns with multicultural counseling competencies is a phenomenon that is lacking in the current research. The current study examined counselor self-efficacy of their perceived multicultural competence when working with individuals from diverse and marginalized groups in the face of a potentially intense sociopolitical climate. The researcher gathered qualitative data from clinical mental health counselors to assess their self-efficacy in both understanding and implementation of appropriate multicultural and social justice counseling

interventions in lieu of the rise in systemic injustices. This dissertation study was designed to answer the following research question:

Research Question: How has the current sociopolitical climate affected minority counselors' ability to deliver culturally competent counseling?

Rationale

The researcher utilized qualitative methods of research. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2015) state that when the researcher seeks to answer questions about experience, particularly from the perspective of the participant, qualitative methods are used. Qualitative methodology is gaining increased momentum and visibility amongst researchers in counseling and counselor education, especially when attempting to capture real-life experiences (Hammarberg et al., 2016). It is for this reason that the researcher selected this methodology in order to highlight the lived experiences of counselors in the current sociopolitical climate. Specifically, the research utilized a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology is the theoretical prospective most often associated with qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Through the phenomenological approach, researchers seek to appreciate significance in lived circumstance and glean new insights. The benefit of phenomenological methodology in exploring counselor cultural competence is that it considers all facets of the counselors' experiences. This consideration adds to the identification of subtle nuances and themes of lived experiences. Due to this nature of meaning-making, the context is important to the interpretation of data. In respect to this study, the means of qualitative data collection will consist of structured interviews and a focus group with current clinical mental health professionals.

> **Commented [JM1]:** In counseling and counselor education, it is more established in other fields

Participants and Sampling

Participant Recruitment

This dissertation study recruited participants utilizing purposeful, snowball, and convenience sampling methods. After approval was granted from Old Dominion University's Institutional Review Board, the researcher sent initial recruitment emails and initiated contact with the appropriate participants. Participants for this study were recruited from the researcher's existing connection to Old Dominion University counseling graduate program graduates and Cesnet. An initial request for participants was sent via email to both listservs, and follow-up requests were made as necessary. The researcher also utilized social media and other professional organizations to recruit participants. For example, the researcher reached out to minority counselors' Facebook forums seeking participants. By utilizing these multiple methods of recruitment, the researcher aimed to compile a base of participants that are both diverse and representative (Creswell, 2014).

Participant Qualification

The target sample size for this study was $N = 8$. Participants for this study were (1) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) or Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), (2) currently practicing and have been practicing since at least 2015, (3) graduated from a CACREP-accredited master's level counseling program, (4) identified as a member of a cultural minority or marginalized population (i.e. immigrant, LGBTQ, differently-abled), and (5) worked in a setting that is highly culturally diverse.

Researcher Positionality Statement

Commented [JM2]: This might be a good place for this.

I am a white, cisgender, non-disabled female with membership in the LGBT community. Personally, I identify with political views that are more democratic and leftist oriented. Although all attempts to bracket any political biases were made and trustworthiness strategies were utilized, political affiliation is worth noting. I am the child of an immigrant from Northern Ireland and, although I was born in the United States, I spent a significant piece of my own childhood there. I was in Northern Ireland for a portion of The Troubles in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and this influenced my understanding of prejudice, social unrest, and marginalization. I am also the parent of three biracial children that identify as both white and Black. Raising children whose ethnicity differs from my own has had an impact on my worldview. Although I have always been a proponent of social justice and human rights, advocating for the lives and well-being of my own children has made the reality of systemic injustices more palpable than before I was a mother.

Procedure

This study utilized semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Before beginning any qualitative interviews, the researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Old Dominion University. After approval was granted from IRB the researcher sent initial recruitment emails and initiated contact with the appropriate participants. The invitations included a brief summary of the study and a participation consent form (see Appendix A). Those participants that expressed a desire for inclusion in the study, and met study qualifications, were individually contacted by the researcher via the researcher's university provided e-mail address to schedule interview date and time. Each interview was conducted separately via virtual platform, and all interviews were audio recorded. The researcher reiterated to interviewees that

participation in this study is of their own volition and that it is within their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Individual Interview

For the interview portion, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). These questions elicited qualitative information that was then coded for statistical computation purposes. Sample interview questions included: (1) What are some ways in which you believe your minority membership has influenced your counseling identity? (2) In what ways has the current sociopolitical climate impacted your counseling identity and/or practices? And (3) Tell me about your perception of culturally competent counseling? Qualitative interviews were conducted via Zoom, at the convenience of the participant. The researcher enlisted practices and procedures to maintain the confidentiality and participants' right to privacy via the use of pseudonyms and password-protected computer files.

Focus Group

The focus group occurred once all of the eight participant interviews were completed. The researcher created focus group probes (see Appendix C) that allowed for focus group interviewees to elaborate upon their experiences beyond the responses given in the individual interview. Sample focus group probes included: (1) What hurdles, if any, do you face as a minority counselor? (2) What is different about counseling in the current sociopolitical climate vs counseling prior to 2016? And (3) How have current events changed the way in which you speak with or approach clients from diverse cultures and/or with diverse beliefs/values? Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the focus group was also held via Zoom rather than on campus at Old Dominion University.

Data Analysis

Once the participant interviews were completed and recorded, the researcher utilized a professional transcription service. All reasonable steps were taken to ensure that the data storage and transfer of the audio recording files and transcripts were compliant with HIPPA standards and directives. After transcription, participants were provided with a copy of the verbatim transcript of their interviews. Participants were invited to edit, change, or retract statements from their interviews. As Hays and Singh (2012) stated, the goal of phenomenological data analysis is to garner a deep understanding of the essence of the phenomena being studied. Therefore, not only is it paramount that the researcher understands Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological data analysis, but also gives critical consideration to the potential meanings extrapolated from the data.

After the interview data was collected and professionally transcribed, it was analyzed by employing the steps in Moustakas's Modification of van Kaam's Phenomenological Data Analysis (Hays & Singh, 2014). First, the researcher participated in listing and preliminary grouping. The researcher noted initial codes by analyzing the transcript of the data. After initial documenting occurred, reduction and elimination followed. After the reduction of codes, the data was then sorted into clusters that became the core themes of the experience. Next, the reduced data underwent the final identification of the themes. Next, a textural description was established using direct examples from the transcription. Then, a structural description was created based on the textural description. And finally, a textural-structural description was developed of the experiences by incorporating the themes. In order to bolster credibility, the following trustworthiness strategies were utilized: (1) triangulation of data, (2) member checking, (3) research journal/field notes, and (4) inquiry audit.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This dissertation study explored the lived experiences and multicultural competency perceptions of eight licensed clinical mental health clinicians working in various settings across the United States; all participants identified as minorities. The minority groups from which participants identified holding membership included persons of color, LGBT, women, and immigrant populations. It is an expectation that all counselors will enter the field with a professional orientation comprised of both competence and knowledge (Neukrug, 2017). It is necessary that multicultural competence among counselors not only continues, but grows to meet the needs of culturally diverse clients while addressing the social justice concerns that can profoundly impact mental health (Ratts et al, 2016). Exploring the ability for a counselor to bracket their own biases, add political affiliation as a cultural component for consideration, and continue to provide counseling that aligns with multicultural counseling competencies is a phenomenon that is lacking in the available research. This study explored eight minority mental health clinicians' lived

experiences providing multiculturally competent counseling and their perceptions of the impact that the current sociopolitical climate has had on their ability to do so.

The qualitative approach utilized afforded the research participants the ability to provide complex and rich descriptions regarding multiculturally competent counseling, political anxiety, and their minority membership. Study participants were requested to answer seven questions delivered during a semi-structured interview, then asked to answer an additional five questions during a semi-structured focus group given at a later date. After the interview data was collected and transcribed, it was analyzed by employing Moustakas's modification of van Kaam's Phenomenological Data Analysis (Hays & Singh, 2014). The transcribed narratives were divided into preliminary categories, which were then separated into meaningful units based on commonalities. From analyzation of these units emerged a final list of codes and subcodes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). These subcodes were further examined to produce thematic schemes that synthesized both the textural and structural experiences shared in the participant narratives. Lastly, an inquiry audit was utilized to confirm the trustworthiness and accuracy of the findings.

The participants of this study were all over the age of 18, with the mean age of 35.5 and a bimodal age of 30 and 31. Five participants identified as female and three identified as male. Six participants identified as Black, one identified as African American, and one identified as biracial. Five of the eight participants identified as having membership in the LGBT community. Five participants identified their political affiliation as Democrat, one identified as Libertarian, one identified as Progressive, and one identified as Leftist. All eight participants are licensed professional counselors and work in settings that are culturally diverse. Six participants stated they worked in private practice while two participants shared they work in addictions centers,

one of which is inside a Veterans Affairs Hospital. All eight participants graduated from CACREP accredited institutions.

This study identified four main themes: (1) impact and importance of minority membership on identity, (2) increase in awareness, (3) atmosphere created by the current administration, and (4) educational and training needs. Each theme was coded more categorically in order to generate more specific subthemes. Specifically, the researcher noted word repetitions informally by reading the transcribed narratives and noting the words, synonyms, and like phrases that participants used frequently. Then a basic cut and paste technique was employed to identify more specific subthemes. All constructed main themes, subthemes, and their descriptions are illustrated in Appendix D.

Jada's Narrative

Jada has worked in two different, culturally diverse positions providing mental health counseling over the past five years. Jada worked in a Title One elementary school in Florida providing mental health services to a high needs population. After starting her doctoral program in 2017, Jada began working with the addictions population in Virginia. Jada expressed noticing a difference in the way in which she perceived and provided culturally competent counseling the current sociopolitical atmosphere.

Minority Membership and Identity

All participants in this study asserted that their minority membership was not only an important component of their personal identity, but of their professional identity as well. In all eight narratives, participants shared that their minority memberships informed their counseling

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Commented [JM5]: What does this mean? Spell it out a bit more for me.

relationships, particularly in the current sociopolitical climate. For several participants there also existed an element of intersectionality as they possessed membership in more than one minority and/or marginalized population such as women, the LGBT community, and the immigrant population. Jada shared how her minority membership became more apparent as she started working in the field.

> I guess being a part of a small subset of counselors, I kind of notice that when I am maybe at a local counseling event, conferences, workshops you start seeing the same people of color over and over again, and kind of realize that it is a small group of people. […] It's also kind of concerning because it's a small group. And also because of the small group, you feel pressure to have group membership…

Jada spoke to the way in which her minority membership is perceived by her clients and colleagues. She shared that she feels she has to prove her competence and credibility more than ever.

> Also, I think I'm kind of aware of my minority status when I'm working with white clients wondering if they think I'm competent to provide the services. And also, when I'm working with African American clients or other clients of minority status, wondering if they see me as competent to be in this role because they're probably used to seeing a white provider.

Jada further elaborated on the hurdles she experienced as a minority counselor in the current sociopolitical climate during the focus group.

…It's like some days you're, like, seen as an expert on like, "Oh, you know! You understand minority stuff," but then things that you might actually be the expert on it, you don't get the same credibility. Really, I do know these things, but I feel like as a person of color, especially, like, in counseling, and just in a work setting, people don't give you, like, this credibility. "You don't know." They don't believe you're qualified, and you have to, like, do extra stuff to prove that you know as much as everybody.

Jada also spoke to the shift, or amplification, of the way in which she may be perceived in the community during this current sociopolitical climate because of her skin color.

Just thinking about how it relates to like my work as a counselor. So, I'm going to be moving to Idaho and took a job in Idaho. Like a fool. I don't know why I did this. And, of course, Idaho is very conservative, and I think of all the times to move somewhere that is very conservative, I feel like now is the worst time to do it because I don't want to go places. I'm scared. I don't want to leave my family and I don't want to just pretend that nothing is happening when things are happening.

Increase in Awareness

Large portions of each interview were spent on identifying ways in which the participants' perceived multicultural awareness changed. Participants also shared that the current sociopolitical climate has had impact on their own awareness of self. Both of these shifts in awareness spurred change within their counseling relationships and within their sessions with clients.

And I guess it [the current sociopolitical climate] just made me more suspicious of people. Everybody at work, they're not pro-Trump but somebody voted for him. So I have my own biases that I have to work through, because I think I'm more suspicious of my clients […] I had to maybe kind of bracket my biases because I would be thinking, "I know this a Trump supporter."

Jada identified a newfound awareness for the types of cultural aspects that were not taught or covered with much depth in her previous counselor education.

So, it's just different. And I feel like people don't talk about different aspects of poverty, of cultural competence. I think its kind of focused on racial, ethnic cultural competence, sexual orientation, or maybe they might mention religion, but I think it's deeper than what they glaze over in our classes.

Jada acknowledged recognition of biases she held that were brought to the forefront during the current sociopolitical climate. Although appreciative of the ability to be aware of these biases, she eluded to feeling some guilt.

And this going to sound so terrible. But not like white professional adult. It's like white adult who maybe did manual labor or maybe grew up in living back wood areas. We had a lot of clients who would commute over an hour just to get to these clinics because there wasn't any clinic where they live. A lot of the people on Medicaid. So maybe lower income. And that's, I guess who I associate with being Trump supporters. That's what I see on the news talking about him. I don't know. That sounds bad.

In the focus group, Jada shared being aware of the way in which she chose her words and communicated with both her colleagues and her clients. She shared that this precaution was not something that she thought much about before the current sociopolitical climate.

> I feel like you don't really know who you're talking to, especially…you have to be kind of careful what you say […] and just, I think you have to be more careful. That's what I'm gonna go with. The thing is you really don't know where people stand. You might think they think a certain way and they really think a completely different way.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

A significant portion of each participant narrative focused on the atmosphere that has been created by the current administration. This atmosphere was described by each participant differently, but the overall consensus was that the current sociopolitical climate has encouraged an atmosphere that is full of negativity. Jada shared how she noticed the shift in the atmosphere beginning even amongst children during the 2016 presidential campaign.

> I remember when the election took place, I had a bunch of young, Black clients when I was a school-based counselor. And they were scared because they were going to be deported back to Africa. They were going to be sent back to Africa. That was their worry because Donald Trump "didn't like black people." […] But I also realized that his presidency probably will have some real impact on your personhood in America.

Jada shared that she has noted more concern with political policies. She identified their disproportionate focus on minorities and the immediate impact they have.

Usually with politics the decision gets made and then it's years before you can actually see it. But I feel like when this administration makes a decision, people are directly impacted immediately. Like they can't come to this country. It's just something crazy. Are they being pushed in a cage?

During the focus group, Jada spoke candidly about how the atmosphere is impacted by the way the current president is handling the resurgence of racially motivated violence and the Coronavirus pandemic.

I'm like fed up with politics with Donald Trump with just his handling. I'm just, I don't know. […] People are dying and I just feel like it's just a shit show. […] I feel like Donald Trump been a hot mess since he got in. Like the political scene is a hot mess. But I feel like right now it's like, like a pressure cooker. Like it's about to explode.

Educational and Training Needs

In all eight narratives, participants identified that the current sociopolitical climate illuminated the ways in which multicultural competence is being delivered and taught in both trainings and counselor master's programs. Jada shared that her multicultural counseling coursework did raise her awareness of cultural competence, but simultaneously made her suspicious of the term "cultural competence." To Jada, cultural competence is something that is always changing and evolving. She believes that it is important that individuals be held accountable for understanding the concepts presented in class rather than just advancing through.

How we teach multiculturalism in counseling programs, this one class model with this idea that if I learn these different things about these different groups, then I

> have reached cultural competence. It's simple. Like nobody is gonna ever be fully
> culturally competent.

Jada also shared that representation of people of color is important in academia. She stated that seeing others that looked like her both in her program and teaching courses would have made an impact on her multicultural education as a counselor.

> …But then when I was in my master's program, nobody was black. I'm like where these black therapists came from? Cause they not the teachers, they not my classmates. So, there are counselors from diverse backgrounds. I don't know where they are, but even like from the top down to people who we have teaching that really needed diversity in the teaching of and training of counselors. I don't know where the people at.

Furthermore, Jada identified that cultural competence needs to be about more than just a public relations concept in counseling programs and the field. She emphasized the importance of training privileged counselors to go and work in urban, lower socioeconomic environments. Simultaneously, Jada shared that it is important to train minority counselors to go into the field and provide supervision.

> Do we have enough providers where minorities within the field mentor other licensed professionals to go ahead and to be a supervisor for those going through internships and practicums? For those being able to go ahead and go to the table and to provide work?

Lastly, Jada stated that funding for graduate level programs is lacking. Specifically, she shared that it may be more difficult for members of minority communities to have the same opportunities to attend master's programs due to a strain on financial means. She asserted that if

more funding were made available to minority communities then perhaps it would help more minorities to enter into, and thus be more represented, in the field of counseling.

> I think part of it really has to go to a bigger push by either state or government, by trying to figure out how do we invest more into minority communities to get more providers, more people to want to go into this field and not be held back by student loan debt.

Tabatha's Narrative

Tabatha has worked for both a crisis hotline as well as an outpatient counseling center over the last four years. Although she specializes in the LGBT community, Tabatha has worked with a variety of populations. She shared that her work is mostly with adults whose diagnoses range from anxiety and depression to more serious levels of psychosis.

Minority Membership and Identity

Tabatha shared that her minority membership was a definite contributing factor to her counselor identity. She also identified the importance of representation in the field. She asserted that it is important to see counselors in the field with whom people of color, and those with other minority identities, can identify.

> I feel like we definitely got to have more individuals of minority background to be in the field, just so that the people that we are providing a service to can feel like there is someone that's going to be able to understand what they've gone through [is important]. Being a part of a minority group and being able to have someone that they could already somewhat have a connection with going into a situation where it's already probably stressful and anxiety provoking, especially when it comes to going to counseling.

Increase in Awareness

Tabatha shared that she noticed topics and feelings related to the current sociopolitical climate finding their way into the counseling sessions with her clients. She stated that she had some clients that openly identified the current sociopolitical climate as a contributor to their feelings of anxiety and depression.

> I have had some conversations with individuals that have had some anxiety about the current political atmosphere. Are we going to go into war? Are we going to have all kinds of different problems and situations related to political nonsense […]? So, having people coming in with real concerns about that.

Tabatha elaborated on topics that her clients brought into sessions that were not as prominent in prior years. She identified having to become a researcher in addition to a counselor in order to better attend to her clients' needs.

> I do know there have been some situations in which I had to discuss with my client, where I was working with a transgender client and when they had the whole situation about being in the military, because she was active military at the time, we had to do some research to make sure that she would be able to remain in the military because of that situation. […] I had to be sure that my client doesn't go to a crisis because she believes she's going to get kicked out of the military.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Tabatha expounded upon the way in which the current atmosphere has impacted her feelings and actions both as an individual and as a counselor. In particular, she highlighted her own active avoidance of politics when at all possible.

> I've never been one of those political people. I've never been one of those people that watch the news and seeing what's going on in the debates and things like that, because it does cause a lot of anxiety and not just for my clients, but for me as well. Because it's just so much going on and everybody's trying to have the right answers and trying to change and make the world a better place. And they say these things but then they get in office, and it's a completely different vote. When the time comes and when it is election time, I do my research then, but everything leading up to it, I don't want to… I don't want to say hate myself, but I would rather just keep away from that unless it's completely necessary for me to do my job.

Tabatha identified feeling additional pressure on her as a counselor to ensure she was protecting her clients as much as possible during the current sociopolitical climate.

> Because we deal with individuals that may or may not have insurance or Medicare or anything like that, but we're still able to provide a service. But are we setting this person up to send them out to provide a service, and then someone is asking for citizenship documentation? Is this my fault? Or did I set this person up or something like that. Before you never had to worry about anything like that.

Educational and Training Needs

Tabatha emphasized the importance of multicultural courses in her master's program in elevating her awareness of her own cultural competence. She shared that it helped in her own accountability in being able to provide culturally competent counseling to diverse groups.

> So, I think that my coursework and particular professors and making sure that I'm taking those classes that talk about cultural competency and minorities and things like that. And being able to just expand my mind outside of myself as a minority and seeing other groups as well, to make sure that, again, I am doing my best to remain competent and to provide service for someone else.

Tabatha also echoed Jada's sentiments regarding the representation of people of color in academia and in the field. Tabatha was able to work with professors that looked like her. She shared that seeing so many Black professors in her program helped to fight the stigma that this particular population had an aversion to counseling and the field in general.

> Oh, well, especially in grad school, I had a lot of professors that were in the field, and actually, I had a lot of professors that were within the minority group. So that right there gave me just like, oh man, okay, I got doctors that are teaching this class that are, they look like me.

Sidney's Narrative

Sidney has spent the last four years working in two culturally diverse counseling settings. She currently works in a university setting providing mental health counseling services for individuals that are on the medication PrEP and are HIV negative, and individuals who are HIV

positive and struggling with medication compliance. Sidney also works part-time in her own private practice providing counseling to clients with a variety of mental health concerns.

Minority Membership and Identity

Sidney shared that her intersectional minority identities are the core of her counseling identity. She asserted the importance of seeing more minority counselors in the field in order to provide the minority population as a whole the opportunity to work with counselors with whom that may better identify.

> I think it [minority membership] is the crux of my counseling identity. From the jump, I knew that I needed... I had a very strong desire to be a counselor, partially because there weren't a lot of counselors who look like me. I'm a black woman. All the counselors I've ever had up until this past year have been white cis women, mostly heterosexual, mostly older. All really great, but it hits different when it's coming from someone who's your same racial identity and just has some similarly shared life experiences.

Sidney further elaborated by sharing the specific importance of intersectionality on her ability to connect with her clients.

> So just from the jump, it's always been really important to me to make sure that I was always very forthright with pretty much all of my identities. Even right now, I'm working out of a collective that focuses on giving space to people of color who identify as queer, trans, and centering those folks. So, all of my work is centered around my own personal identities, and the majority of my clients come to see me because of the identities that I share with them.

In the focus group, Sidney shared some of the hurdles that she believes originate from her minority memberships.

> So, it's like really a hard negotiation to know like when to speak up about something and when to not. And then also to, like, constantly be looked at in the room for, like, any and everything that may come up that's like black or queer is very frustrating for me. And it's, you know, the microaggressions, of course. And also, some just like straight up macroaggressions.

Increase in Awareness

Sidney asserted that there has been a shift in the interventions and approaches she has been utilizing with clients during this current sociopolitical climate. She noticed, just as Teresa previously shared, that her clients were coming into sessions wanting to talk about the current climate and the impact that it has had on their lives, and thus Sidney needed to adjust her counseling practices accordingly.

> It [the current sociopolitical climate] definitely has impacted [my] counseling practices in terms of just helping folks with coping skills. […] So, I found that a lot of my sessions have had at least parts of it dedicated directly just to what's going on politically in this country. Yeah, so a lot of that mostly being supportive counseling, affirming that what they're going through and feeling is real, and helping them to find ways that can help them cope with things that have been going on.

Sidney shared that she has recognized a lack of cultural competence and awareness in her white colleagues occurring with more frequency during the current sociopolitical climate.

I recently saw a post in one of the groups, the counseling groups I'm a part of on Facebook, someone, who's a white cis woman, had posted, like, "I'm trying to figure out if this is a delusion or not from my client. He's a black man, and he said he lives in fear of being shot and killed by the police. I don't know if that's a delusion or not." Cultural competence would be to hear that and to recognize what's going on in that person's life, both in terms of personally and the cultural zeitgeist, and being able to put aside your own lived experiences, where the police may be seen as saviors and the good guys on white horses, and being able to understand that this is not true for everyone.

Sidney also shared being more cognizant of the types of clients she serves within the community. She asserted that she has been very intentional with those she surrounds herself with, including those that she worth with via her private practice.

I haven't really experienced working with folks who disagreed or had vastly different sociopolitical, just, outlooks on life than I do personally. I mean, like I said before, I've done that very purposefully in terms of curating the spaces that I work out of. I do believe that it would be very difficult for me to counsel someone who didn't share some of those same beliefs that I have if those beliefs came up a lot during session.

During the focus group Sidney ascertained being more aware of her own reactions and feelings aroused during the sessions with clients than she had been prior to 2016. Sidney identified a sense of countertransference occurring at times during sessions when her clients spoke of their experiences surrounding the current sociopolitical climate.

I find like having sessions is a lot more triggering now. It wasn't something that, I mean, getting triggered was always something that was a potential, of course, for me in session. But it's something that is more of a regular occurrence now. It is particularly in the pandemic. Yeah, I think I was maybe triggered like once or twice in that kind of in those two positions [prior to 2016] and now it's probably like weekly.

Sidney further elaborated on the triggers she was now experiencing frequently during counseling session.

But I have a lot of folks who are either first generation American or are immigrants themselves and just talking about everything that has been and was kind of, like, more in the focus around immigration and keeping people in cages was also very triggering for me just because my view… I do come from a family of immigrants and had a cousin who was locked up in ICE for a couple of years. And so that was also something that was very triggering to me kind of pre all of this. That's kind of like been put on the back burner of it but has definitely been more present since Trump.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Like Tabatha, Sidney also identified a similar need for her to be cognizant of the contributing events of the current atmosphere upon her responsibility to provide counseling that helped her clients to feel safe.

[…] some of it [what is going on] is related directly to our current president. When the travel bands were in the front of everyone's mind, in terms of what he was talking about in the media... I have a number of clients who are either immigrants or their parents are

immigrants, and so just being concerned about what that meant for them, what that meant for their family members. With all of the school shootings... I have a number of teenage clients who are terrified to go to school because of all the shootings that occur and just come to me specifically because of that anxiety.

Sidney highlighted the increase in importance of the political landscape in her daily life, something she had not had to consider as carefully before the current presidential administration, and the way it contributes to the current atmosphere thus impacting her personal well-being.

Just even physically, losing sleep about things, having some nightmares about what would happen to some of my family members. And also having nightmares about what happened if Trump has another four years in office. Even with Bloomberg. Thank God he's dropped out. But envisioning eight years of him, potentially, also was giving me a lot of anxiety around that as well.

In the focus group, aside from the impact on relationships with clients, Sidney shared the apprehension and inability to be authentic with colleagues that has arisen during the current atmosphere due to fear of how this authenticity would be received.

I will go ahead and suggest again, are you able to even be truly authentic and genuine with other coworkers? Because kind of like [Jada] mentioned again, is there any belief system that other people have that are different than yours? And as a result, referrals just won't keep coming in and a way you're going to really be blackballed and kind of pushed out.

Educational and Training Needs

Sidney shared that although she believes being culturally competent is important, she felt that she did not get much in terms of multicultural competency in her master's program. Like other interviewees, Sidney stated that it was presented in the fashion of one solitary course on the subject that may not effectively train counselors to enter the field with true cultural competence.

> I don't really feel like I got too much in terms of cultural competency in my program. There was a class that we took, and it was fine and dandy, for the most part… So, while well-intentioned, I definitely felt like it lacked, and I don't really feel like it was... I don't really feel like cultural competency was stressed across the board. I definitely think that it was discussed and brought up across multiple courses but did not go into depth around what that truly meant, except for that one class.

Sidney elaborated further about the need for more thorough and in-depth counselor training.

> And including, like you said, it's about more than one class, and finding ways to de-intellectualize everything. Cause like there's so many of my coworkers who can, you know, talk the talk and know all of the right words to say and all of the right things to say, and then like you get down to it and they're just not, there's no cultural competency there. And so, finding ways to, and I don't know how to do that. But finally take it out of academia and make it more practical. So that it's in addition to like learning the right things, to say, they also learn ways to actually address folks from different cultures and inequalities as well.

Sidney elaborated on the need for programs to produce counselors that were able to enter the field and provide counseling that was not laden with stereotypes. She shared that in her

multicultural class she perceived much of the lessons to be stereotypical in nature. She stated that although providing examples of how to work with various populations is important in becoming culturally competent, the context in which these lessons are delivered should be considered.

> I did find that there was a lot of stereotyping. Ironically, while not trying to stereotype, there was a lot of stereotyping in terms of to be culturally sensitive with Asian people, you should remember this. And to be culturally competent with Latinx or Hispanic folks, you should be aware of stuff like this. That's all very well-intentioned, but also not every Asian's like that, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Sidney also addressed the topic of funding for counselor master's programs. She shared that often there is not funding allocated for diversity trainings or to invest into hiring a culturally diverse faculty.

> Finding ways to properly fund things like that because there's so often that the cultural work is expected to be done by, you know, folks with, you know, minority identities, but kind of in addition to whatever it is that they're doing and on top of it, without adding any extra money to it. And so, I think, you know, stuff, one is putting money, like programs, putting their money where their mouth is.

Cameron's Narrative

For the past four years Cameron has been working either in private practice, or with the Veterans' population initially in California and now in Texas. Cameron's private sector work focused mainly around crisis intervention and substance use. When working with the VA,

Cameron has worked on the veteran crisis line providing counseling to veterans that were in crisis or experiencing suicidal ideations. Currently, Cameron works as the director of a residential program for veterans focusing on both mental health and substance use.

Minority Membership and Identity

Cameron asserted that his minority membership aids him in bringing a different perspective into the practice of counseling. He shared that it often helps in building rapport with certain clients that otherwise may find difficulty in connecting with their counselor.

> So, it gives me a very different perspective as far as, again, oftentimes working with other people from a minority culture. It allows me to go ahead and to better relate and to kind of be a ... It opens up doors, typically, in trying to form a connection with other people who identify as a minority. Also, again, having identifying as a minority, it gives me a specific lens to look at other people, and to look at life experiences, and being able to try and better relate to my patient/client.

Cameron further illuminates his perceived importance of representation of minorities in the field of counseling.

> …We really need again, that the providers that we have are representative of the population in which, again, we are serving. […] And so I don't believe that we have to be the exact duplicate of the population that we're serving, but we have to go ahead and have an awareness and a competency to be able to relate, to understand, and to be able to empathize in order to go ahead and have a better understanding.

In the focus group, Cameron elaborated upon some of the challenges he has found to be more prominent as of late amongst his colleagues. He shared that he, too, often feels the need to prove his competence to his white colleagues.

> I work in a predominantly cis, white female clinic, and […] I tend to be more assertive. And so when I do go ahead and engage in being assertive, oftentimes again, it is seen and perceived as being "the angry Black man" and as such, again, it tends to minimize again what I'm saying, and I really have to try and speak in a way that's gonna help my coworkers receive what I'm saying without it putting them off. […] And as such again, there's still a need for me…to kind of prove myself and to prove that in these different areas, I'm still credible and quantified to make that assertion.

Increase in Awareness

During the current sociopolitical climate, Cameron has noticed an increase in attempts at political discourse during his counseling sessions and group therapy. He shared the intentionality and assertiveness he had to further develop to deter this type of dialogue due to the veteran setting in which he works.

I'm making sure we're not bringing in politics into the therapy session. So essentially working here in Texas it's not uncommon for me to have patients within the residential program who are big supporters of different political parties. For me to begin [the session], oftentimes, just like in the private sector during the previous administration, I will listen. I'll validate that that is their perspective, but I actually don't really go into it.

Cameron offered that he endeavors to practice increased validation and empathy with clients who attempt to bring controversial political beliefs into the group sessions that he facilitates.

> I will just say, "you know what? That is again political conversation. I encourage you to have that conversation between each other outside of group. But here, we're going to actually focus on a therapy process." So, I really don't try and explore that given that they're not really coming to therapy per se due to politics.

Cameron shared experiencing more difficulty with providing counseling that he felt was culturally competent when he was working with white male clients.

> […] Trying to provide cultural competence for white males, it's a little bit more difficult in that there is more of a directness coming from certain patients who are white males. […] So, I guess for me, it is more difficult for me to go ahead and to understand the perspective of the white, straight male in that they are getting the short end of the stick. When in fact again, they are at the apex of not just this country, but of the world. And yet feeling but at the same time, oftentimes they feel as if they are somehow losing ground to those who are the complete antithesis of that. So that validation barrier is therefore a struggle for me in trying to balance both of them out.

In the focus group, Cameron further shared how he perceived the counseling relationship feeling different during the current sociopolitical climate.

> […] We [individuals with opposing political views] just haven't really found a way of being more together and in doing so that is kind of fracturing the counseling session creating some way, […] that inability for us [counselors] to be as authentic and genuine,

because we are trying to maintain certain professional boundaries. And I think that that causes other micro-issues and fracture.

<u>Atmosphere Created by Current Administration</u>

Like Tabatha, Cameron shared a shift in the way he perceives politics in the current sociopolitical climate. The atmosphere the current administrated has created produces more negativity around a subject in he once found pleasure.

> My initial goal when I was younger was to go into politics. I used to love politics. I could watch on the news 24/7 literally watching it repeat. And then within the last three-ish, three and a half years, I struggled to be able to remain doing the same things that were at one point enjoyable. I guess I've lost some hope or faith in the political process, and the protective barriers of our democracy to be able to balance out and share that democracy is for all. So, for that I find myself again, limiting and restricting the amount of time that I already focus on politics.

Cameron also identified some ways that the current administration's policies impact his ability to be a present and effective mental health counselor.

> Again, I do work in the federal government and so Donald Trump is again my, my awkward supervisor. And so for me again, in how things triple down on throughout the agency is more so just really having to be able to compartmentalize because again I'm more, I guess, more directly impacted by some of his decisions as relates to my career and everything else.

Educational and Training Needs

Cameron shared that he finds issue with the fact that the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) only requires one course in multicultural counseling prior to graduating with a master's degree in counseling. He stated that most CACREP courses are 60 credits in duration and the ability exists to better integrate cultural competency education into more than one three-credit course.

> So, for me, within my program, we had one thing that's actually consistent with the requirements at CACREP, which is again another issue […] Most programs, of course, through CACREP is about 60 credits. And so, I get that we want to try and get a number of providers through and educated and trained. So, part of it is a training component that perhaps again, better integrating and exploring and expanding the cultural competency is a factor in the educational component.

Cameron further elaborated on the importance of thorough culturally competent counselor training within the CACREP counseling master's programs.

> Even through CACREP training and CACREP program, we're not taking a big enough stance and ensuring that providers and new providers are in fact fully trained, fully informed, fully aware of the needs.

Cameron also added to the interview the importance of having culturally competent supervision once clinicians enter the field. The training for these supervisors begins in their counseling master's programs, but the training should not stop there. He highlighted the importance of having supervisors that are not only culturally competent, but able to incorporate that competence into supervision in specialty areas or with specific theoretical orientations.

But the other part, and it's probably the larger argument, is really around the training. That again most providers are, again, white, straight females who are cisgender. And if they, as a provider, are not as culturally competent or aware of their own limitations or lack of insight, then trying to go ahead and be a supervisor or a preceptor or a mentor to other people would therefore be a deficit. And therefore again, not ensuring that we're as aware of multiculturalism.

Corinne's Narrative

Shortly after completion of her master's program, Corinne opened her own agency in Nevada and has been working there for the entirety of her counseling career. She shared that, living in such a diverse community in Las Vegas, she made a point to incorporate multicultural competence into every facet of her practice. Corinne stated that the majority of the counselors she employs are people of color and this helps her diverse client population better identify with their provider.

Minority Membership and Identity

Corinne spoke to her minority membership as being one that is visual. She shared that this visual minority membership has impacted her counseling identity in terms of establishing rapport with her clients and being perceived as credible by both her clients and colleagues.

Well, I think because it's a minority membership that is obviously visual, it [minority membership] kind of affects the, I guess, the rapport building at times, just because people have certain assumptions that they make about Black women. So, I think a lot of times it has ... I've been in a position where people have been surprised that I was a good

therapist and they've not hidden that surprise. They've said things out loud to me or I read it on their face or that they kind of are shocked that I actually know how to do my job.

Corinne further asserted that bringing her own cultural identity into supervision with her supervisees is not something that she is hesitant to do.

I'm not afraid to bring culture into my supervision with my students.

Corinne also shared that because she identifies as a minority, it helps her to better identify with her clients even if they do not share the same cultural identity.

I think it [minority membership] also affects the way I view my clients and my clients' culture. Even though people may not be a part of minority groups, because I am a part of a group that has been oppressed in multiple ways, I'm very keen and aware of my clients, I guess, different cultural aspects.

Increase in Awareness

Corinne shared an increased need for disclosure and empathy in her counseling sessions during the current sociopolitical climate. Like other participants, Corinne eluded to a juxtaposition between the desire to be genuine and authentic in her practices while also being professional.

I think I've had more of a self-disclosure with clients through this political climate, just because clients have wanted to talk about how if my experience is similar to their experience. I kind of do therapy where I'm not the kind of person that pretends like I

have no existence in the world. So, if a client asks me a question, unless it's something

that's going to be harmful to therapy, usually I'll answer the question.

Corinne also identified noticing much more political conversations and concerns arising in

her counseling sessions. She shared that her clients were bringing up feelings surrounding the

current sociopolitical climate at a much higher rate than she had noticed prior to 2016.

> I know of my clients of color specifically, we've gotten into more political conversation
>
> in therapy, just because when kids are being locked in cages and you have a president on
>
> TV that's saying harmful, hurtful things, there have been clients who haven't been
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> affected by those things and so we've had those conversations in therapy. Whereas
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> before, even before the current administration, I think I wasn't having as many political
>
> conversations in therapy. I think it definitely amped up since the current president.

Corrine identified growing more in her awareness of how the current sociopolitical climate

effects the clients she serves. She shared that she has had to do more introspective thought and

that has helped her to develop a greater level of empathy for her clients.

> So, I think it [the current sociopolitical climate] has helped me, it almost kind of, I don't
>
> know. It kind of forces that topic into a lot of what we talk about with clients, just
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> because they're triggered, I'm triggered, we're all triggered. So, it kind of forces me to
>
> deal with my own ways of managing what's going on. And then also kind of being in
>
> tune with kind of how it's affecting my clients as well.

Corinne further elaborated upon how the current sociopolitical climate has increased her

empathy and altered her sense of multiculturally competent counseling. The below excerpt is

specific to acknowledging the impact that the threat that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and deportation has had on her Hispanic clients.

> So I think it's kind of put things on the forefront and forced, and even for me, someone who likes to talk about cultural diversity, all those type multicultural competency, it's even forced me to even go a step further because some things that even, maybe we might've taken for granted that we all understood have that be said out loud now, so that we can all kind of touch and agree like that. We all understand the situation and kind of understand what's happening.

Corinne asserted that she has found herself having to be more alert and aware of the changes in insurance policies during the current presidential administration. She shared that some of her clients previously struggled with healthcare coverage, but she has noticed it has become increasingly more frustrating for her own clinical practice and her clients in recent years.

> So, in the state of Nevada, we don't have very strong medical and mental health, services out here. It's very tough to get services here. It's very tough to keep people covered. So, over the course of this presidency, there's been a lot of things that have been happening in Nevada. Like in Nevada, Medicaid that has been just up and down all over the place.

Corinne elaborated upon the impact that insurance policy changes, or the threat to changes, during the current presidential administration has had on her own private practice.

> So as a business, we've restructured probably six times. We've almost lost it a couple times, lost our company a couple of times because of that, the Medicaid it is not strong

enough to handle the uncertainty. So every time there's an announcement of everything's good when he goes out and says, "I'm not going to cut Medicaid," but then when they enact actual policies that cut Medicaid, the state shuts down and we don't get reimbursement.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Just as other participants mentioned within their interview, Corinne shared the shift she felt in the overall atmosphere, and, in turn, with her personal well-being when Donald Trump became president.

> Well, I will say that the night, I can remember exactly how I felt the night that Donald Trump got elected. Again, I had an overwhelming sense of doom. I don't think I slept that night. I remember feeling like, "How are we going to make it through this?" I can remember laying in my bed like the only thing I needed to do was, because I come from a faith background, the only thing I knew to do was to pray and sing songs my grandma used to sing because I was like, "I need something to soothe me. I can't calm down."

Corinne shared that the atmosphere that recent acts of police brutality has created sometimes seems to fall on deaf ears with her white colleagues. Within her narrative Corinne shared a story in which a white colleague called the police on a client struggling with an onset of psychotic behavior.

> […] we [Black counselors] become triggered because of how communities of color interact with the police. So, we have one 20-year-old, Black female, small build surrounded by five police cars in our parking lot. It didn't occur to the therapist who called that "I should also manage the client's safety in this situation", that this could go wrong at any minute because

of how police perceive people of color. And worst case scenario, we could have a client murdered in front of our office because if she freaks out, goes into her psychosis and doing crazy stuff, and the police are unwilling to deescalate the situation, manage the situation, wait for an ambulance. Instead, you decide that they want to handle the situation themselves. We could have a client murdered, literally in front of our office.

Educational and Training Needs

Corinne shared that she experienced multicultural competence education in her master's program much like the previous participants. She stated that it was spoken of in her program as though it was a critical component of a counselor's identity and skillset, yet she found it was not present in her classes in the way in which she expected. She shared that she assumed multicultural awareness would be integrated throughout her educational experience but discovered that it was mainly present as an afterthought. She eluded to concerns when considering what cultural competence clinicians just entering the field learned from this way of teaching.

I guess it kind of showed me that if it was going to be important, it was going to be up to me because like many programs, it's kind of the asterisk at the bottom is very much kind of an afterthought. It's very much kind of one prompt of the assignment. […] Like, how do you talk about cultural competency without it just being another piece of the assignment that you would tend to after you've done the whole assignment? That's kind of how it always seems to be in cultural competency is we talk about everything else and then someone says, "Oh yeah, and now I want you to attend to the cultural competency issues." And I'm like, "Why is it at the end?" We should have been dealing with that

from the beginning, because if you offend someone because of the theory you're trying to

utilize and the perceptions of that theory and the approaches to that theory, you're not

going to get to attend to the cultural piece after, because you've already turned the client

off.

Corinne also spoke of the importance of the supervisory component of multicultural competence.

She shared that in her experience as a clinical supervisor, she found it vital to weave cultural

competence into her supervision model. She asserted that there was more to cultural competence

than understanding race and ethnicity and made sure to address this in supervision

sessions with her supervisees. In doing so, she believed that the rapport and trust with the

clinicians' clients would be easier to build.

> I think one way that I have approached it is really by not only talking about the standard
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> culture and race and ethnicity issues, but also forcing people to look at the other cultural
>
> issues that they ignore. Because if you can recognize that everyone has cultural pieces
>
> that need to be attended to in therapy, then it's more of a normal, natural thing.

Corinne elaborated about the other cultures of which she spoke in the previous quote. She

shared an anecdote about a former supervisee of hers.

> So, I think recognizing that I didn't like that it [multicultural competence] was a side
>
> thought, I had a supervisee that had a client that was a part of gun culture. So that might
>
> be something that we don't normally think of when we talk about cultural diversity. But
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> if you have a client who is normally walking around with a gun on their hip, who believes
>
> in the right to bear arms, and that's a way of viewing the world that you have to attend to

in therapy. If you don't attend to it, then that client's not going to come back to the therapy, or if they do, they're not going to make a connection with you because they're going to feel like you are against something that they hold very close to their personhood.

Corinne added that it was important to remind her supervisees to be cognizant of the areas in which you practice as they also inform the cultures that may be brought into the counseling session.

Marijuana is now recreationally legal and medically legal in Nevada. So how do you balance the marijuana culture with mental health and in the cultures that believe in marijuana? I'm going to turn off my young African American male client if I come in as a therapist, just like, "Well, you need to stop smoking." It may not be the healthiest thing in the world, but that's a part of his culture. […] It's been a cultural thing, so we can unpack it in therapy, but you have to recognize also that it's a cultural thing that you have to unpack delicately. You can't just go in guns blazing.

Teresa's Narrative

Teresa currently has her own private practice located in Louisiana. Additionally, she teaches in a counseling master's program in her area. She shared that she also once worked as a clinical supervisor for a community-based agency. Teresa has worked with a myriad of clients in both Virginia and Louisiana.

Minority Membership and Identity

Teresa asserted that her minority membership is inseparable from her counselor identity. She also shared that she possesses intersectionality within her minority membership that also inform her identity.

> I think it [minority membership] completely informs it [counselor identity] because I can't step outside of my minority identity. Most of them [minority memberships] are pretty obvious to people when they interact with me. […] But in general, with clients, I can't separate myself from my identity. There's no way for it to not come up in the room.

Just as several previous participants have shared, Teresa believes her minority memberships have resulted in clients and colleagues questioning her competence more than they would someone with membership in the dominant culture.

> So, I think it [minority membership] requires me to be a little bit more authentic, genuine, and accepting of certain things, and cognizant of the fact that I might need to be more direct in certain situations because I need to maybe make it clear my expertise in the area, something in that nature.

Increase in Awareness

Teresa identified ways in which the current sociopolitical climate has increased some personal awareness directly associated with her minority status. She shared how the considerations she makes when navigating the university in which she works are more heightened than before.

So, just navigating, moving, leaving from Virginia, moving here, I was just really aware, like, I need to make sure I have […] my faculty and staff ID on me because I'm at a small, private, Jesuit institution in the South. I'm walking around and I don't want…necessarily want to not be who I am, but I have to be aware of making sure that I am not mistaken for something random. […] I was pretty conscious of the fact that I wanted to have identification on me at all times because no one knew me. I think that that definitely has impacted who I am.

Teresa asserted that the current sociopolitical climate has made her more aware of her own multicultural competence and areas in which she can continue to grow. She is more aware of the ways in which experiences inform an individual's identity and sense of understanding for one another.

There's constantly things to learn. No one is in a space where they can stop growing just because they experienced this, or they experienced that. You didn't live every single person's experience, so I think this current cultural climate has, after getting past the frustration part of it, I think it allowed me to really humble myself a bit and see what are the other areas of growth that I have.

Teresa further elaborated upon how the current sociopolitical climate shifted both her clinical cultural awareness and awareness of self.

I need to be more open, and I need to be more considerate and mindful of the things that I'm saying to protect myself, but to protect my practice and my professional reputation.

Because I don't want it to miss, not to misspeak, but say something at the wrong time or is taken out of context.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Teresa identified an increased sense of vigilance early in the period of the current presidential administration. She felt that the atmosphere created was one of increased distrust of people of color.

I've had to be more just conscious of where I am. I think that things have calmed down a little bit in a way, but I'll say initially with the election, I had to be more aware and conscious of where I was, who I was around, just trying to make sure that I'm safe or as safe as can be.

Teresa further elaborated upon feeling targeted in an atmosphere of suspicion even in her role as a professor.

Essentially people questioning why I'm in buildings. Our department closes down pretty early, it's not like [my former school]. People aren't there at 8:00 PM at night. I like being there working, coming in early for classes, being able to have access to the building, the keys to the building itself.

Educational and Training Needs

Teresa identified that she had training and education in multicultural competence in both her master's and doctoral programs. She shared that she felt as though, in both experiences, she was left wanting more and with unanswered questions.

I think being a culturally competent counselor is something you cannot take a class to become. It's something you have to continuously put effort into. […] I think my master's education, when it was solely that I was left wanting more thinking, "oh, I think we're going to really dive into something." […] Then the doctoral education, I think it allowed for some interesting dialogue around being multiculturally competent, while simultaneously ignoring all forms of cultural authorship. So, it still was whitewashed.

Teresa elaborated by sharing the ways in which she saw multicultural competence being taught in her programs.

So, I think that programs need to put more emphasis on having engaging activities that aren't just around, "go to a church that you've never participated in and then let's talk about it." It's not that. I think that we need to be engaging in more forms of education around like private practice, everyone's not going to do private practice. It doesn't even make sense to focus everything on private practice when really, it's families and systems' space.

Teresa also highlighted what she felt is the role of counselor educators in a counseling master's and doctoral program. She spoke to the need for accountability for professors to model cultural competence. She also shared that she felt it important to bring current events and the current climate into the classroom when teaching multicultural competence.

I think professors need to do that [model cultural competence] in their actions, so that in classes you can actually be timely and intentional and say like, "hey, you just said

something racist, or sexist," or whatever, instead of everything being like, "oh, we'll talk

about it later.

Teresa further elaborated on her experience both with and as a counselor educator.

…you can't just have a section of a class talking about multicultural counseling. I think

that being a culturally competent counselor requires us to really evaluate how we're

doing counselor education and have a conversation about like, "this is the history of

counseling and now let's talk about what counseling is today" because if we spend so

much time focused on the theories, especially the early theories of Freud, and Ellis, and

Beck, and all of those people, the early psychologists, you get away from what's

happening now.

John's Narrative

Over the past four years John has worked in several different settings providing mental

health counseling services in both Virginia and Georgia. John has worked in the hospital setting,

with the Navy Reserve population, and in private practice. John's experience includes working

with both adults and children in these various settings.

Minority Membership and Identity

John shared that his minority membership has greatly influenced his identity. As a

counselor, he feels it has afforded him the ability to build a better rapport with the clients that her

treats.

It [minority membership] has influenced it [counselor identity] quite a bit because I know that my current population that I work with is mostly minority. And I think just being a picture of what mental health looks like, and to be able to support people of color in their mental health awareness and not feeling that guilt of going to therapy…

John further elaborated on the perceived importance of representation of minorities in the field of clinical mental health.

…Because a lot of times they [minorities] hear that if he [a minority member] goes to see a therapist, "you're crazy." So being able to change that mindset with some positive and encouraging outlook on their life instead of not being able to share how they feel inside with people.

Increase in Awareness

During his interview, John pondered how his theoretical orientation and approach may have inadvertently kept political conversation out of the counseling sessions with his clients.

A lot of the individuals that I work with, I use a theory based off of solution focused brief therapy. So, a lot of times when I use that theory, I don't delve into what are their specific stressors. I kind of focus on what can we do right in the moment and move forward. Maybe I'll talk about some things that maybe bothered them as far as politics and social justice, but it's more of "how am I managing my day to day, my intake of information that comes in?"

John shared that the current sociopolitical climate has made him more aware of the way in which he and his colleagues may have made assumptions of clients in the past. He acknowledged an increased awareness of a need to combat these assumptions.

> But there are so many things we don't know about people, even if they're sitting in front of you, they may associate with a whole nother race or another culture and you don't know. There's just a lot of assumptions that occur when we sit in front of our clients and some of the therapists that work with people assume a lot just because what they look like or the way they dress and just kind of goes on and on from there.

John also shared feeling obligated to be more aware of the topics and situations that were saturating the current sociopolitical climate. He stated that although he made avoid the news and media for his own well-being, he felt it necessary to have a certain level of awareness in order to connect with what his clients may bring into the counseling session.

> …being aware of various hot topics that are happening, even if it comes down to just me going and following some different social media people to see what's happening in the community. Because a lot of times in session clients will bring up things that's been going on with them or things that has been affecting them based on what they've been watching through social media and television. And they may bring those things into the session. It's important to have that awareness, so just trying to keep my ear to the ground by staying in touch with the people that I work with, so I can be able to communicate effectively.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Just as Teresa mentioned within her narrative, John identified a need to be more cognizant and aware of his words and actions in the current atmosphere created by the current administration.

So, I have to be more diligent about how I respond to people and respond to the leadership, the vocal leadership, the national leadership, wherever it comes.

John elaborated by sharing that he is more aware than ever that his role and his position is one of great responsibility.

A lot of times I will have to be real aware of the things that I'm talking about with people, just because it can be real influential, but that's just me increasing some of my boundaries.

Similar to what other participants have shared, John eluded to a need to stay more in tune with what is happening on the national stage and around him on an everyday basis in order to help clients maneuver through what could be perceived as a confusing or intimidating atmosphere.

I think growing up my dad told me to know a little bit about a lot, not to be a master of everything, but just know a little bit about a lot. This message stuck with me for a while.

Educational and Training Needs

John shared that continuing education beyond the master's program classes is important to further developing cultural competence as a counselor. He asserted that it is important to take this area of training seriously.

But I think being able to be educated and training ongoing about that sensitivity to various cultures, it's important. [....] There's not a lot of education that's being taken seriously because it's not.

John shared his own experience with multicultural competent education and training in his master's program.

I went through different various trainings, so it made me diverse in cultures that I work with. I went to a historically black college from an undergrad, and then for graduate school I went to a predominantly white institution. So, I was able to kind of get a lot of different sides and see a lot of different cultures and to be aware of just what is, and what's important to talk about. […] I think it was important for me to be able to have a nice background of different clientele to work with, whether it is severe mental illness or sex offender population, or whether it was with military. Having a background and some diversity in the training, I think that helped me out quite a bit to be able to be more sensitive to different populations and I think that kind is lapsed in some therapists because they don't have that diversity in their training.

Bradley's Narrative

Bradley is currently working as the CEO of a counseling agency providing supervision to current licensed counselors as well as counselors currently in residency in Illinois. Bradley also provides mental health counseling in a private practice setting and has been doing so for over 20 years. Bradley shared that he has seen a growth in the diversity of his clients over the past four

years. In addition to providing supervision and mental health counseling, Bradley is also a counselor educator teaching counseling courses at the masters and doctoral levels.

Minority Membership and Identity

Bradley shared that he claims membership to many minority cultural groups. He asserted that this intersectionality has made an impact on his professional identity.

> I'm multiethnic, multiracial, and I identify myself as Black and I'm a part of a sexual minority. So, in that, [...] I would say the oppressed ones that matter the most are the being gay, or same gender-loving, as African Americans […] Those two probably stick out to me the most and those […] had some impact.

Bradley also shared that, in the context of the current sociopolitical climate, his minority memberships have informed his identity as a social justice advocate. Through this addition to his identity, Bradley shared he has been able to connect on a different level with his clients.

> So I think it's [minority membership] made me… as a counselor, in my identity, made me more aware of the pressures that might come upon my clients that I'm serving, so I've become more, I think if you were going to term it, it would be more, social justice oriented and I've incorporated that into my therapy.

Bradley identified how his minority membership has made maneuvering through higher education and the counseling field challenging at times.

> I feel that if I say certain things […] that the impact of what I can do in the education field could be impacted negatively.

Bradley also shared his belief that his credibility and intellect was called into question due to his minority membership.

> …Some comments that they were made, of even indicating that I might've gotten what I got, the scholarships I got, might've been because I'm Black, not because of my intellect. […] The thought to them didn't occur, that maybe I was smarter than they were. Just like, "Well, could you chalk it up to maybe I smarter and not because I was Black?" And I told them, I said, "If I were a white man, I still would've got it."

Increase in Awareness

Bradley identified feeling more compelled to allow dialogue surrounding the current sociopolitical climate to enter the counseling sessions with his clients than before. He shared a desire to challenge his clients and/or to explore how the current sociopolitical climate is resonating with them.

> …how it's [the current sociopolitical climate] changed my practices is, […] I do question clients when they bring up political items, sociopolitical items. If they seem to be biased, in my opinion, then I will explore that. I never tell the client that they're wrong or that they're ... but if they bring it up, I will ask them a question […] not trying to change what they say, but explore where they're coming from and how that relates to therapy at that time, because it's obviously important.

Bradley stated that he believes the current sociopolitical climate has helped him to become a better clinician. It has permitted him to broach topics in counseling sessions that may have felt

uncomfortable prior to the current atmosphere. Bradley realized that the current climate is something that needed to be included in the counseling sessions with his clients.

> I think it's [the current sociopolitical climate] made me better. I do think that it's made me better because I deal with it more with my clients. It's an easier topic to broach, especially for people of color and other oppressed identities, it's an easier thing to broach. Even with the ones that are of the majority, I broach these things with them and ask them, "how is the climate for them? How is this pandemic? How are these things impacting how you live?" Especially when they bring them up. So, I think it's made me go into those areas that might not typically be ... Some people might not be aware.

Bradley also shared that the current sociopolitical climate has illuminated the ways in which he perceived his white colleagues failing to advocate for minority populations. He noticed that, with many of his dominant-culture colleagues, if he did not broach the injustices that were occurring and the need for action then they would not bring it up themselves.

> I guess my frustration with my colleagues, my white or majority colleagues, that are unwilling, unable, or blind, too blind to see how this impacts us as humans, as counselor educators of color, or therapists of color, how this really impacts us as, almost as if we always have to explain or bring it up. I find that I'll bring it up and they won't. They won't bring it up, and that's just as frustrating. You're sitting in this ivory tower as if, "Well, it doesn't impact me." Well, it's in my face every day, the sociopolitical climate. I feel like my vote is necessary. […] I can't just stay at home and not vote for someone. Whether I like anybody, whether I like them or not, I do have to choose my best option because it's my life.

Atmosphere Created by Current Administration

Bradley identified feeling a need to mute himself amongst certain colleagues because the atmosphere that the current administration has created is one that places people of color in a precarious position when wanting to speak out.

> [,,,] people that might be offended by what I might have to say. So, there are very strong ... I have some very strong opinions or messages. So, when they're [white or conservative colleagues] talking about Trump and I just, that man ... This has been, in my lifetime, the most poignant and evil presidency I've ever seen in my life.

Bradley grieved for minority and marginalized populations living in the atmosphere created by the current presidential administration. He shared both grief for his clients, but also feelings of sadness for himself and his own experiences.

> I've also become, because of this and the social political climate, I think that it's made me cry more. It's made me cry more. Maybe not even within the session and not crying with the client in their expression of the pain they're going through, but on my own. It's made me cry more because I just feel this pathos and this negative energy in the climate. I describe this climate as extremely racist, oppressive to women and LGBT and minority religious expressions.

Just as some participants shared previously, Bradley identified an atmosphere in which Black people, and he as a Black man, feel targeted. He shared a fear for his own life and the lives of those he loves as a result of witnessing current events unfold in the media with regard to police brutality and acts of racial violence.

Just recently with the death of Ahmaud in the news. Yeah, I had a moment where I had to just debrief with some of my other peers of color about ... This has really impacted me as a Black male. It's been going on but the fact to me, that white men could track me down in the south well, and in the north, but I haven't seen it happening as much in the north, but in the south that they could just track me down because they suspected something and take your gun out at me and I'm afraid for my life and go to defend my life because you've got these guns and how dare you. I have a right to be where I'm at. How dare you just detain me and you're not police officer? And then shoot me and kill me.

Educational and Training Needs

Bradley shared that he took courses in multicultural competence in both his master's and doctoral level classes. He stated that the classes addressed the idea of multicultural competence but did not delve very deeply into the subject.

I don't think that my master's degree was very ... I don't think it went to the level that it probably needed to go with multicultural competence. We had a multicultural class in my masters and a multicultural class in my doctorate and I don't think either one went where it should go. […] Yeah, so I think the role it played, it was very rudimentary.

Bradley spoke to the role he felt his professors played in the instruction of multiculturally competent counseling during his counselor education.

In both classes, I had professors that were of the majority and they were male, there were white males and they didn't push ... Things would come up that they wouldn't deal with or didn't know what to deal with. So, I had students that were peers of mine that went out

and I knew they did damage because they became counselor educators. I just know that there was damage done because they didn't get it and they didn't get it because of some comments that they made.

Bradley further spoke to the role of training and the environment that is provided for counselors once they enter the field.

I think I became more culturally humble and aware and competent in my experience as a counselor educator in an institution that I won't name. […] But in that institution, they really push for social justice and they did so much work with that, that it made me grow. It made me grow with things such as women's issues and rights and the otherness that I talked about before.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Multicultural counseling competencies were first created in 1992 with the objective of assisting in the development of multiculturally capable counselors who could then provide effective and ethical counseling services to clients of culturally diverse backgrounds (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The ability to embrace diversity and immerse oneself in the understanding of how culture impacts the counseling relationship is paramount in providing services that exude multicultural competence. To expound, it is important to understand how one interprets their own culture in order to develop a greater awareness of its impact on our interpretation of other's culture (Friedman, 2017). However, providing multicultural competent counseling in the face of extreme oppression, and during a period of apparent resurgence in overt systemic injustices, may prove daunting to counselors, particularly those with membership in marginalized populations.

As previously mentioned in this paper, the rampant systemic injustices that have been more highlighted during the current sociopolitical climate, prove just as consequential to

minority counselors as they do to the minority population as a whole. The racial victimization that is experienced by members of minority and marginalized populations can have a long-term detrimental impact on their mental health and overall well-being (Okazaki, 2009). The targeting of immigrants within the United States threatens their ability to maintain an existence that is not permeated with fear and anxiety (Artiga et al., 2017). In the same vein, the emphasis on heteronormativity within this country provides an environment of victimization for those in the LGBTQ community (Austin et. Al, 2009). It is noteworthy that for many counselors that identify as minorities, there exists intersectionality with more than one marginalized population mentioned above. This was true for several participants in this study.

A 2015 survey of the diversity of the psychology workforce revealed that only 14% of the workforce is represented by those identifying as a racial minority (APA, 2018). This speaks to the staunch underrepresentation of minorities in the field and the lack of heterogeneity in service delivery. This also suggests that the overwhelming voice illuminated in current research is that of the racial majority. There exists a gap in the research of lived experiences of minority counselors in the context of the current sociopolitical climate. DePaulo (2018) addresses client and counselor experiences post 2016 election, but more so conveys the discomfort felt by white counselors rather than by all counselors. The current research also focuses mainly on the feelings evoked and experiences reported by current or future clients, not counselors (Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2019; Keller, 2019; Torino, 2017; Keller 2019). There also appears to be a lack of qualitative inquiry in relation to this topic.

Purpose, Methodology, and Results of the Study

There is a scarcity of research exploring the lived experiences of minority counselors in the context of the current sociopolitical climate. This dissertation study was developed in

consideration of the ability for minority counselors to set aside any biases, adding political associations as a cultural awareness component, and to continue to provide counseling that aligns with multicultural counseling competencies in the face of an uncertain sociopolitical environment. The main purpose of this study was to explore this central research question: *how has the current sociopolitical climate affected minority counselors' ability to deliver culturally competent counseling?* To garner a richer comprehension of a specific component of a topic that had not been extensively researched, a phenomenological approach was utilized.

In Chapter Three, the methodology and rationales used for this study were presented and discussed in detail. Once the Institutional Review Board approval was obtained, a total number of eight (8) participants were recruited. The inclusion criteria utilized to determine appropriateness of participants was: (1) being a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), (2) currently practicing, and have been practicing since at least 2015, in a setting that is culturally diverse (3) having graduated from a CACREP accredited university, and (4) identifying as a member of cultural minority status (i.e. immigrant, person of color, LGBTQ, differently-abled). Participants were asked to complete a 45-minute semi-structured interview and to participate in a 60-minute semi-structured focus group. After the interview data was collected and transcribed, it was analyzed by employing the steps in Moustakas's Modification of van Kaam's Phenomenological Data Analysis (Hays & Singh, 2014).

First, the researcher participated in listing and preliminary grouping. The researcher noted initial codes by analyzing the transcript of the data. After initial documenting occurred, reduction and elimination followed. After the reduction of codes, the data was then sorted into clusters that became the core themes of the experience. Next, the reduced data underwent the

final identification of the themes. Next, a textural description was established using direct examples from the transcription. Then, a structural description was created based on the textural description. And finally, a textural-structural description was developed of the experiences by incorporating the themes. In order to bolster credibility, the following trustworthiness strategies were utilized: (1) triangulation of data, (2) member checking, (3) research journal/field notes, and (4) inquiry audit.

Chapter Four discussed the research findings and identified themes that emerged from the narratives of all eight participants. The themes that surfaced included: (1) minority membership and identity, (2) increase in awareness, (3) atmosphere created by current administration, and (4) educational and training needs. All research participants provided an insightful perspective on the unique complexities and challenges that exist for minority counselors. Furthermore, each participant's rich experiential description added significantly to the understanding of how these complexities and challenges impact their perception of multicultural awareness in their clinical practice. In this section, the themes that emerged from these narratives will be interpreted in the context of literature and participant experiences. Clinical implications, limitations of this study, and future directions will also be addressed.

Descriptions and Implications of Themes and Subthemes

Minority Membership and Identity. Participants in this study strongly agreed that the current sociopolitical climate highlighted the importance their minority membership played in both their personal and professional identity. Common amongst all eight participants was a belief that their minority membership had a direct impact on the way in which they perceived their clients and their work. This theme was further broken down into three subthemes: (1) representation, (2) proving competence and credibility, and (3) intersectionality.

Representation. Every participant in this study identified the need for the visibility of Black and brown practicing counselors in the field. Although the counselors in this study identified a long-standing appreciation for the representation of minority counselors, they emphasized the magnification of its importance during the current sociopolitical climate. Access to a minority counselor can aid in destigmatizing of the field of counseling. By breaking down the barriers of stigma, minority counselors help clients with membership in same minority group to change their perception of counseling (Kim, 2006). Participants shared recognition of the connections that were made deeper via client's ability to identify with them. These connections were not limited to race and ethnicity alone, but to unseen minority class such as LGBT membership or immigrant status. Many participants believed that these connections helped their clients to feel more welcomed and aided in the reduction of the stigma that mental health carries within minority communities.

Proving Competence and Credibility. An overwhelming majority of participants in this study shared experiencing an increase in the need for them to prove their intelligence, competence, and/or credibility over the past four years. This subtheme is one that was identified as the most frequently cited issues amongst minority counselors for over twenty years (Iwamasa, 1996). Many shared that in a room full of counselors of the dominant population, they often felt overlooked or doubted when participating in staff meetings or consultations. It was expressed by several counselor participants that some of the only times they were looked to for their expertise in a subject matter was when they were being asked questions related to being a minority. Many identified experiencing this while still in counselor preparatory programs as well, often feeling their voices being muted while in the classroom. This also seemed to stem into the counseling session when the minority participants were working with clients of all cultures. It appeared as

though their capability to provide sound counseling was questioned due to their minority membership.

  Intersectionality. Several participants disclosed membership in more than one minority community. Since the emergence of the term in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality has become an important way to identify oneself without having to conform to one sole or prominent identity. Intersectional identity theory stresses that people are often disadvantaged or privileged by multiple causes to include race, age, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and/or other identity indicators (Kort, 2019). For some participants that translated into being both Black and a member of the LGBT community, or being Black and an immigrant, or being Black and a woman. Regardless of the way in which their intersectionality presented itself, they all shared that it greatly informed their counseling identity. They shared that whether visible or not, their intersectionality lent to them a deeper understanding of the issues that many clients are facing in the current sociopolitical climate. This intersectionality was a driving force behind much of the research these participants were conducting, the grants they were writing, and the interventions they were utilizing. They shared that this component of their identity aided in their ability to develop and seek cultural knowledge and awareness as if it were a journey more so than a destination.

  Increase in Awareness. One key commonality that emerged among all participants was the increase and change in their perceived multicultural awareness. Participants also shared that the current sociopolitical climate has had impact on their own awareness of self. This theme was categorized into four subthemes: (1) recognition of biases, (2) awareness of self, (3) change in counseling relationship, and (4) role of researcher.

__Recognition of Biases.__ As has been mentioned in previous chapters as well as in numerous participant interviews, the recognition, and bracketing, of biases is a critical component to providing culturally competent counseling. Participants have identified the current sociopolitical climate affecting the way their own biases impact the counseling relationship. For some participants they have realized that their biases became more prominent than they had in previous years. For other participants, the biases that emerged during the current climate were new. Some counselors noticed an increased bias when working with white males due to the assumption that these individuals were more likely to be "Trump supporters."

__Awareness of Self.__ Awareness of one's own cultural existence has long been considered a crucial part to understanding others' cultures. It has been posited that exploration of one's self-awareness as a counselor is heightened and encouraged by vicarious participation in a client's worldview (Martin, 2020). Participants in this study identified an increased awareness of how they felt about their minority membership and how that impacted their role in the field of counseling and in the country itself. For all participants they identified an integral relationship between their own cultural identity and their professional identity. They expressed a need to be more cognizant of how current events impacted their feelings and thus influenced the ways in which they engaged with clients and colleagues. Being aware of the language that they used and the way in which their messages were delivered is something that most participants identified as being more prominent in the current climate. In turn this meant processing an increase in the occurrence of countertransference with supervisors.

__Change in Counseling Relationship.__ The counseling relationship in the current sociopolitical climate has changed significantly according to participants in this study. Clients are entering counseling sessions with the need to discuss the current climate at a higher rate than

in past years. Counselors in this study have also found the need for clients to process the feelings associated with current events and, thus, counselors are entering into dialogue with clients that looks much different than in previous presidential administrations. There now exists a need to create a space of permission for clients to express their feelings and thoughts about political factors in a space that is free of judgment (Karayigit & Nesbitt, 2019). An increase in empathy for clients, even those whose political views do not align with the counselor, has been noted by all participants in this study. Counselors shared an increase in their level of self-disclosure as well. For those counselors that typically utilize minimal self-disclosure, they found it difficult to maneuver through the counseling relationship without accepting the need for it now in order to help normalize clients' feelings and improve trust and rapport.

   Role of Researcher. Basic comprehension of the way in which medical insurance works is an important part of providing mental health counseling services. However, participants noted a need to increase this knowledge in order to provide the best care to their clients. For some individuals, the current presidential administration created major shifts and changes in their insurance coverage. These changes occurred more than once, and without counselors staying in the loop some clients may have lost their ability to receive services. Simultaneously, it is imperative for those counselors that run their own private practice to remain abreast of any changes in policy that may result in them owing money due to changes in coverage. Participants also found themselves doing more social-work type duties in order to ensure that their clients had access to the care and resources necessary for them to remain in the country or to maneuver the criminal justice system.

   Atmosphere Created by Current Administration. All eight participants overwhelmingly agreed that the atmosphere that the current presidential administration has

created has directly impacted their own well-being. In turn this has manifested a paradoxical increase in both negative feelings and collective levels of empathy. This theme was broken down into three subthemes: (1) management of feelings, (2) recognition of triggers, and (3) us vs. them mentality.

  Management of Feelings. The feelings that have arisen secondary to the atmosphere created by the current presidential administration are expressed by counselors and clients alike. The participants in this study have shared an overwhelming feeling of negativity, doom, and anxiety over the past four years that has been exacerbated by recent crises surrounding racial tensions and a global pandemic. Research suggests the extreme stress triggered by these events could lead to the development of mental health disorders that have a long-term impact on well-being (Dastagir, 2020). Some participants shared being the recipient of hatred towards themselves and other minority groups as a result of the Trump presidency. This has resulted in counselors having to take steps in order to manage their feelings to prevent permeation of them into the counseling relationship. Counselors have had to table their feelings of suspicion when working with white clients. They have also taken measures to seek their own counseling to help manage and quell feelings of fear and anxiety. Being intentional, when possible, with the types of clients the counselors treat can help to ensure they serve their clients in the most authentic way possible while protecting their own well-being. Simultaneously, counselors have reported noticing an increase in the level of empathy felt for individuals from cultural backgrounds and political affiliations that differ from their own. This distinctive finding speaks to the level of cultural awareness and humility that the participants possessed. Being able to recognize their own reactions to the situations that caused intense feelings led them to understanding a universality of these feelings, despite the differences that existed between them.

Commented [JM6]: Add to this, this seems like an important finding (distinctive). 2 or 3 more sentences.

Recognition of Triggers. In general, this subtheme was discussed by all participants of this study. The use of the term "trigger" was common amongst the counselors interviewed regardless of the state in which they reside or the client population whom they serve. The current sociopolitical climate is one that is laden with racism, sexism, cultural appropriation, and police brutality. Seeing these stories in the news daily has had a direct impact on the well-being of the counselors interviewed. Many participants shared having to limit their intake of news and visits to social media in order to help safeguard their psyche. Watching videos of the brutal police arrests of Black people, or the unprecedented death toll of the Coronavirus, or the violence perpetrated upon immigrants, the LGBT community, or people of color triggered many counselors' memories of previous traumas. Processing the aforementioned triggering topics with clients, participants discovered they were often triggered via their stories. This exacerbated form of countertransference is not something these counselors anticipated facing in their careers, nor did they feel adequately trained from their counselor education programs.

Us vs. Them Mentality. The need for the dominant white culture to not only recognize the adversity that minority populations are facing, but to advocate for help and change is imperative during this sociopolitical climate. However, most participants have found that their white colleagues are often silent in the face of issues that they are encountering. Instead of allowing space for minority counselors to process the impact of the current climate, counselors of the dominant culture are silencing their Black and brown colleagues. In the event that white colleagues acknowledge the hurdles that minority members are facing, there is not much, if any, action seen to accompany it. Counselors are also finding that their white clients may try to bring racial and political issues into the counseling session. Some counselors attempt to challenge their client's thoughts or tease out reasons behind their feelings while other counselors do not see

the benefit in confrontation. The desire for equity in the counseling relationship regardless of whether a white counselor or a counselor of color is providing services was prominent in this study.

Educational and Training Needs. In all eight narratives, participants identified that the current sociopolitical climate illuminated the ways in which multicultural competence is being delivered and taught in both trainings and counselor master's programs. It was the consensus of all eight participants that the manner in which multiculturalism is currently taught in CACREP programs needs to shift and change. This theme was categorized into subthemes: (1) diversity of faculty, (2) the "one class" structure, (3) training and supervision, and (4) accountability of faculty.

Diversity and Accountability of Faculty. If representation of minorities in the field of counseling is important, then representation of them within the faculty of counseling programs is important too. Many counselors of color, or those identifying with other minority populations, fail to see counselor educators with whom they can identify and relate. This lack of relational opportunity minimizes the possibilities for minority student mentorship by minority faculty. The lack of diversity in the faculty is also indicative of the field in general. If there does not exist a variety of cultures and ethnicities represented during counselor preparatory programs, the perspectives from which multiculturalism is taught and presented is limited. The overwhelming narrative of the programs from which the participants hailed was one of the white, dominant culture. The two participants that identified having access to a diverse faculty praised this opportunity to help them grow in their confidence and counselor identity.

It is also important that faculty members are held to a standard that exemplifies the importance of cultural competence in counselor education. Some participants shared that some

professors often attempt to endorse an identity that is immersed within multiculturalism, but also make problematic statements that are not culturally humble or alert. Faculty need to acknowledge social and cultural issues, examine their own biases, and find a way to promote potentially controversial and difficult conversations (Shallcross, 2013). The accountability that counseling programs impart upon professors sets a standard for what is expected of all counselors in terms of cultural competence and awareness.

The "One Class" Structure. CACREP accredited programs have one required course in social and cultural issues in counseling. There is no requirement to take further courses on the subject matter outside of the singular, core, required course. This was a resounding issue for the participants in this study. The current sociopolitical climate is one that calls for a deeper understanding of multiculturalism and the ability to provide counseling that is culturally alert. This cannot be accomplished fully from one academic course. It is insinuated that multiculturalism should be infused throughout all the courses in a counseling preparatory program. A pedagogy that encourages social justice is needed to manifest critical consciousness and inquisitiveness in counseling students in every course (Goodman et al., 2015). However, participants in this study shared that was often not the case. There may be some professors that see the value of providing case scenarios that are culturally diverse or incorporating current issues in the classroom, but this seems to be the exception and not the rule. Fickling and Gonzalez suggest that counselor educators that allow for opportunities to practice and process social justice dialogue increases the likelihood a student would engage in advocacy outside of the classroom (2016). The lack of threading multiculturalism into core courses may result in counselors that do not comprehend fully how to weave the concept into their practices. Cultural awareness should be a foundational concept in every course and should reach beyond one class.

__Training and Supervision.__ Cultural competence is emphasized through CACREP standard and ACA Code of Ethics. However, some counselors may see this terminology as suggestive of a destination rather than an ongoing pursuit. Participants of this study identified a gap in multicultural training post-graduation. This lack of training could be impactful during a time in which the need for increased cultural awareness and sensitivity is high. When there exists an equilibrium and continuity between counseling and social justice advocacy, counselors are better able and equipped to support their clients (Ratts et al., 2015). Several participants also identified the need to bring multiculturalism into the supervisory relationship. As supervisors, participants shared that they make a point to approach their supervision model from a lens informed by cultural awareness and inclusion. It should be a common component of supervision that extends beyond the academic level and out into the practicing field.

Applications for Clinical Practice and Counselor Education

This study presented several implications for both the clinical field of counseling and counselor education. The following section elaborates upon the findings of this study and illuminates the importance of this study in regard to current literature and practice.

Awareness of Biases

This study revealed the importance of counselor self-awareness regarding biases felt towards cultural populations or individuals that may be the recipients of counseling. If these cultural biases were to go unchecked it could lead to the counselor's ethics being called into question (Myers, Morse, & Wheeler, 2014). The ability to bracket biases that were exacerbated by the current sociopolitical climate proved difficult for some participants However, participant narratives suggest that without taking the time to acknowledge their personal biases the

counseling session could not fully focus on the needs and goals of the client. A bias led counseling session could result in the imposition of the counselor's beliefs and values upon the client thus violating the ethical foundations imparted upon counselors while in counselor preparatory programs.

Shin (2008) suggested that education assists in creating shifts in attitudes and beliefs, and a social justice-oriented program can produce students that will better serve the community. Normalization and processing of implicit biases is an integral component for the growth of counseling students. It is common for counseling students to under report biases and exaggerate levels of multicultural competency. This is problematic as counseling students are being sent into the community to serve a variety of client populations. When given the Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R), a 2008 study by Boysen and Vogel discovered counseling students possessed significant levels of implicit bias toward the African American and the LGBT communities despite initially agreeing to a high level of multicultural competence. Given this knowledge and the implication of the potential influence of bias revealed by this study, it is important for counselor educators to not only assess students for implicit bias, but to do it at intervals throughout the counselor education program and to emphasize the importance of engaging in difficult conversations within the classroom.

Multicultural Preparation of Counselor Impacts Client Outcomes

Participants in this study emphasized the importance that their multicultural preparation played in their ability to work with a myriad of different client populations. The nation's changing demographic profile is one that suggests minority populations will comprise the majority of the nation's population by 2050 (Poston, 2020). Thus, the need for extensive multicultural preparation and training is necessary to prepare counselors to work with this

growing, diverse population. It is noteworthy that although the Black community is included in the growing minority population, they are still accessing outpatient mental health services at a lower rate than their white counterparts despite a need for care (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Therefore, when this population utilizes mental healthcare services it is imperative to establish trust and rapport via culturally responsive treatment which a counselor would acquire in a preparatory program (Vance, 2019).

Participant narratives in this study also emphasized the need for continued multicultural training post-graduation. Participants identified seeking this training and increased multicultural knowledge through self-motivation rather than a need to fulfill a requirement. Despite an overwhelming amount of studies regarding the outcomes of multicultural training courses in the confines of a counselor education program, there currently exists a gap in the research regarding the impact of multicultural training post-graduation. Two of the eight components of the competencies expected to be garnered during the social and cultural core course during counselor education include: (1) the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients, and (2) strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (CACREP, 2016). It was overwhelmingly shared by the participants in this study that these components are being minimally met, if at all, during counselor education. Regardless, both the American Counseling Association and CACREP expect counselors to practice counseling that is culturally alert and responsive. Therefore, it may be beneficial to require continued multicultural trainings in order to remain knowledgeable of the growing and increasingly diverse national population and to provide counseling that is effective to this population.

Utilization of Multicultural Supervision Model

The last clinical and educational implication of this research study worth noting is the role of multiculturally informed supervision. The utilization of a multicultural supervision model was a talking point of several participants within this study. Although none of them directly identified a specific model, they all noted the importance of weaving multicultural awareness into both the delivery of client supervision and within the supervisee/supervisor relationship. The experience of cross-cultural supervision is something many participants highlighted. Within this supervision delivery method, awareness of cultural differences within the supervisory relationship is of high importance. Colistra and Brown-Rice (2011) suggested that should supervisors flounder with sensitivity to these cultural differences, a negative impact can occur with not only with the supervisee, but with the clients the supervisee is serving.

It is important that, just as in clinical counselor preparation, counselor supervisors receive education and training that emphasizes the critical value of multicultural competence. In a study conducted by Duan and Roehlke (2001), 90% of supervisors surveyed stated that they addressed ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation issues in supervision, but only half of their supervisees surveyed recognized these discussions. This statistic suggests that if supervisors are not adequately trained to deliver multiculturally competent counseling, or if they are not fully developed in their supervisory identity, the misapplication of cross-cultural supervision is likely (Colistra & Brown-Rice, 2011). Alternatively, utilization of the Synergistic Model of Multicultural Supervision (SMMS) may prove most effective for providing supervision that goes beyond cross-cultural concerns. By combining two existing models of supervision, one developmental and the other multicultural, SMMS presents as a more comprehensive model of multiculturally informed supervision that deserves more emphasis in counselor preparatory programs (Ober, Granello, & Henfield, 2009).

Limitations

The study may be potentially biased by the sampling procedure. Despite the representation of eight different states within the study sample, due to utilization of convenience and snowball sampling, the geographic scope of participants within the sample could be wider. For instance, the utilization of prior connections to the researcher that, in turn, provided more referrals to potential participants may have resulted in a less diversified participant pool than was optimal. Thus, inferences from the sample to the accessible population and then wholly to the target population should be made thoughtfully. However, despite the limited range of recruitment, the results of this study offer a significant perspective of the role that multicultural competence plays in the delivery of mental health services by minority counselors.

A second limitation this study may have encountered is the social desirability bias. Social desirability in research refers to the way in which a participant responds to a posed question or scenario; responding with how they feel they should respond versus how they genuinely want to respond. Lalwani, Shavitt and Johnson (2006) suggest that cultural membership, whether collectivist or individualist, may also play an integral role in social desirability in respondents. At the conclusion of at least half of the interviews, when participants were asked if there was anything further they wanted to share about their experiences providing counseling in the current sociopolitical climate, participants amended or elaborated upon their responses. This may suggest that some participants initially responded in a way that was not wholly authentic, but rather in a way that was more socially acceptable.

A third limitation this study may have experienced is researcher cultural membership. Although the researcher herself identifies as having minority membership, she does not identify as a person of color. A white researcher conducting a study with persons of color may

inadvertently bring bias into the interview, and/or may encounter more difficulty gaining the trust of the participants to share their experiences properly (Anderson, 1997). Therefore, the researcher employed several trustworthiness strategies, and immersed herself in the experiences shared in the data collected, in order to combat any privilege bias that may arise.

Lastly, this study may have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducting research that required personal interviews with participants during a time of such great uncertainty proved challenging for both the research and the participants. The way in which researchers approached their methodology amidst the restrictions of quarantine required adaptation to say the least (Gardner, 2020). It was noted how the narrative for those participants who were interviewed prior to the quarantine was slightly different than those who were interviewed during it. However, the stark similarities that existed throughout all of the interviews regarding the impact of the current sociopolitical climate remained unchanged.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study offers a multitude of directions for future research. First, fear for threats of physical harm from law enforcement upon minority populations is a significant topic of the societal landscape at this current moment in time. This current study suggests a prominence of fear of police amongst the counselors within this study. The momentum the Black Lives Matter movement has created illuminates the need for health professionals to confront police violence and institutionalized racism (Charles, Himmelstein, Keenan, & Barcelo, 2015). This role may have a significant impact upon counselors of color. The privileges that are afforded to individuals from dominant populations often includes a level of comfort and security with law enforcement. This privilege is another layer worth exploring within the contexts of the aforementioned future research recommendation.

Multicultural awareness and sensitivity to the inequities and challenges of minority populations calls for greater emphasis on multicultural education within counselor preparatory programs. This study suggests that the current way in which social and cultural issues in counseling is addressed within the one required class curriculum in CACREP-accredited programs is not enough to efficiently prepare future clinicians. Addressing the gap that exists within this curriculum is a necessary step to help foster counselor's awareness to a level that dives deeper than what is currently broached. Exploring and eliminating the stereotypical brush with which some cultures and ethnicities are painted may help create more consistency in both knowledge and understanding amongst all CACREP-accredited programs.

Lastly, it is imperative to acknowledge the probable impact that current COVID-19 pandemic may have had upon the course of this research. In order to help curtail the spread of the virus, each state instituted their own state-specific lockdown procedures (Gershman, 2020). Counselors and health-care workers continued to remain on the front lines of treatment for both physical and psychological health throughout the unprecedented national quarantine. Although the impact of COVID-19 affected individuals from all cultures, Black health-care workers experienced a disproportionate amount of negative effects. The societal conditions under which many Black health-care providers continue to work creates a much different kind of burnout, stress, and exhaustion than is experienced by their white counterparts (Wingfield, 2020). An increase in racial biases exhibited by white practitioners, and witnessed by Black practitioners, added to Black healthcare workers experiencing heightened stress levels and diminished well-being (Wingfield, 2020). Exploring the way in which this may have impacted the delivery of mental health services by minority counselors to clients from various cultural backgrounds may assist in the understanding of certain healthcare prejudices.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

<u>**PROJECT TITLE:**</u> Minority Counselor Multicultural Competence in the Current Sociopolitical Climate

<u>**INTRODUCTION**</u>

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

<u>**RESEARCHERS**</u>

Name of the Responsible Project Investigator researchers: Jeffry Moe, PhD

Other Investigator involved: Kathleen Brown, MSEd

Old Dominion University, Department of Counseling and Human Services.

<u>**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**</u>

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of the way in which the current sociopolitical climate has influenced mental health counseling. Few if any, have specifically focused on the lived experiences of minority and marginalized counselors. The intent of the proposed study is to aid counselors' understanding of the impact of systemic injustice not only upon client needs and concerns, but upon the minority counselor. Furthermore, the researcher seeks to examine minority counselor self-efficacy in understanding and implementing multicultural competent counseling amidst a tumultuous sociopolitical climate.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of the experiences of minority counselors. This will include an interview and a focus group activity. Specifically, you will be asked to answer several opinion-based questions that identify your subjective experience. If you say YES, then the interview will last for approximately 1 hour at a reserved room in the Old Dominion University CHS suite, or via telephone/online meeting. After the interview, you will be scheduled for a follow-up focus group with other minority counselors in which you may participate in person or via online meeting platform. Approximately 8-10 minority counselors will be participating in this study.

<u>**EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA**</u>

You must possess current licensure as an LPC or LMFT, and be currently practicing counseling. You must have graduated from a CACREP accredited counseling master's program. To the best of your knowledge, you should identify as a member of a minority population.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

It is important that you know about the potential risk and benefits of participation. Specifically, the interview and focus group will involve discussing and reflecting on your identity which can often be a sensitive topic. If negative emotions occur at any time during this study, community (counseling) referrals will be provided as needed. However, there is little to no anticipated physical, psychological, legal, or social risks to participants. At a minimum, a risk of breach of confidentiality is possible, but this risk is mitigated because data will be de-identified, and all data will be uploaded onto a secure, password protected drive.

As with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits for participants in this study.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The researchers will take reasonable steps to keep private information, such as questionnaires and transcripts, confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from transcripts, destroy tapings once transcribed and safeguard all computer-based information. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of any harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers can give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact the principal investigator, Dr. Jeff Moe at 757-683-3326 at Old Dominion University, the current College of Education IRB Committee Chair,

Dr. Laura Chezan, at 757-683-7055, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

<u>VOLUNTARY CONSENT</u>

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Phone: Kathleen Brown 757-389-1685

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call the current College of Education IRB Committee Chair, Dr. Laura Chezan, at 757-683-7055, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

<u>INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT</u>

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

Appendix B

Interview Protocol and Questions

Interviewer's name:

Participants' assigned participant number:

Interview date:

Interview start and stop time:

Interview duration:

Interview location and type (e.g., phone, in-person, web-conferencing):

Interviewer completed field notes and reflexive journal:

Date of interview transcription:

Transcription member checking for accuracy and to expand on points as desired?

Date(s) transcription sent to participant and participant confirmation?

Follow up questions needed for subsequent interview?

All public record demographic information gathered

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello! My name is Kathleen Brown, I'm a counseling PhD student from Old Dominion University. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me about your experiences with cultural competence and political anxiety. There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that only myself and my committee will be aware of your answers. The purpose of that is so we know whom to contact should we have further follow--up questions after this interview.

Before we get started, I would like to confirm that you had a chance to read the informed consent document I emailed you and to see if you have any questions. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today?

___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? *(field participant questions).*

The interview should last about 45 minutes and will be recorded for later transcription. If at any time you wish to stop the interview or to not answer a question you are completely free to do so without penalty. I will take all necessary precautions to protect your confidentiality, the confidentiality of the university you attended, and your current place of employment. After the interview is transcribed, we will blind any identifying information and email the transcribed interview back to you to see if you would like to change, clarify, or add anything

Before I hit the record button and we begin the interview do you have any questions? *(start timer and recording device)*

Qualitative Interview Questions

<u>Interview Questions</u>

Tell me about your experience providing counseling over the past four years.

Potential Probes:
> 1. What are some ways in which you believe your minority membership has influenced your counseling identity?
>
> 2. In what ways has the current sociopolitical climate impacted your counseling identity and/or practices?
>
> 3. In what ways has the current sociopolitical climate impacted your own well-being?
>
> 4. Tell me about your perception of culturally competent counseling?

5. What type of role did your coursework and training play in your perception of counselor cultural competence?

6. In what ways has the current sociopolitical climate impacted your self-efficacy in providing culturally competent counseling?

7. Are there any other aspects of your experience with counseling in the current sociopolitical climate that we haven't covered, and you would like to speak on?

<u>Demographic Questions</u>

1)   What college and/or graduate program did you attend?

2)   When did you graduate your most recent degree (month/year)?

3)   Where do you currently practice counseling?

4)   What is your gender?

5)   What is your age?

6)   How would you best describe your race/ethnicity?

7)   Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community?

8)   Do you identify as differently-abled?

9)   How would you best describe your political affiliation?

Thank you again for helping me to better understand your experience with counseling over the past four years. The interview will be transcribed over the next several weeks and I will email it back to you to see if you would like to change, clarify, or add any information. Also, if I have any additional questions at a later time would you be willing to have brief meeting or participate in a focus group?

Turn off recording device...

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol and Probes

Focus Group Protocol

Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. My name is Kathleen Brown and I am a third-year doctoral student at Old Dominion University. I will be both the facilitator and note taker for this focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to ascertain current minority mental health counselors' perspectives and experiences during the current sociopolitical climate.

The focus group should last about 60 minutes and will be recorded for later transcription. If at any time you wish to stop, or to not answer a question you are completely free to do so without penalty. I will take all necessary precautions to protect your confidentiality, the confidentiality of the university you attended, and your current place of employment. After the focus group is transcribed, I will blind any identifying information.

Before I begin, are there any questions?

Focus Group Probes

1. What hurdles, if any, do you face as a minority counselor?

2. When I say the term "political anxiety" what comes to mind and does it resonate with you?

3. a) What is different about counseling in the current sociopolitical climate vs counseling prior to 2016?

b) If you could change one aspect about counseling in the current sociopolitical climate, what would it be?

4. How have current events changed the way in which you speak with or approach clients from diverse cultures and/or with diverse beliefs/values?

5. Given the what you have shared regarding counseling in the current sociopolitical climate, what, if anything, can be done to improve counselor multicultural alertness?

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Definitions	Subthemes	Examples
Minority Membership and Identity	The impact and importance of minority membership on both counselor professional and personal identity	Representation Proving Competence and Credibility Intersectionality	"…It's like some days you're, like, seen as an expert on like, "Oh, you know! You understand minority stuff," but then things that you might actually be the expert on it, you don't get the same credibility." "I think it [minority membership] is the crux of my counseling identity. From the jump, I knew that I needed… I had a very strong desire to be a counselor, partially because there weren't a lot of counselors who look like me." "So I think it's [minority membership] made me… as a counselor, in my identity, made me more aware of the pressures that might come upon my clients that I'm serving, so I've become more, I think if you were going to term it it would be more, social justice oriented and I've incorporated that into my therapy."
Increase in Awareness	Shift in cultural awareness and awareness of self spurred by the current sociopolitical climate	Recognition of Biases Awareness of Self Change in Counseling Relationship	"Everybody at work, they're not pro-Trump but somebody voted for him. So I have my own biases that I have to work through, because I think I'm more suspicious of my clients […]" "I do believe that it would be very difficult for me to counsel someone who didn't share some of those same beliefs that I have if those beliefs came up a lot during session."

		Role of Researcher	"I think it's [the current sociopolitical climate] made me better. I do think that it's made me better because I deal with it more with my clients. It's an easier topic to broach, especially for people of color and other oppressed identities, it's an easier thing to broach."
Atmosphere Created by Current Administration	Impact of the current environment upon minority counselors' personal well-being and professional identity	Management of Feelings Recognition of Triggers Us vs. Them Mentality	"Usually with politics the decision gets made and then it's years before you can actually see it. But I feel like when this administration makes a decision, people are directly impacted immediately." "Just even physically, losing sleep about things, having some nightmares about what would happen to some of my family members. And also having nightmares about what happened if Trump has another four years in office." "It's made me cry more because I just feel this pathos and this negative energy in the climate. I describe this climate as extremely racist, oppressive to women and LGBT and minority religious expressions."

Educational and Training Needs	Identified educational and training needs in counselor education to effectively prepare counselors to practice with multicultural awareness	Diversity and Accountability of Faculty The "One Class" Structure Training and Supervision	"I don't know where they [black therapists] are, but even like from the top down to people who we have teaching that really needed diversity in the teaching of and training of counselors." "I don't really feel like I got too much in terms of cultural competency in my program. There was a class that we took, and it was fine and dandy, for the most part… So while well-intentioned, I definitely felt like it lacked, and I don't really feel like it was... I don't really feel like cultural competency was stressed across the board." "In both classes, I had professors that were of the majority and they were male, there were white males and they didn't push ... Things would come up that they wouldn't deal with or didn't know what to deal with."

Appendix E

Participant Demographic Information

Age	Gender	Most Recent Degree Conferral	Race/Ethnicity	LGBT Membership	Political Affiliation
30	Female	2012	Black	No	Progressive
38	Female	2014	Black	No	Democratic
31	Female	2016	Black	Yes	Leftist
31	Female	2014	African American	Yes	Democratic
30	Female	2019	Black	Yes	Democrat/Liberal
35	Male	2013	Biracial	Yes	Libertarian
39	Male	2009	Black	No	Democratic
54	Male	2010	Black	Yes	Democratic