Comparing The Color of Fear and Evolution of a Group: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

This article compared two films: (a) *The color of fear* and (b) *Evolution of a group* using the *Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey* and the *Counselor Skills and Personal Development Rating Form*. The results indicated significant differences in multicultural counseling skills evidenced by the leader of *The color of fear* when compared with those skills of the leaders of *Evolution of a group* [t(6) = 3.43, *p*<.001]. *Keywords:* Multicultural; Pilot Study; Testing.

Comparando El Color de Miedo y Evolución de un Grupo: Un Estudio Modelo

Compendio

Este articulo compara dos peliculas: (a) *The color of fear* (El color del miedo) y (b) *Evolution of a group* (Evolucion de un grupo) usando el *Multicultural Awareness Knwloedge and Skills Survey y el Counselor Skills and Personal Devlopment Rating From*. Los resultados indican diferencias significativas en las destrazas multiculturales en el leader del group en *The color fear* cuando se comparan con las destrazas de los ledaeres de *Evolution of a group* [t(6) = 3.43, *p*<.001]. *Palabras Clave:* Multicultural; Pilot Study; Testing.

There has been some discussion of culture-specific group interventions in the most recent group counseling literature (e.g., Brinson & Fisher, 1999; Chen & Han, 2001; Colmant & Merta, 1999; Torres-Rivera, Garrett, & Crutchfield, 2004). In many of these writings, the focus is on recommendations to majority-culture therapists regarding how to best serve group clients of a particular culture. As such, it is necessary to discuss the importance of working with culturally homogeneous groups in order to better understand culturally-responsive services offered through multicultural interventions.

Furthermore, the diverse demographics of the Americas requires that group leaders be trained to be culturally competent before they can be considered to be effective with all populations (Mendoza, Fernández, & Páez, 2005; Smith Castro, 2005; Traverzo-Yépez, 2005). Despite the clear need for training in cultural competence, group counseling as a field has neglected the cultural components of group dynamics, concentrating primarily in EuroAmerican models of group counseling (see Guth & McDonnell, 2004; Riva &

Korinek, 2004). Recognizing this need in the United States the Association for Specialists in Group Work, a division of the American Counseling Association developed the *Principles for Diversity Competence Group Workers* (ASGW, 1999). Essentially, the *Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers* is a document that makes an attempt to provide guidelines to effectively work with diverse population in group setting and it is based on the *Awareness-Knowledge-Skills* model of Pedersen (2000).

While the *Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers* (ASGW, 1999) provides some guidelines for working with diversity, these standards can at times be confusing and some people might find it overwhelming, given that the principles are not really providing much more than just guidelines and not much structure nor examples on how the a group leader can become culturally competence in leading multicultural counseling groups. Correspondingly little can be found in the literature of group work with regards to operationalization of these principles. Therefore, this study is an effort to add to the research literature about group work by suggesting methods of operationalizing cultural competencies in group settings. When considering the use of culturally-based interventions in groups, it is likely to note two seemingly divergent applications. The first

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application is the use of interventions that are culturally-responsive with members of culturally homogeneous groups. Many authors have discussed the importance of working effectively with racially or ethnically homogeneous groups to specifically address issues and concerns of people from those specific populations (i.e., Chen & Han, 2001). The second application is the integration of indigenous practices into psychoeducational and counseling groups that may not be racially/ethnically homogeneous or focused on cultural issues. This approach consists of a synthesis of contemporary group counseling techniques and traditional wisdom. Thus, in order to assess the second application of the integration of indigenous practices into psychoeducational and counseling groups that may not be racially/ethnically homogeneous or focused on cultural issues the *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000) was selected. Similarly, *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) was selected as a comparison training tool.

For the purposes of this study, the authors were not concerned with all of the dimensions outlined in the principles of cultural competencies (see Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996). As this is a pilot study, it was our intention to evaluate group work from a multicultural perspective using race and ethnicity as a beginning of a number of studies that could lead to the development of the operationalization of cultural competencies in group work.

More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine whether the group leader of *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrated cultural competency skills as measured by the *Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey* (MAKSS) (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1990) and to compare these results with those of the leaders of *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000). In addition to the reason stated earlier, these two films were examined because of their popular use, as evident in the number of hits found on the web using the search engine Google. However, it is important to note that *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) is used mainly in multicultural courses, while *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000) is used in group courses only. The *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000) is a video where students see Marianne and Jerry Corey demonstrating their integrative approach to group work. It is a two-hour video of a real live group. The video highlights the development of the group process by showing segments of the group work that occurred over the three-day session. Throughout the video, the Coreys demonstrate a wide variety of techniques and skills, including: how to deal with members' hesitation and resistance, their feelings of not being "good" enough, their fears of being judged, their difficulties with intimate relationships, and their unresolved issues with parents. The Coreys demonstrate how to recognize and work with interpersonal group conflict and how to "link" members and get them to work effectively with one another.

The color of fear (Muh Wah, 1994) is a documentary where eight men from the United States of Asian, European, Latino, African American and Native American ancestry gather under the direction of a group leader of Asian ancestry to discuss issues of racism and discrimination. It is emotional, and at time heated interactions among the group members. During the session, the participants challenge the privileged status of the white Americans and recount their anguished experiences with discrimination.

Definition of Terms

In order to provide clarity and background for the study, the following definition of terms are offer:

Culture – "Culture is defined as collective programming of the mind; it manifest itself not only in values, but more superficial ways in symbols, heroes, and rituals" (Hofstede, 2003, p. 1). However, Lump (1986) further offered a definition of culture that is widely used in the cross-cultural counseling literature. He defined culture as the institutions, language, values, religion, ideas, habits of thinking, artistic expressions, and patterns of social relationships of one particular group.

Multicultural Counseling – Multicultural counseling is a condition or even in which two or more persons with different ways of perceiving their social environment and/or worldviews are brought together in a helping relationship (Pedersen, 2000).

Multicultural expertise – For the purpose of this study a counselor with multicultural expertise is a counselor that: (a) Modifies his/her technique to reflect the cultural differences of the client; (b) is prepared to deal with difficulties during the counseling process due to cultural differences between the client and the counselor; and, (c) understands that the way culturally diverse people conceptualize their problems as well as how they resolve those problems is bound in cultural patterns.

Multicultural competence – Similarly, for this study, a multicultural competent counselor is a counselor that: (a) is aware of his/her own cultural heritage; (b) see how his/her cultural background affects his/her attitudes, values, and beliefs about the counseling process; (c) recognize the limitations that he/she has in regards to his/her multicultural expertise and/or competency; and, (d) that recognize the root of discomfort with different clients in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture.

Group Dynamics – The term "dynamic" describes the impact that social processes have on group members. These social processes include "the interdependence of people in groups…a group's capacity to promote social interaction, create patterned interrelationships among its members, bind members together to form a single unit, and accomplish its goals…" (Forsyth, 1999, p. 11). As group members shape

their own microcosm, the dynamics that occur between the group environment and the group member form a social microcosm that evokes the core issues of all members. The spontaneity of interactions determines how fast the social microcosm will develop and how authentic the social microcosm will become.

Types of Group

The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), a division of the American Counseling Association, who specializes in group therapy, identifies four different types of groups. These types of groups are task group, psychoeducational group, group counseling, and group psychotherapy. According with the classification of groups by ASGW, each type of group has a different and unique goal. The goal for task group is to promote efficient and effective accomplishment of goals. The goal for the psychoeducational group is to promote personal and interpersonal growth and development and the prevention of future difficulties among people who may be at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems or who seek enhancement of personal qualities and abilities. The goal for group counseling is to address personal and interpersonal problems of living and promote personal and interpersonal growth and development, among people who may be experiencing transitory maladjustment and who are at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems, or who are seeking enhancement for personal qualities and abilities. The goal of the psychotherapy group is to address personal and interpersonal problems of living, remediate perceptual and cognitive distortions or repetitive patterns of dysfunctional behavior, and promote personal and interpersonal growth and development; among people who may be experiencing severe and/or chronic maladjustment.

The two films illustrated two different types of group with overlapping dynamics that are present all types of groups. *The Evolution of Group* presented a typical counseling group modality or therapy group, while the *Color of Fear* presented an encounter group that folds under the psychoeducational group modality. The group dynamics and the group leader role in both groups overlap even when the goal of each group is different.

Group Development and Stages

Related to the definitions and goals of the different types of groups is the issue of group development and stages. A number of authors have developed and proposed numerous conceptualizations and definitions of three to five group stages or phases through which groups progress in their development (Corey & Corey, 2006; Day, 2007) and while no empirical confirmation or outcome studies have validated the existence and progression of such sequential,

developmental stages, it is important to mention that the various developmental group stages do possess common sense value, and do have face validity, based upon the clinical experience of group workers. There also remains the task of furthering the credibility and development of group stages and phases in various group type formats and structures, such as multicultural counseling group work.

Gladding (1998) simply described the structure of a group as the way in which the leader directs group member interaction, which exists on a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the leader assumes a passive stance and encourages members to give direction to the group. This type of group structure is often referred to as a process group. Conversely, in highly structured groups, the leader often focuses on specific themes or topics, and communication among group members is frequently directed through the leader and other times through direct member-to-member interactions. The *Color of Fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) provides a good example of an encounter structure group, consisting of developmental phases (or stages) that may be applied to a multicultural counseling group work.

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this study are:

Hypothesis 1: The results of the MAKSS will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more multicultural competency than do the leaders in *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

Hypothesis 2: The results of the *Counselor Skill and Personal Development Rating Form* (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Maddux, Smaby, Phan, & Roberts-Wilbur, 2002) will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more counseling skills than do the leaders of *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

Method

Participants

The participants were 16 doctoral students in an APA-accredited counseling psychology program who completed at least their first year practicum and were part of the advanced group counseling course. There were 15 females and one male, with a mean age of 28 (range = 25-53). Of the sample, two were African American, one was Asian (Korean) and 13 were Caucasian. One of the participants was bilingual (Korean and English). The participants considered themselves part of the middle class of the socio-economic status in the United States of America The participants also have completed the multicultural counseling course that the university required as part of the degree plan of study.

Instruments

The *Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey* (MAKSS) (D'Andrea et al., 1990) was used in the

study to measure multicultural counseling competencies of group leaders. It was modified so as to measure observed behaviors rather than self-report information. The MAKSS is survey that consists of sixty items on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Three subscales of awareness, knowledge, and skills are equally divided among the sixty items assessing rater agreement about the observed levels of awareness of multicultural issues, understanding of multicultural counseling terms and topics, and multicultural counseling skills. The ranking of these choices include a range of 1 (strongly disagree or very limited), 2 (disagree or limited), 3 (agree or good), and 4 (strongly agree or very good). Calculation of the MAKSS consists of total subscale scores by each individual (awareness subscale in items 1 to 20; knowledge subscale in items 21 to 40; skill subscale in items 41 to 60) and then the sum is divided by 20 to produce three subscale scores. Seven items that were negatively worded were scored in reverse. The alpha reliability coefficient from previous studies for each subscale of awareness, knowledge, and skills respectively were .73, .32, and .92 (Díaz-Lázaro & Cohen, 2001). For the present study, reliability has been reported as .76, .79, .90. Full scale reliability was .90 and for the present study. While the use of this scale for this study is not what it was intended to do and it creates a limitation for the use of the scales, the authors of this manuscript found evidence to support that the scale have been use to assess training programs, providing support for the use of scale in a evaluative function beyond self-reporting events. (see D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Daniels, D'Andrea, & Kim, 1999). Additionally the authors of this study received confirmation that the MAKSS could be use as an external assessment tool with limitations without losing validity (M. D'Andrea personal communication, 26, February 2006). Nonetheless, it is important to mention that Constantine, Gloria and Ladany (2002) warn us against using the MAKSS, the *Multicultural Counseling Inventory* (MCI) (Sodowksy, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994), and the *Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale* (MCKAS) Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2000) in clinical and training setting given that they may be limited in the information that they provide. Nonetheless, the same study did found that it was some correlation between the instruments, thus, providing validity for an exploratory study such as this.

The *Counselor Skill Personal Development Rating Form* (CSPD-RF) (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Maddux, Smaby, Phan, & Roberts-Wilbur, 2002) was the second instrument used in this pilot study. The CSPD-RF consists of 20 items. The format consists of statements that describe the counselor-in-training's performance (for example, the counselor's observed use of clarification skills in responding to the client statements), followed by six, six-point Likert-scale items with responses ranging from 1 (unacceptable) to 6 (outstanding).

Total scores on the CSPD-RF reflect the overall performance of counselors-in-training in observed counseling situations. Internal consistency of all 20 items of the CSPD-RF was .91 (Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Cronbach, 1951). The split-half reliability coefficient was .83 and .84. This reliability is consistent with a previous study using the CSPD-RF in which Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .95 (Phan, 2001; Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett, 2001). For the present study Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93.

Design and Procedure

Testing occurred in two parts a week apart in order to create a baseline. The 16 students were divided in two groups of 8 participants. The first group was placed in a comfortable room with a VCR and a television and viewed a 30-minute version of *The color of fear*. At the same time, the other group of 8 students were placed in another comfortable room with a VCR and a television and viewed a 30-minute version of *Evolution of a group*. After each group watched a film, the MASKK and the CSPD-RF were administered. No discussion about either movie was allowed during the first week.

A similar procedure was conducted the following week. This time the group of 8 students who saw *The color of fear* watched *Evolution of a group* and the group that saw *Evolution of a group* watched *The color of fear*. As it was done the first week, both groups were given the MASKK and the CSPD-RF and were instructed to evaluate the performances of the group facilitators in the film. A discussion followed after the senior researcher of this pilot study collected all of the completed assessments.

Data analysis

To determine whether the group leaders of each film presented significantly different multicultural competency skills and counseling skills, the mean scores of each group were compared using a *t* test for dependent samples. All of the instruments were analyzed by total score and not by subscales. For example, when looking at the MAKSS the researchers did not tabulate sub-scores for awareness, knowledge, or skills, but rather used the total score of the MAKSS as whole.

Results

The following results were obtained the first week:

Hypothesis 1: The results of the MAKSS will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more multicultural competency than do the leaders in *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

A dependent sample *t* test was performed to test this hypothesis. The *t* test confirmed that the group leader in

The color of fear demonstrated more cultural competency [t(7)=2.87; p<.02] (M=2.95; SD=.41) than did the leaders of *Evolution of a group*. Hypothesis one was supported the first week.

Hypothesis 2: The results of the *Counselor Skill and Personal Development Rating Form* (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Maddux, Smaby, Phan, & Roberts-Wilbur, 2002) will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more counseling skills than do the leaders of *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

A dependent sample *t* test was performed to test this hypothesis. The t test indicated no significant difference between the counseling skills of the group leader in *The color of fear* and those of the leaders of *Evolution of a group* (M=3.84; SD=.55). Hypothesis three was rejected the first week.

The following results were obtained the second week:

Hypothesis 1: The results of the MAKSS will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more multicultural competency than do the leaders in *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

Similar to the procedures performed during the first week, a dependent sample *t* test was performed to test this hypothesis. The *t* test indicated that the group leader in *The color of fear* demonstrated more cultural competencies [t(6)=3.43; p<.001] (M=3.45; SD=.34) than did the leaders of *Evolution of a group*. Hypothesis one was accepted the second week.

Hypothesis 2: The results of the *Counselor Skill and Personal Development Rating Form* (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Maddux, Smaby, Phan, & Roberts-Wilbur, 2002) will indicate that the group leader in *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) demonstrates more counseling skills than do the leaders of *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000).

An dependent sample t test was performed to test this hypothesis. The *t* test indicated more counseling skills in the group facilitator of *The color of fear* [t(6)=3.90; p<.008] (M=4.59; SD=.50) than the group leaders of the *Evolution of a group*. Hypothesis three was accepted the second week.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. The number of participants was small (n=16). The participants were only a representation of one university and the results may or may not be generalizable to the general population. Also, while the students evaluating the group films were doctoral students, their cultural competencies may not be up to the standards of other professionals in the field who may have had more than one course in multicultural counseling. This is may also be true in regards to their group counseling skills. Another important limitation was the lack of adequate

minority representation. With three ethnic minority students as raters, it is impossible to know if more raters of color may have yielded different results.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that according with the MAKSS scores the leader of the *The color of fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) showed more multicultural competencies and counseling skills in the training films than the leaders of the *Evolution of a group* (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000). While it is difficult to state with absolute confidence, the results of this particular group of students in training indicate a benefit was derived from comparing the films.

In addition, the results of this preliminary study present evidence of the value of *The color of fear* as a tool for teaching multicultural counseling competencies in a group course. Following the recommendations of Bemak and Chung (2004) and the results of this study, it is fair to say that *The color of fear* may help students gain an understanding of culture, self-awareness, the complexity of cultural backgrounds, and white privilege. Furthermore, this study shows the differences of group dynamics when race and ethnicity are present in the group. One of the biggest contributions of the analysis of these two films relates to conflict in groups where race and ethnicity are significant issues and yet maintain at a level of respect and appreciation of differences.

Finally, the comparison of these two group films could help students gain an appreciation of the issues of group as an independent discipline and the value of risk-taking in group settings. This comparison also illustrated differences in ways of delivering services without following the traditional model of group facilitation. As such, it was an illustration of how to adapt to the culture of clients as well as to their communication styles.

Future Research

A follow-up study to this pilot would include a larger and more diverse sample of student raters. Similarly of interest, a study that compares ratings of students with those of experts in the field of multiculturalism and group work would have important implications. Furthermore, a study in which language issues are part of group dynamics could also serve as a follow-up for this study.

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