

Culturally educated questioning: Toward a skills-based approach in multicultural counselor training

ROBERT R. RODRIGUEZ

University of Notre Dame

N. EUGENE WALLS

Saint Mary's College

Abstract

Increased resources are being committed to the multicultural training of counselors. Despite these gains, training continues to focus almost exclusively on the acquisition of cultural awareness and culture-specific knowledge. Valuable though they are, awareness and knowledge, the authors argue, do not necessarily result in effective multicultural counseling skill. Therefore, it is recommended that current training models be modified to include techniques through which cultural knowledge can be synthesized into effective counseling interventions. Specifically, it is suggested that programs stress the need to conduct cultural assessments of clients using what the authors term “culturally educated questioning”: empirically rooted inquiry designed to elicit from clients clinically relevant cultural data. The benefits of culturally educated questioning, including its safeguards against cultural stereotyping, are discussed.

Keywords: Multicultural counseling, Counselor training, Counseling skills, Psychotherapy

“The Culturally Encapsulated Counselor,” Gilbert Wrenn’s (1962) commentary on the limited worldviews of school practitioners, may be one of the earliest and most widely cited challenges to cultural bias in professional psychology:

Each day we should question something that we believe but that other people of integrity may reject. This is to remind ourselves that there is a difference between our culture and the culture of the parent, the culture of the teacher, and the culture of the child. The thing that we believe in deeply may be something that someone else has every right not to believe in. (p. 448)

In the decades since Wrenn’s manifesto, a chorus of like-minded voices has echoed the call for greater multicultural emphasis in counselor training and practice (see, e.g., Bernal & Padilla, 1982; Pedersen, 1997; Sue et al., 1982; Sue & Sue, 1990). As a result, multicultural endeavors among counseling professionals and researchers are at their peak. The acquisition of multicultural counseling competencies, for example, has received full-issue coverage in mainstream counseling journals (e.g., *Journal of Counseling and Devel-*

opment [Vol. 70, No. 1]; *The Counseling Psychologist* [Vol. 26, No. 4]), has been mandated by educational accreditation bodies (American Psychological Association [APA], 1991), and—some have suggested—may soon help determine the composition of managed care provider lists (Ponterotto, 1996).

Recent trends in psychology suggest that, at least in spirit, Pedersen’s (1991) “fourth force” characterization of multiculturalism was prophetic indeed. Consider that multiculturally oriented presentations at the 1999 APA conference in Boston numbered well over 100 (APA, 1999). And according to a 1995 survey, nearly 90% of counseling psychology doctoral programs require graduates to complete a course addressing multicultural issues (Ponterotto, 1997)—a rate that stood at 59% only 10 years ago (Hills & Strozier, 1992) and at approximately 21% a decade earlier (Bernal & Padilla, 1982).

There is no question that these strides represent a significant and promising movement toward diversifying the breadth and impact of service-oriented psychology. At the same time, multicultural scholars have warned—and it should be reiterated here—that multicultural rhetoric does not necessarily translate into quantifiably better services for culturally diverse clients (see Heath, Neimeyer, & Pedersen, 1988; Lloyd, 1987; Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Speight, Thomas, Kennel, & Anderson, 1995).

Send correspondence and reprint requests to: Robert R. Rodriguez, Department of Psychology, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556–5636. E-mail: Robert.R.Rodriguez.44@nd.edu

There is, in fact, reason to doubt that current multicultural training approaches are resulting in more effective, more culturally astute counseling interventions (see Jackson, 1987; Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue & Zane, 1987). In a recent evaluation of training outcomes in counseling psychology, Quintana and Bernal (1995) concluded, for instance, that "most programs are providing training that leads to, at best, multicultural sensitivity, but very few appear to be providing training that prepares practitioners to be multiculturally proficient" (p. 102; see also D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Palmo & Weikel, 1986).

With financial and curricular investments in multicultural training on the rise (Hollis & Wantz, 1994), the apparent missing link between the proliferation of multicultural knowledge and the evidentiary improvement in services is cause for concern. Although the source of this breakdown is unknown, poorly defined training competencies (Ponterotto & Casas, 1987; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994), information overload (Lopez et al., 1989), opposition to multicultural principles (Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988), and underdeveloped training programs (Quintana & Bernal, 1995) have been offered as possibilities. Arguably, each factor has its role in complicating the delivery and procurement of multicultural expertise. In our view, resolving outcome issues in multicultural training requires that contributing factors be viewed systematically rather than independently. That is, we suggest that underdeveloped training programs will remain so as long as they fail to articulate training objectives adequately. And as long as competencies are vaguely defined and difficult to measure, trainees—armed with, but not skilled in managing, cultural knowledge—are at risk for feeling overwhelmed and, consequently, for rejecting multicultural principles altogether.

In this article, we focus on one specific element of the problem and offer a tailored remedy. We begin by making the perhaps familiar case that current multicultural training efforts are "top-heavy": understandably preoccupied with the development of multicultural awareness and with the dissemination of culture-specific facts and trends but neglectful of the skill-driven mechanisms by which such knowledge is translated into effective interventions. We proceed by addressing the controversy over the use of universal versus specific counseling skills in multicultural settings. Finally, we introduce and consider culturally educated questioning—a knowledge-driven inquiry designed to elicit culturally relevant information from clients—as a means (both universal and specific) of applying important cultural information in clinical practice.

Teaching "What" But Not "How": The Skills Gap in Current Multicultural Training

Multicultural competence in counseling has long been thought to depend on counselor acquisition of cultural awareness, cul-

tural knowledge, and cross-cultural counseling skills (see McRae & Johnson, 1991; Pedersen & Ivey, 1993; Sue et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1982). According to this paradigm, culturally aware counselors are those who have examined and are in the process of understanding their "attitudes, opinions, and assumptions about their own and other cultures" (Pedersen & Ivey, 1993, p. 17; see also Sue & Sue, 1990). Culturally knowledgeable counselors are those who have acquired accurate facts and information about the cultural experience (e.g., sociopolitical history, values, and norms) of culturally different client groups (see McRae & Johnson, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990). Culturally skilled counselors are those who are "in the process of actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive intervention strategies/skills" for working with culturally different clients (Sue & Sue, 1990, p. 166).

The vast majority of graduate programs in counseling psychology have responded to competency mandates (see APA, 1991) by requiring their students to complete a one-semester culturally oriented lecture course (Hills & Strozier, 1992; Ponterotto, 1997). Arguably, this response assumes that "if you build it (i.e., multicultural awareness and knowledge), they (i.e., culturally skilled counselors) will come." But as indicated earlier, there may be cause to question this assumption (see Jackson, 1987; Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Sue et al., 1992; Sue & Zane, 1987). As a result, some have challenged the single-course remedy and suggested that programs adopt more integrated, cross-curricular approaches to cultural training (see Atkinson, 1994; Johnson, 1987; Quintana & Bernal, 1995).

Quintana and Bernal (1995), for instance, measured the effectiveness of multicultural training protocols in counseling programs against a training assessment continuum proposed by Bernal and Castro (1994). Based on their analysis, Quintana and Bernal (1995) concluded that single-course approaches to multicultural training often impart only the most basic levels of competence—training Bernal and Castro (1994) would term "culturally sensitive." More sophisticated (i.e., "culturally proficient") levels of training, Quintana and Bernal (1995) suggested, would require the following:

a standard cultural content that is directly related to basic clinical competencies and is included within core courses such as assessment and counseling; in-depth coverage of specific mental health issues (e.g., ethnic identity, acculturation, and mental health) via specialty courses; coordination of didactic instruction with practicum experiences in settings serving multicultural clients so as to provide maximum opportunities for transferring theory and knowledge to practice; and the preparation of psychologists through course work and supervision for the investigation, development, and evaluation of new therapeutic and prevention approaches based on cultural variables. Cultural proficiency training requires an integrated set of courses and experiences that are organized to meet these training goals. (p. 117)

In advocating for expanded, more integrated multicultural training, Quintana and Bernal (1995) adopted—as have others (e.g., Hartung, 1996; Rooney, Flores, & Mercier, 1998)—a more-is-better approach. Quintana and Bernal's (1995) well-articulated criticism of existing training philosophies, however, leads us to the question, more of what?

A growing body of evidence suggests that current training approaches are already improving multicultural awareness among counseling students (see Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Robinson & Bradley, 1997), which, given the demands of multicultural competence, is not insignificant (see Atkinson & Lowe, 1995; Ridley, Mendoza, Kanitz, Angermeier, & Zenk, 1994). Quintana and Bernal (1995) made the case, however, that awareness alone does not constitute cultural proficiency: a level of training leading to culturally competent practice (Bernal & Castro, 1994) and characterized by the acquisition of "broad skills" (Quintana & Bernal, 1995, p. 117). Nevertheless, Quintana and Bernal's (1995) detailed list of recommendations—suggestions meant to guide the progression from culturally sensitive (or aware) to culturally proficient (or skilled) training—makes only passive reference to skill development. Specifically, Quintana and Bernal (1995) failed to articulate exactly how cross-curricular approaches to training will result in "transferring theory and knowledge to practice" (p. 117).

We are not opposed to multicourse cultural training models. In fact, we find arguments against single-course (so-called "sidebar") approaches (see Hartung, 1996; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995) quite compelling. Therefore, that there should be more multicultural training is, in our opinion, a given. What we do question is whether there should be more of the same. That is, we are not convinced that exposing trainees to greater amounts of multicultural information will, in and of itself, result in increased levels of multicultural competence.

Bloom (1956) and Gronlund's (1982) taxonomy of knowledge continuum helps put the current status of multicultural training in perspective. The markers on the continuum run from an endpoint of "not taught" to "taught for awareness only" to "taught for comprehension" to "taught for application" and, finally, to "taught for mastery." When used as an overlay for the state of multicultural training in counseling programs, the continuum demonstrates both how far the field has come and, concurrently, what remains undone. We would argue that current multicultural training efforts fall within the "taught for awareness only" and "taught for comprehension" sections of the continuum. Forays into the "taught for application" and "taught for mastery" sections of the continuum will signal much-needed progress in training models.

There is, therefore, a need to offer training that directly addresses the translation of cultural knowledge into clinically prudent action (see Heath et al., 1988; Lloyd, 1987; Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Speight et al., 1995). Unfortunately, training that speaks to the actual application of multicultural knowledge is rare (see

Johnson, 1987; McRae & Johnson, 1991; Ridley, Li, & Hill, 1998). This tendency to emphasize the "what" at the expense of the "how" in multicultural training (see Johnson, 1987; McRae & Johnson, 1991; Ridley et al., 1998) is not without its consequences—some of which Palmo and Weikel (1986) identified:

The gap between awareness, understanding, and knowledge on the one hand, and behavior on the other, has led to failure in counseling programs and ultimately to ineffective cross-cultural counseling experiences. (p. 131)

Because they have focused almost exclusively on the building of cultural awareness and knowledge, current approaches to multicultural training have left skill development issues largely unaddressed. That is not to say that the importance of multicultural counseling skills has not been noted in the literature. In fact, there is widespread mention of intervention savvy as a critical multicultural competency (see, e.g., Ibrahim, 1991; Sue et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990; Westermeyer, 1987). Rarely, however, have multicultural counseling skills been adequately operationalized or their acquisition and development adequately explained (see Atkinson, 1994; Ibrahim, 1991; McRae & Johnson, 1991). Consequently, the extant literature offers counselors little more than vague, often difficult-to-implement guidelines, which, in some cases (see Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995), are more attitudinal than technique-oriented in nature.

What are counselors-in-training to make, for instance, of suggestions that multiculturally competent practitioners possess "skills for effective multicultural communication" (Ibrahim, 1991, p. 17), display "a readiness to use alternative counseling strategies that better match the culture of ethnic minority clients" (Kiselica, 1991, p. 130), and are able "to send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and appropriately" (Sue et al., 1992, p. 79)? Although these statements may correctly describe a culturally proficient counselor, they neglect to reveal how aspiring counselors can come to acquire similar attributes.

It is no longer enough to stress the importance of multicultural knowledge in counselor training. Nor, in the name of skills training, will it suffice simply to describe the qualities of a culturally skilled counselor. Efforts must be made, despite the embryonic state of the field, to develop and teach multicultural counseling skills worthy of converting cultural data into culturally responsible interventions.

In Search of Universal and Specific Multicultural Counseling Skills

It should be acknowledged that our own emphasis on skill development in multicultural training does not necessarily reflect the sentiment of the field as a whole. In fact, there is considerable disagreement over whether culturally astute practice requires a unique repertoire of counseling skills—a

question that currently frames the debate between proponents of etic and emic approaches to multicultural counseling.

Those holding an etic (or universal) view (e.g., Fukuyama, 1990; Parker, 1987; Patterson, 1996; Vontress, 1979) maintain that existing theories and therapies are wholly applicable (see Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Wampold et al., 1997) and therefore appropriate for use across ethnic and cultural groups living in the United States. A concern motivating the etic perspective is that transmission of culture-specific knowledge will foster stereotyping among counselors and, as a consequence, the misperception that clients' behaviors are determined solely by their cultural identification (see Fukuyama, 1990; Lloyd, 1987). Advocates of an emic philosophy (e.g., Cayleff, 1986; Sue & Sue, 1990), on the other hand, argue that efficacious counseling with diverse clients requires access to culture-specific knowledge—a position that itself has received empirical support (Pomales, Claiborn, & LaFromboise, 1986; Wade & Bernstein, 1991).

A number of scholars have endorsed a more moderate, combined etic–emic approach to multicultural practice (see, e.g., Atkinson, 1994; Fischer, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994). Finding value in both viewpoints, Pedersen and Ivey (1993), for instance, agree with emic proponents that effective culture-centered counseling is built on accurate knowledge about the counselor's own and contrasting cultures. They affirm, however, etic concerns pertaining to disregard for within-group differences: "While the cultural label may be predictive in aggregate data about large groups from the same culture, it is less helpful in dealing with a particular individual from that culture" (p. 43). Atkinson (1994) synthesized the ramifications of a blended etic–emic approach for multicultural training:

In my judgment, regardless of the ethnic makeup of their catchment area, [training] programs need to provide a core of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that are both generalizable and specific to a variety of ethnic groups. (p. 302)

The proposed integration of etic and emic perspectives in multicultural counseling is a welcome development—one that rightly balances a respect for traditional foundations in counseling with the ever-increasing need to infuse those foundations with cross-cultural knowledge. We suggest that a similar approach guide the formulation of multicultural counseling skills. That is, for skills to be optimally practical and effective, they should be responsive to issues of cultural difference (see Sue & Sue, 1990) and rely on traditional techniques to which counselors have ready access (see Fischer et al., 1998).

If, as we would suggest, a fused etic–emic approach is to characterize multicultural counselor training and corresponding skill development, then so too should it determine the makings of a culturally skilled counselor. Too often, it seems, calls for multicultural competence have been misconstrued (see Atkinson, 1994; Burn, 1992; Ridley, Men-

doza, & Kanitz, 1994), suggesting to some the need to retain volumes of sometimes obscure cultural information. It is far more accurate and realistic, we think, to regard as multiculturally skilled those practitioners who use theoretical frameworks and interventions with which they are particularly adept but who do so flexibly enough to accommodate the needs of culturally diverse clients.

Educated Questioning and Cultural Assessment in Multicultural Counseling

How counselors are to go about applying their multicultural competence is a separate matter altogether and, as we have pointed out, one that has often been taken for granted in the literature. As a preface to our own recommendations with regard to bridging the skills gap in multicultural counselor training, let us suggest that cultural competence depends largely on the counselors' ability to elicit culturally relevant information from clients. Educated questioning—a tool commonly used in effective assessment and differential diagnosis—may be particularly helpful in this regard.

In definitional terms, educated questioning is a process by which counselors use knowledge-based inquiries for the purpose of eliciting from clients treatment-relevant information. Educated questions are crafted with the help of empirically supported information concerning the investigated issue. Moreover, it is not the counselor's preexisting knowledge but the client's elicited responses that most influence subsequent interventions.

The introduction of educated questioning as a concept and potential multicultural counseling skill is perhaps best done by example. Consider, for the purpose of explanation, the work of the experienced drug and alcohol counselor who, in assessing the severity of a client's alcohol use, poses the question "Do you drink when you are alone?" Like educated questions in general, this probe reflects the counselor's preexisting knowledge about the condition or experience being assessed and the counselor's willingness to use the client's response in forming conclusions and determining treatment priorities.

Another example serves to demonstrate the degree to which educated questioning is, in our view, already an integrated element of effective clinical work. When face to face with a potentially suicidal client, skilled clinicians progress through a series of queries that, for the same reasons just cited, qualify as educated questions: "Have you ever attempted suicide in the past?" "Are you presently planning to hurt yourself?"

Key Assumptions

The suggestion that educated questioning play a prominent role in multicultural training and practice stems from four related assumptions about the multicultural counseling enterprise. First, the client, the counselor, and the counseling process all exist within a cultural context. It is widely ac-

cepted that culture is inseparable from human experience (Angel & Thoits, 1987; Ridley et al., 1998; Triandis, 1989) and, therefore, from counseling interactions (Draguns, 1989; Good & Good, 1986).

Second, client cultural identification or experience may or may not relate significantly to presenting problems. Indeed, the challenge for counselors in multicultural encounters is to consider cultural influences without unduly overemphasizing their importance (see Ridley et al., 1998). For instance, a counselor who is assigned or retained by an African American client should not conclude, before the fact, that the client's concerns necessarily involve race. Nor should the counselor who is seeing a lesbian client assume prematurely that her presenting issues relate to sexual orientation. The fact that each of these counselors is engaged in clinical work with clients from underrepresented groups raises the possibility—but in no way guarantees—that cultural variables (e.g., race, sexual orientation) are clinically significant.

Therefore, effective multicultural counseling requires that the salience of the cultural context within which the presenting problem exists be assessed, not assumed. It becomes the counselor's responsibility to avoid the automatic imposition of cultural generalizations. Rather, the counselor must assess to what degree employing learned cultural knowledge will advance the therapeutic goals of the client. By way of cultural assessment, counselors determine—either conclusively or by forming working hypotheses—the extent to which cultural variables impact the client's presenting problems.

Finally, client self-report is the most reliable source of information regarding the relevance of cultural factors. A client's firsthand experience as a culturally different individual always supercedes the counselor's textbook knowledge of that culture. That is not to say, however, that clients who are impacted by cultural phenomena will necessarily be aware of, report, or acknowledge that this is the case. To use an extreme example, it is discrepant with our own experiences as clinicians that a client would present for counseling with the following complaint: "I am a recent immigrant to the United States and am having trouble assimilating." More often than not, clients present a list of psychological symptoms: "I'm feeling down, like something's not right"; "I'm not getting along with my boss"; "My teenage son is out of control, and he won't listen to me." To discount cultural variables in these cases because clients did not address them directly would be shortsighted. But to rely on cultural generalizations not subsequently confirmed by clients would be equally dangerous. Under both circumstances, counselors run the risk of basing interventions on incomplete, if not inaccurate, information, thereby jeopardizing counseling outcome.

We offer these assumptions as a framework within which the multicultural application of educated questioning was first conceived and within which such application should be assessed. That a multiculturally competent counselor evaluates and adjusts to clinically relevant cultural information presented by the client is in accord with long-perpetuated de-

scriptions of multicultural competence (see Sue & Sue, 1990). Culturally educated questioning, however, is offered as technical means by which counselors can accomplish these goals.

The Need for Multicultural Knowledge

Before proceeding with examples of how educated questioning can be used in multicultural contexts, it is imperative that the "educated" aspect of this probing technique be underscored. An educated questioning approach to multicultural training and practice presumes that counselors will work to acquire culture-specific data (e.g., trends, patterns, base rates)—knowledge that many have argued is vital to therapeutic effectiveness with multicultural clients (see Atkinson, 1994; D'Andrea et al., 1991; Ibrahim, 1991; Lopez et al., 1989; Parker, Valley, & Geary, 1986; Speight et al., 1995). We stand by our position that multicultural knowledge alone—divorced from educated questioning and other interventions—is not likely to achieve optimal outcomes (see Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Sue & Zane, 1987). Substituting client self-disclosure of cultural data for a foundation in multicultural knowledge is also problematic. Such an approach fails to account for some clients' reluctance to disclose (see Sue & Sue, 1990) and other clients' reluctance to spend valuable clinical time providing their counselors with a cultural education (see Franklin, 1993). For the purpose of educated questioning, however, the greatest value of cultural knowledge is that it guides the development of appropriate probes and sets the stage for effective cultural assessment. To be educated, questioning of this sort must be grounded in empirically suggested tendencies, patterns, and trends. Only clients can validate, however, whether the said pattern applies to them uniquely.

Contextualizing Presenting Problems with Culturally Educated Questioning

Let us assume, for the purpose of demonstrating the use of culturally educated questioning, that an Asian American client—despite complaining of concentration difficulties and general lack of motivation—denies symptoms typically associated with anxiety and/or depression. The culturally encapsulated counselor would, more than likely, be unaware that the use of physical complaints to express psychological distress can be particularly pronounced among some clients of Asian descent (see Sue & Sue, 1990). A culturally knowledgeable counselor—armed with culture-specific insights—may hold this potential nuance as a hypothesis. But whether this counselor proceeds with a cultural assessment, sets the cultural information aside, or applies it in a stereotypical fashion is—in knowledge-only training approaches—left largely to chance. The counselor skilled in educated questioning-based cultural assessment, however, not only is aware of the potential nuance, but has also given prior thought to how its role can be assessed. Questions, for instance, about the client's recent physical ailments, doctor office visits, and past medical conditions may be particularly

informative with regard to assessment, diagnosis, and treatment.

Whereas this example accurately reflects the use of educated questioning in multicultural counseling, it may leave the reader with the impression that the tool is being recommended for use in initial assessment and diagnosis only. Although educated questioning relies on assessment principles, more formal procedures for conducting traditional assessments with multicultural clients have been proposed elsewhere (see Ridley et al., 1998), and it is not our intention to provide an alternative to such procedures. Instead, culturally educated questioning is offered as an informal vehicle for eliciting clients' concerns, interpreting them within the proper cultural context, and guiding subsequent counselor interventions—a process that extends beyond the early phases of counseling. In that regard, we would argue that culturally educated questioning has a role to play across the counseling encounter, from relationship building and treatment planning to goal setting and evaluation.

Culturally Educated Questioning in Practice: A Case Example

We offer the following case example to illustrate the use of culturally educated questioning during various phases of counseling. We acknowledge, however, that educated questioning cannot, independent of other facilitative factors, fully account for effective multicultural practice. That is, generic counseling skills (e.g., reflective listening, empathy, immediacy) form a foundation on which culturally educated questioning rests. After all, as we suggested earlier, multicultural competence presumes the combination of approaches that are both generic and culturally specific.

Consider, then, the hypothetical case of Roger, a 21-year-old gay African American male. Roger reported during his counseling intake session that he is experiencing sleep disturbance and irritability, is having significant conflict with his family, and is considering leaving the small town of his youth for a more urban environment.

Establishing the Working Alliance

A preliminary task for counselors in all settings involves establishing a positive working relationship with the client. According to Teyber (1997), "A collaborative alliance is established when the client perceives the therapist as a powerful, trustworthy, and committed *ally* in his or her personal struggles" (p. 34; emphasis added). Forging an alliance with clients who are members of underrepresented groups, we would argue, may be particularly important, given that such individuals face unique, often grim, sociopolitical realities. When counselors pose informed questions—questions rooted in a sensitivity for and knowledge about cultural difference—clients are more likely to feel understood.

Using language unique to the client's cultural experience, for instance, can be particularly helpful. Asking Roger "So,

how long have you been 'out'?" serves dual functions in that it both elicits clinically and culturally relevant information (i.e., Roger's level of self-awareness and acceptance) and illustrates the counselor's personal awareness and knowledge of gay identity development and culture (i.e., use of the cultural term "out").

The relationship-building phase of the counseling encounter also provides an opportunity for counselors and clients to discuss their expectations for the counseling process and their respective roles in that process—factors that may be influenced by cultural values. For instance, asking Roger "Who else have you asked for help?" may provide valuable information about his support network, his help-seeking tendencies, and his attitude toward traditional counseling (i.e., counseling may have been sought as a last resort). Evidence suggests that some African Americans prefer to rely on informal support networks comprised of family and community members rather than on mental health professionals (see Neal-Barnett & Smith, 1997). Eliciting information about Roger's help-seeking history allows the counselor to determine whether an empirically grounded generalization about African Americans is consistent with Roger's personal experience. Regardless of Roger's answer, the information he provides informs the counseling process (e.g., what are the client's primary sources of social support?) and sends the critical message that the counselor has done his or her cultural homework. As the working relationship is forming, therefore, culturally educated questioning can be particularly helpful, both in gathering clinical information and in communicating an empathic understanding for the client's unique cultural experience.

Setting Therapeutic Goals

Throughout therapeutic exchange, the therapist engages the client in a process of identifying, prioritizing, and modifying counseling goals. The question "How is it that I can help you?" is, in a generic sense, a worthwhile query for any goal-setting endeavor. In Roger's case, however, the question may have unique significance. Having read notes from the intake session, a culturally encapsulated counselor may assume that Roger is suffering from, and seeks to alleviate, depression. However, according to Wood and Sherrets (1984), African Americans may be more likely than European Americans to seek administrative help (e.g., negotiation with schools and social service agencies, referral to other community resources) as opposed to therapy from mental health practitioners. Therefore, the educated question provides Roger the opportunity to request assistance with tasks that may fall outside the scope of traditional counseling. Furthermore, wondering aloud "How do you think your immediate and extended family will feel about these goals?" assesses the degree to which Roger—like some African Americans (see Sue & Sue, 1990)—is uniquely influenced by the opinions and wishes of family members. So at the very least, use of culturally educated questioning can assist in identifying

goals that are truly the client's. Moreover, they can help identify external supports and constraints affecting those goals. What emerges, we contend, is a client-centered agenda—whether consistent or inconsistent with cultural patterns—that is unencumbered by the conventions of traditional counseling. Speaking of goal development, Egan (1994) stated, "Although helping is a process of social influence, it remains ethical only if it respects . . . the values of the client" (p. 264).

Creating a Treatment Plan

Based on the client's therapeutic goals, the counselor articulates a plan for treatment, including the specific interventions meant to foster the client's desired change. In our example, culturally educated questioning concerning Roger's religious or spiritual life may assist with treatment planning. With regard to cultural trends, Roger's case is complex. On the one hand, the general salience of spirituality in the African American community has been well documented (see, e.g., Neal-Barnett & Smith, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). On the other, negative views of homosexuality tend to be consistent with the evangelical and fundamentalist beliefs influential in some African American communities (see Appleby & Anastas, 1998). As an African American gay man, Roger's response to the questions "What role does church play in your life?" and "Have you spoken to your pastor about your concerns?" may be useful in planning treatment interventions. Nothing is lost therapeutically should Roger discount religious influences in his life. If such influences do exist, however, including spiritual guidance as an adjunct to traditional counseling or putting Roger in contact with gay-affirmative clergy may serve to personalize his treatment plan.

Evaluating the Success of Counseling

Egan (1994) argued that the effectiveness of counseling needs to be evaluated during, as well as after, a course of therapy. In fact, Egan (1994) said, "Helpers and clients need to ask themselves 'In what ways are the counseling sessions contributing substantially to problem management and opportunity development?'" (p. 40). Whereas Egan proposed a valid evaluation question, it is generic in nature. A culturally educated question consistent with the goals of evaluation may seek to determine the extent to which cultural variables may influence a client's willingness to provide evaluative feedback. In the case of Roger, a counselor might ask "If you were dissatisfied with a service you received, what would you do about it?" in order to anticipate the client's own unique way of providing feedback. Direct verbal feedback from the client may not be the norm in multicultural counseling (see Sue & Sue, 1990). Asking, for instance, "What expectations do you have regarding which of us will do more of the talking in here?" may help elicit from the client his or her own comfort levels with regard to self-disclosure and assertion. In a more direct way, counselors may pose the question "How will I know if you're unhappy with our progress in therapy?" This series of questions acknowledges the po-

tential influence of culture on the evaluation process and signals the counselor's willingness to assess progress in a manner consistent with the client's values.

Debriefing

This case example demonstrates the use of—and, we think, the need for—culturally educated questioning in multicultural counseling encounters. Admittedly, the example was brief and the number of educated questions few. Our intent, however, was to provide a flavor for educated questioning and to further the suggestion that educated questioning complements knowledge-only multicultural training approaches.

The greatest advantage of culturally educated questioning may lie in its ability to build on the generic. For instance, asking a client "How do you get along with your family?" is a valid, often incredibly informative, question. It is generically useful. But is the question specific enough to elicit information about extended family networks? Does it even communicate appreciation for such networks? The question "When you have to make an important decision, to whom do you turn?" is more likely to elicit from clients information about the influential individuals in their lives—whether family or otherwise. Employing the culturally specific fact or pattern in counseling does not, in our view, constitute an indictment of generic, empirically supported counseling approaches. We would certainly argue, however, that supplementing the generic with the specific may markedly improve the quality and outcome of multicultural counseling interventions.

Benefits of Educated Questioning

Culturally educated questioning holds particular promise as a skill in multicultural counselor training. In addition to being an effective means of assessing cultural influences on the counseling process, culturally educated questioning is—we would suggest—a manageable, flexible, and accessible addition to training programs. Because educated questioning is, to some extent, trained in existing programs (often in assessment courses), we believe it can be integrated into multicultural courses without extensive restructuring or financial outlay. Despite our own belief that counseling programs could benefit from additional multicultural coursework, educated questioning offers an opportunity to improve multicultural training without requiring major overhauls of existing curricula.

Another benefit of an educated questioning approach to multicultural counselor training is that it has positive implications for the etic-emic divide. Draguns (1989) noted that there are few guidelines for blending the etic and emic approaches in counseling. In our view, culturally educated questioning provides one such bridge. As a broadly used (i.e., generic) skill in counselor training, educated questioning is not a technique specific to cultural encounters. Applying ed-

ucated questioning to the cultural arena does not, therefore, require that counselors acquire new skill sets. But because culturally educated questioning is built on a presupposed cultural knowledge base, it also honors arguments that culture-specific information is necessary in effective multicultural counseling.

Culturally educated questioning also addresses the very real hazard of counselors applying culture-specific knowledge in a stereotypical manner. Berg-Cross and Chinen (1995) illustrated the threat of inadequate cultural assessment: "Cultural knowledge devoid of personal knowledge inevitably leads to stereotyping and an inability to relate empathically" (p. 339). Teaching diligent use of culturally educated questioning introduces a curiosity about the client's cultural experience, forcing counselors to test their cultural hypotheses. By design, educated questioning steers clear of stereotypes and unsubstantiated assumptions in multicultural counseling encounters—evoking the confirming or disconfirming evidence on which interventions are then based. With educated questioning, the clinician incorporates cultural knowledge only to the extent that skilled interactions with the client support doing so. Consequently, cultural information is not imposed haphazardly, nor is the client's unique life experience lost amid the unrestricted noise of normative data.

One final benefit of educated questioning is that it permits the counselor to conduct a true multicultural assessment. For the purpose of demonstration, the examples provided in this article isolated one or two cultural dimensions on which the client differed. In practice, however, this is rarely the case. Cultural boundedness (see Roseberry, 1992)—a perspective that denies the interaction and overlap of cultural variables—can come to typify the way counselors view clients. For example, a Hispanic American female client may be viewed by the counselor as only Hispanic, causing the counselor to leave unassessed the significance of her experience as a female and the significance of "hidden" cultural influences (e.g., sexual orientation, disability, religion). Educated questioning, then, permits the counselor to navigate the complex, often enigmatic, subtleties of multicultural experiences.

Implications for Training and Research

We have spent a considerable amount of time in this article pinpointing the shortcomings of existing multicultural training protocols. We have also tried to convey an appreciation for achievements in building cultural awareness and knowledge—advances that inform and sustain the inquiry-driven skills we have proposed. Therefore, we view culturally educated questioning as an adjunct or addition to current training approaches and consider it to be a practical way of getting on with (if you will) the business of skill development in multicultural practice.

As we see it, incorporating culturally educated questioning into existing training models is a straightforward process,

entailing the literal pairing of cultural knowledge with questioning techniques. For instance, introducing trainees to minority identity development paradigms is a worthwhile endeavor. But to fortify counselors with a series of questions effective in determining a client's present stage of minority development would be far more effective. To have, for example, information about the conformity stage of racial identity development (see Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989) is hardly on par with the ability to assess the presence of developmental factors typical of the conformity phase. Therefore, throughout training, the "what" (i.e., cultural knowledge) must be coupled with the "how" (i.e., educated questioning). That is, where there is normative data there must also be access to educated inquiry.

Needless to say, the availability of both culture-specific information and the educated questioning it inspires heavily depends on the continued productivity of multicultural researchers. The more we know about specific cultural groups, the more educated our questioning of group members can be. And the more intricate empirical findings become, the better able we should be to design and tailor counseling interventions. Testing the effectiveness of question-based training techniques would itself be extremely informative. With time, the selection of culturally educated questions need not be based on clinical judgment alone. Empirical study of culturally educated questioning may, in fact, come to support the use of some individual questions over others. Therefore, scientific investigation of this multicultural counseling technique may represent a logical next step in its development and implementation.

Closing Thoughts

Forty years after the first rumblings about multicultural needs in psychological practice, the field is still grappling with critical questions about how best to prepare practitioners for work in an increasingly diverse world. We have attempted to draw attention to current deficits in training models. We do not mean to suggest that existing approaches to training are misdirected but rather that they have stalled prematurely. In particular, current methods—in fortifying trainees with cross-cultural knowledge—have stressed the "need to know." We strongly suggest that supplementing this approach with a "need to ask" may yield significant dividends with regard to enhancing multicultural training and, as a consequence, multicultural counseling as a whole. Good questions elicit good answers. Culturally aware and knowledgeable queries communicate to the client an understanding and respect for the cultural contexts within which all human experience exists. They also signal the willingness of the counselor to consider—if not honor—the client's personal cultural insights when making clinical decisions and offering specific interventions.

Some may contend that translation of multicultural knowl-

edge into educated questions is an implicit or implied element in current training protocols. This position would be consistent with the faulty assumption that multicultural awareness and knowledge will automatically result in the acquisition of multicultural counseling skills. If counselors in multicultural encounters are to be proactively affirming of and effective with their diverse clientele, then training must be equally proactive. That is, the time has come to make the implicit explicit and to arm those who are willing to engage in multiculturally competent practice with the specific skills

and abilities with which to do so.

In 1962, Wrenn reflected, "'Space flight' is near reality" (p. 444). In the four decades since Wrenn first envisioned a less culturally encapsulated psychology, much has been achieved in the name of science. A new and ever-shifting cultural landscape now requires that counseling psychology commit itself to unprecedented achievements in multicultural counselor education. Nowhere are those energies more wisely spent or more needed, we believe, than in the area of skills development and training.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (1991, Summer). *Capsule: A newsletter from the APA Committee on Accreditation and the staff of the Office of Accreditation*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Psychological Association. (1999). *APA annual convention program*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Angel, R., & Thoits, P. (1987). The impact of culture on the cognitive structure of illness. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 11, 465–494.
- Appleby, G. A., & Anastas, J. W. (1998). *Not just a passing phase: Social work with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Atkinson, D. R. (1994). Multicultural training: A call for standards. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 22, 300–307.
- Atkinson, D. R., & Lowe, S. M. (1995). The role of ethnicity, cultural knowledge, and conventional techniques in counseling and psychotherapy. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 387–414). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G., & Sue, D. W. (1989). *Counseling American minorities: A cross cultural perspective* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Berg-Cross, L., & Chinen, R. T. (1995). Multicultural training models and the person-in-culture interview. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 333–356). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bernal, M. E., & Castro, F. G. (1994). Are clinical psychologists prepared for service and research with ethnic minorities? Report of a decade of progress. *American Psychologist*, 49, 797–805.
- Bernal, M. E., & Padilla, A. M. (1982). Status of minority curricula and training in clinical psychology. *American Psychologist*, 37, 780–787.
- Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Volume 1: Cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay.
- Burn, D. (1992). Ethical implications in cross-cultural counseling and training. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 578–583.
- Cayleff, S. E. (1986). Ethical issues in counseling gender, race, and culturally distinct groups. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 64, 345–347.
- D'Andrea, M., Daniels, J., & Heck, R. (1991). Evaluating the impact of multicultural counselor training. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 143–150.
- Draguns, J. G. (1989). Dilemmas and choices in cross-cultural counseling: The universal versus the culturally distinctive. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (3rd ed., pp. 3–21). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Egan, G. (1994). *The skilled helper: A problem-management approach to helping* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Fischer, A. R., Jome, L. M., & Atkinson, D. R. (1998). Reconceptualizing multicultural counseling: Universal healing conditions in a culturally specific context. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 26, 525–588.
- Franklin, A. J. (1993, July/August). The invisibility syndrome. *Family Therapy Networker*, pp. 33–39.
- Fukuyama, M. A. (1990). Taking a universal approach to multicultural counseling. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 30, 6–17.
- Good, B., & Good, M. J. (1986). The cultural context of diagnosis and therapy: A review from medical psychiatry. In M. Miranda & H. Kitano (Eds.), *Mental health research and practice in minority communities: Development of culturally sensitive training programs* (DHHS Publication No. ADM 86–1466, pp. 1–27). Washington, DC: National Institute of Mental Health.
- Gronlund, N. E. (1982). *Constructing achievement tests*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hartung, P. J. (1996). Transforming counseling courses: From monocultural to multicultural. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 36, 6–13.
- Heath, A. E., Neimeyer, G. J., & Pedersen, P. B. (1988). The future of cross-cultural counseling: A delphi poll. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 67, 27–30.
- Heppner, M. J., & O'Brien, K. M. (1994). Multicultural counselor training: Students' perceptions of helpful and hindering events. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 34, 4–18.
- Hills, H. I., & Strozier, A. L. (1992). Multicultural training in APA-approved counseling psychology programs: A survey. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23, 43–51.
- Hollis, J. W., & Wantz, R. A. (1994). *Counselor preparation, 1993–1995: Volume 2. Status, trends, and implications* (8th ed.). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Ibrahim, F. A. (1991). Contribution of cultural worldview to generic counseling and development. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 13–19.

- Jackson, M. L. (1987). Cross-cultural counseling at the crossroads: A dialogue with Clement E. Vontress. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66, 20–23.
- Johnson, S. D. (1987). Knowing that versus knowing how: Toward achieving expertise through multicultural training for counseling. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 15, 320–331.
- Kiselica, M. S. (1991). Reflections on a multicultural internship experience. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 126–130.
- Lambert, M. J., & Bergin, A. E. (1994). The effectiveness of psychotherapy. In A. E. Bergin & S. L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (4th ed., pp. 143–189). New York: Wiley.
- Lloyd, A. P. (1987). Multicultural counseling: Does it belong in a counselor education program? *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 26, 164–167.
- Lopez, S. R., Grover, K. P., Holland, D., Johnson, M. J., Kain, C. D., Kanel, K., Mellins, C. A., & Rhyne, M. C. (1989). Development of culturally sensitive psychotherapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 20, 369–376.
- McRae, M. B., & Johnson, S. D. (1991). Toward training for competence in multicultural counselor education. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 131–135.
- Neal-Barnett, A. M., & Smith, J. (1997). African Americans. In S. Friedman (Ed.), *Cultural issues in the treatment of anxiety*. New York: Guilford.
- Palmo, A. J., & Weikel, W. J. (1986). *Foundations of mental health counseling*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Parker, W. M. (1987). Flexibility: A primer for multicultural counseling. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 26, 176–180.
- Parker, W. M., Valley, M. M., & Geary, C. A. (1986). Acquiring cultural knowledge for counselors in training: A multifaceted approach. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 26, 61–71.
- Patterson, C. H. (1996). Multicultural counseling: From diversity to universality. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74, 227–231.
- Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Multiculturalism as a generic approach to counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 6–12.
- Pedersen, P. B. (1997). *Culture-centered counseling interventions: Striving for accuracy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pedersen, P. B., & Ivey, A. (1993). *Culture-centered counseling and interviewing skills: A practical guide*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Pomales, J., Claiborn, C. D., & LaFromboise, T. D. (1986). Effects of Black students' racial identity on perceptions of White counselors varying in cultural sensitivity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 33, 57–61.
- Ponterotto, J. G. (1996). Multicultural counseling in the twenty-first century. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 24, 259–268.
- Ponterotto, J. G. (1997). Multicultural counseling training: A competency model and national survey. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. Coleman (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ponterotto, J. G., & Benesch, K. F. (1988). An organizational framework for understanding the role of culture in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66, 237–241.
- Ponterotto, J. G., & Casas, J. M. (1987). In search of multicultural competence within counselor education programs. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 65, 430–434.
- Pope-Davis, D. B., & Dings, J. G. (1995). The assessment of multicultural assessment competencies. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 287–311). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pope-Davis, D. B., Reynolds, A. L., Dings, J. G., & Nielson, D. (1995). Examining multicultural counseling competencies of graduate students in psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 26, 322–329.
- Quintana, S. M., & Bernal, M. E. (1995). Ethnic minority training in counseling psychology: Comparisons with clinical psychology and proposed standards. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 23, 102–121.
- Ridley, C. R., Li, L. C., & Hill, C. L. (1998). Multicultural assessment: Reexamination, reconceptualization, and practical application. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 26, 827–910.
- Ridley, C. R., Mendoza, D. W., & Kanitz, B. E. (1994). Multicultural training: Reexamination, operationalization, and integration. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 22, 227–289.
- Ridley, C. R., Mendoza, D. W., Kanitz, B. E., Angermeier, L., & Zenk, R. (1994). Cultural sensitivity in multicultural counseling: A perceptual schema model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 41, 125–136.
- Robinson, B., & Bradley, L. J. (1997). Multicultural training for undergraduates: Developing knowledge and awareness. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 25, 281–289.
- Rooney, S. C., Flores, L. Y., & Mercier, C. A. (1998). Making multicultural education effective for everyone. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 26, 22–32.
- Roseberry, W. (1992). Multiculturalism and the challenge of anthropology. *Anthropology*, 59, 841–858.
- Speight, S. L., Thomas, A. J., Kennel, R. G., & Anderson, M. E. (1995). Operationalizing multicultural training in doctoral programs and internships. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 26, 401–406.
- Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 20, 64–88.
- Sue, D. W., Bernier, J. E., Durran, A., Feinberg, L., Pedersen, P., Smith, E. J., & Vasquez-Nuttall, E. (1982). Position paper: Cross-cultural counseling competencies. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 10, 45–52.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Sue, S., & Zane, N. (1987). The role of culture and cultural techniques in psychotherapy: A critique and reformulation. *American Psychologist*, 42, 37–45.
- Teyber, E. (1997). *Interpersonal process in psychotherapy: A relational approach* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 98, 506–520.
- Vontress, C. E. (1979). Cross-cultural counseling: An existential approach. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 58, 117–122.
- Wade, P., & Bernstein, B. L. (1991). Culture sensitivity training and counselor's race: Effects on Black female clients' perceptions and attrition. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38, 9–15.
- Wampold, B. E., Mondin, G. W., Moody, M., Stich, F., Benson, K., & Ahn, H. (1997). A meta-analysis of outcome studies compar-

- ing bonafide psychotherapies: Empirically, "All must have prizes." *Psychological Bulletin*, 122, 203–215.
- Westermeyer, J. (1987). Cultural factors in clinical assessment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55, 471–478.
- Wood, W. D., & Sherrets, S. D. (1984). Requests for outpatient mental health services: A comparison of Whites and Blacks. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 25, 329–334.
- Wrenn, C. G. (1962). The culturally encapsulated counselor. *Harvard Educational Review*, 32, 444–449.