Faculty and Curriculum: Examining Multicultural Competence and Inclusion

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As multicultural research in student affairs literature diversifies and expands, new areas of study continue to emerge. Exploration of multicultural issues in student affairs preparation programs is one of those developing areas of research. Although some studies have been completed, there is limited information about the demographic composition of students and faculty members, exploration of multicultural issues within the curriculum, and the multicultural competence of faculty and staff. For student affairs practitioners to be more multicultural competent in all aspects of their work, it is vital that diversity issues be effectively and systematically infused into preparation programs. Knowledge and understanding about faculty members who design curriculum and courses, supervise practica, and teach within student affairs preparation programs is essential to fully appreciate the strengths and challenges that exist in creating a more multicultural sensitive and skilled profession.

The researchers gathered important information about faculty members who are teaching in student affairs programs, such as the amount of multicultural education and training they have received and their level of multicultural competence. Multicultural competence has been described as having the multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills essential for creating multicultural campuses (Pope & Reynolds, 1997). This knowledge can assist the profession in curricular transformation within preparation programs and designing additional multicultural education and training for faculty (cf., McEwen & Roper, 1994; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004).

Talbot (1996) and Talbot and Kocarek (1997) gathered data about the gender, racial, and sexual orientation background of two distinct national samples of student affairs faculty members and graduate students. In Talbot’s study, and Talbot and Kocarek’s study, 84% and 92%, respectively of the faculty members were White, and 57% to 59% were male (Talbot & Kocarek). Racial background of the graduate students was somewhat similar with 82% being White; however, there were far fewer men (29%) among the students (Talbot). Talbot also reported that 8% of the graduate students identified themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Although these demographic results are somewhat dated and not necessarily indicative of the percentages found in the profession today, recent scholarly work supports the notion that the student affairs profession remains predominantly White (Liang & Sedlacek, 2002; Mueller, 1999).

In terms of the curriculum, data are limited regarding the degree to which multicultural issues are integrated in student personnel coursework. Talbot (1996) investi-
gated student affairs master’s students’ perceptions of diversity within their academic program. She found that although almost 80% reported that diversity training was important to them individually, almost 60% perceived the overall level of diversity training in their program to be moderate or low. Although a majority of the students (66%) acknowledged that their faculty recommended taking diversity courses, only 31% said such courses were required. In a more recent study, Flowers (2003) surveyed coordinators of student affairs preparation programs (master’s degree) and found that of the coordinators that responded to his survey, 74% reported that a diversity course was a required component of their student affairs curriculum.

Although no extensive review of the extent to which multicultural issues have been addressed within the student affairs literature has been completed to date, Banning, Ahuna, and Hughes (2000) explored the NASPA journal articles focusing on race and ethnicity over the past 30 years. In their review they found that although the themes and foci within these articles have changed, the needs and concerns of students, faculty, and staff of color continue to receive limited attention. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2003) has suggested that multicultural issues be addressed in the curriculum within the areas of student development theory and student characteristics but neglected integrating multicultural issues into other significant areas of the curriculum such as organization and administration of student affairs, history and philosophy, organizational interventions, or assessment. Many multicultural scholars in student affairs do not believe that preparation programs are doing an adequate job of preparing graduates to effectively work in multicultural environments (Ebbers & Henry, 1990; Hoover, 1994; Liang & Sedlacek, 2002; McEwen & Roper, 1994; Pope & Reynolds, 1997).

The incorporation of multicultural knowledge as well as exploration of multicultural awareness and skills within student personnel preparation programs is vital to the development of student affairs practitioners who are competent to work ethically and effectively with all students (Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope et al., 2004). Although exploration of the multicultural competence of student affairs faculty, graduate students, and practitioners is still in early stages of research, some initial findings have been reported. Talbot and Kocarek (1997), in their study of faculty, indicated mixed results in reported faculty comfort, knowledge, and skills with diversity issues. Faculty reported being most comfortable, knowledgeable, and skilled with gender issues followed by race and sexual orientation.

Despite increasing understanding about the multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of graduate students and practitioners, there is a lack of data about the multicultural competence of preparation faculty. Until more accurate information about the education, training, and degree of multicultural competence among student affairs faculty is available, it will be difficult to accurately assess and address the supposed chasm between graduate students and new professionals and the faculty who train them.

The primary purpose of this study, then, was to examine the relationship between multicultural competence and the demographic, experiential, and departmental characteristics of a multiracial, nationwide sample of faculty members in student affairs preparation programs. In addition to examining the relationship between these faculty characteristics and multicultural competence,
gender and race differences among faculty and their relationship to experience and departmental characteristics were examined.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred forty-seven student affairs preparation program faculty from 81 institutions were included in this study. Slightly more than one third of the participants ($n = 52$) were not full-time faculty, but rather had primary administrative responsibilities on campus in student affairs or in academic affairs. Respondents included 76 females (51.7%) and 71 males (48.3%). The mean age of the participants was 49.4 years ($SD = 9.0$). The racial composition of the respondents was: 83% White ($n = 122$), 9.5% African American ($n = 14$), 3.4% Asian American ($n = 5$), 0.7% Hispanic ($n = 1$), and the remaining 2% did not indicate a race or they identified their ethnic identity as "other." Ninety-one percent ($n = 134$) held doctorates, and 53% (78) of these reported having done their graduate work in student affairs or higher education, followed by 20% (29) in counseling. Within the entire sample (recognizing that some participants had dual teaching and administrative roles, and not all were in tenure-track positions), faculty rank was: 23% ($n = 34$) full professor, 31% ($n = 45$) associate professor, 22% ($n = 32$) assistant professor, and 21% ($n = 31$) adjunct or instructor. Five participants (3%) did not indicate faculty rank. One half of the participants ($n = 74$) reported having earned tenure. Male participants held higher rank than their female colleagues, and White faculty members held higher rank than the faculty of color.

Instruments

The following instruments were used in this study: (a) Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs—Preliminary 2 Scale (MCSA-P2) (Pope & Mueller, 2000); (b) the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale—Short Form C (MC-SDS) (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Reynolds, 1982); and c) a background data form designed by the researchers. Multicultural competence was assessed with the MCSA-P2, which is based on Pope and Reynolds’ (1997) description of characteristics of multiculturally competent student affairs professionals. On this 34-item instrument, designed to measure multicultural competence in student affairs practice, respondents use a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (not at all accurate) to 7 (very accurate) to describe themselves. MCSA-P2 shows a satisfactory level of internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .91. The coefficient alpha for the current sample was .94.

Crowne and Marlowe (1960) observed that self-report instruments tend to be influenced by social desirability effects. Fulton (1994) suggested that this is particularly true for sensitive issues like multicultural competence. To measure the potential influence of social desirability, the researchers administered Form C of the MC-SDS (Crowne & Marlowe; Reynolds, 1982). The original MC-SDS consists of 33 true-false items and has an internal consistency of .88 and a test-retest stability coefficient of .89. The shorter version of the instrument (Form C) consists of 13 of the original 33 items and has a correlation of .93 with the standard form. Reynolds recommended using the short version when measuring social desirability response tendencies. The coefficient alpha for Form C used with the current sample was .79.

To examine the relationship between multicultural competence and demographic and educational variables, background information about the participants was obtained.
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through a Background Data Form. Demographic information included age, gender, race, and identification with any other socially marginalized groups (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGBT), or religious minorities). Background items about participants' past and current professional experience with multicultural issues (e.g., professional development, research, departmental and campus policies) were also included.

PROCEDURES
The researchers identified student affairs preparation programs from the Directory of Graduate Programs Preparing Student Affairs Professionals (Coomes & Gerda, 2003) that contained listings of the full-time and part-time faculty members. Only those faculty members whose time devoted to the programs was 50% or higher were used for this study. A total of 277 faculty members were identified and considered for inclusion in the sample. Each participant was sent a research packet that contained a cover/consent letter along with the three measures. Participants received the instruments in common order of BDF, MCSA-P2, and MC-SDS. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to examine background, experiences, social attitudes, and self-perceptions of faculty in college student affairs programs. Participants were asked to return the instruments in self-addressed envelopes provided by the researchers. The researchers received 156 completed surveys, of which 147 were usable, representing a response rate of 39%. All data were entered into SPSS and, to protect the confidentiality of programs and faculty, data are presented in aggregate form.

RESULTS
For the purposes of analysis, the data was arranged into three variable groupings: (a) demographics of the sample; (b) experience (i.e., faculty members' past and current educational and professional development, teaching, and research); and (c) characteristics of the faculty members' departments and curriculum. Because the primary variable of interest in the study was multicultural competence, all other variables were examined in relation to multicultural competence as measured by the MCSA-P2. For this sample (N = 147), the mean score on the MCSA-P2 (on a scale of 1 to 7) was 5.8 (SD = .70).

The mean score on the MC-SDS (social desirability scale) was 1.52 (SD = .25). Because the maximum score of 2.0 indicates minimal social desirability effects, the researchers concluded that the data collected for this sample was not susceptible to social desirability. This was substantiated by correlation analysis that indicated that there was no relationship between social desirability and multicultural competence (r = .01).

Demographic Variables
The demographic variables that were of most interest to the researchers were age, gender, race, and identification with a socially marginalized group (e.g., LGBT). There was no relationship between age and multicultural competence for this sample. Gender and race, on the other hand, did show relationships with multicultural competence when t-test comparisons were run. Female faculty in the sample scored higher on the MCSA-P2 (M = 5.98) than the male faculty (M = 5.62) with means scores differing significantly from one another (t = 3.26, p < .001).

Faculty of color in the sample scored significantly higher (M = 6.33) than the White faculty (M = 5.75) on the MCSA-P2 (t = -3.67, p < .001). A significant difference in self-reported multicultural competence was also found for those who identified as LGBT.
LGBT participants scored higher ($M = 6.44$) than their heterosexual-identified counterparts ($M = 5.76$), ($t = -5.86, p < .001$).

**Experience Variables**

The experience variables examined in this study focused primarily on training and development experiences as well as experience with multicultural interventions. When asked to indicate the degree to which multicultural issues were included in their own graduate preparation on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = not at all, 4 = a great deal), the mean score was 2.21 ($SD = .92$). Only 10% indicated that their graduate school training provided a great deal of information on multicultural issues. There were significant correlations at the .001 level between this variable and age ($r = -.36$) and years as a faculty member ($r = -.29$), suggesting that newer and younger faculty members received this information to a greater degree than their senior colleagues did. Still, there was no significant relationship found between self-reported multicultural competence and the amount of multicultural education and training provided in their graduate preparation programs. A significant and positive correlation was found, however, when examining the participants’ experience with more recent training and development on multicultural issues ($r = .61, p < .001$).

Examining the participants' work with multicultural issues in their teaching and research also assessed experience with multicultural issues. Although less than one third (29%) of the sample had taught a course on multicultural issues, there was a significant correlation between teaching on multicultural issues and one's self-reported multicultural competence ($r = .42, p < .001$). A $t$-test comparison indicated that those who had taught a multicultural content course had significantly higher scores on the MCSA-P2 ($M = 6.26$) than those who didn't ($M = 5.62$) ($r = -5.54, p < .001$). Similarly, a significant and positive relationship existed between multicultural competence and the degree to which multicultural issues are addressed through one's research ($r = .56, p < .001$). Finally, when examining multicultural competence in relation to experience with implementing multicultural policies and designing programs to promote cultural diversity, positive and significant correlations were found at the $p < .001$ level: $r = .32$ and $r = .56$, respectively.

The differences in multicultural competence between the gender and race as well the apparent differences in some of the experience variables suggested the need to examine these areas more closely. In particular, the researchers elected to run a series of $t$-test comparisons to look at the gender and race differences with respect to multicultural teaching, research, professional development and multicultural interventions (program and policy implementation).

Participants were asked to describe their multicultural experiences as faculty members. Using a 4-point, Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = none/not at all to 4 = a great deal, participants rated their level of involvement in multicultural teaching, multicultural research, facilitating professional development on multicultural issues and designing multicultural programs and policies. The differences between male and female participants as well between White faculty and faculty of color are presented in Tables 1 and 2. These tables indicate that, with respect to gender, female faculty were more likely to teach a multicultural course, conduct multicultural-related research, and engage themselves in their own professional development related to multicultural issues. There were no significant differences between the males and females on
TABLE 1.
Differences on Experience Variables by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Variable</th>
<th>Faculty of Color Mean (SD)</th>
<th>White Faculty Mean (SD)</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 20</td>
<td>n = 122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach a Course</td>
<td>1.65 (0.49)</td>
<td>1.23 (0.42)</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Research</td>
<td>3.45 (0.91)</td>
<td>2.57 (1.03)</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>3.50 (0.74)</td>
<td>2.98 (0.78)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Programs</td>
<td>3.41 (0.85)</td>
<td>2.64 (0.90)</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement Policies</td>
<td>3.29 (0.96)</td>
<td>2.73 (0.88)</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

designing multicultural programs and implementing multicultural policies. When examining race, however, it appears that faculty of color participate in all five of these activities to greater degree than their White counterparts. Although the sample sizes between these independent groups (Whites vs. people of color) are quite different from each other, they do approximate the racial diversity of the faculty members teaching in student affairs preparation programs as reported by the American college Personnel Association (ACPA) (V. J. Clairmont, Personal Communication, April 8, 2004).

Departmental Variables

Several variables related to the participants' departments were examined in this analysis. Of particular interest were the degree to which multicultural issues were discussed among the faculty in departmental meetings and the degree to which multicultural issues were integrated into the department's curriculum.

When asked to describe the frequency of discussions on multicultural issues in the department on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = never, 4 = all the time), the mean score was 2.66 (SD = .840). Seventeen percent (n = 25) of the participants indicated that discussion on multicultural issues occurred all of the time. No relationship was found between this variable and the self-reported multicultural competence.

When asked to describe the degree to which multicultural issues were integrated into the curriculum, only 8% (n = 12) of the sample said they were not included at all. Approximately two thirds of the sample (n = 99) indicated that multicultural issues were integrated into the curriculum via a discrete course or courses. Eighty percent (n = 118) of the respondents indicated that multicultural issues were infused throughout the curriculum, suggesting that although there may be a single course on these issues, multicultural issues are not confined to that course. Analysis of the relationship between the integration of multicultural issues within the curriculum and multicultural competence did not yield any significant correlations.

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation found that some demographic and experience variables were strong predictors of multicultural
the multicultural competence of the faculty who deliver such a curriculum. Finally, a thorough examination of the faculty of color, lesbian/gay/bisexual, and female faculty may shed light on how all faculty, regardless of race or gender, can assume greater responsibility for this aspect of preparation and, as result, enhance their multicultural competence.

CONCLUSION

As the role of multicultural education and training grows within student affairs preparation programs and becomes more institutionalized, it is vital to have a deeper understanding of that education including its content, effectiveness, and the role of those responsible for the training of new professionals. Faculty, regardless of their level of education, training, and experience with multicultural issues, are becoming increasingly responsible for the multicultural education and training of future generations of student affairs professionals. The results of this study offer some important initial insight into the background and experiences of faculty members and their effect on faculty level of multicultural competence.

This study further demonstrates the powerful influence that social identity (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation) has on how preparation faculty may perceive their level of multicultural competence. In addition, there is support for the notion that those individuals with teaching, research, administration, and training experience with multicultural issues have more well-developed multicultural competence than those without these experiences. These results are a fairly clear indication that more work must be done to insure that every student affairs professional achieve and maintain a basic level of multicultural competence rather than rely solely on multicultural experts within the profession.

Although these results are exploratory, they do provide some insight into the importance of continued professional development on multicultural issues for all student affairs preparation faculty. Additional information on faculty experience, the curriculum, and the climate of preparation programs is essential to further develop multicultural competence within the student affairs profession.

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