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INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of various course formats for multicultural training in higher education for psychologists, counselors and educators remains an under-researched domain (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Stebnicki & Cubero, 2008). While the traditional on-campus course format has been widely used, it proved to have multiple limitations (Chen, Jones, & Moreland, 2014; Coleman, 2006; Rowell & Benshoff, 2008). However, it remains unclear whether alternative formats such as international service learning or infusion of multicultural principles throughout professional curricula are more effective in increasing student multicultural learning outcomes (Ibrahim, 2012; Kiely, 2011). In addition to the limited scope, the current research on the effectiveness of multicultural training in higher education pertains to the constraints in research methodology. In particular, the studies in this realm has predominantly utilized quantitative approaches while qualitative methods have been rarely applied (Malott, 2010).

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to compare the effects of two multicultural course formats on student learning of multicultural competencies: (1) the traditional on campus course and (2) the international course. The curriculum of both formats entailed extensive interactive lectures and discussions, application-based assignments, and guided reflections on personal multicultural growth. The international format added to the aforementioned content a series of direct interactions within foreign communities, immersion into a foreign language, and service learning projects. The following student learning outcomes were analyzed: (1) openness towards diverse clients, (2) ability to reflect on learning of multicultural competencies, and (3) ability to apply multicultural competencies to unfamiliar cultural contexts.

METHOD

The participants were 29 graduate students in counseling, psychology and education from a private university in the United States. The participants in the on-campus course closely matched their counterparts in the international course in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and area of study. The students' multicultural learning outcomes were measured using: (1) standardized scale of self-reported openness towards diverse clientele and (2) qualitative analysis of two permanent products, the reaction journal and cultural activity reflective paper.

Both groups were administered an identical set of instruments utilizing identical procedures. First, the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS), a 45-item, 6-point Likert scale self-report, was used to assess general openness and comfort level towards diverse clients (Fuentes *et al*, 2000; Krentzman and Townsend, 2008). Second, students responded to the Reaction Journal that utilized an open-ended response format to document student reactions toward the course content along with personal and professional experiences and reflections. An analytical rubric was designed to distinguish among three levels of performance on the five components of journal: (1) personal multicultural growth, (2) intellectual multicultural growth,

(3) extrapolation of newly acquired multicultural knowledge, (4) commitment to multicultural agenda, diversity and social justice, and (5) reflection on class discussions and readings in the context of local experience. Twenty five percent of all journals collected for the study were used to establish the inter-rater agreement at the 87% level. Third, student wrote essays called the Cultural Activity Paper designed to facilitate reflection and analysis of the students' direct interactions within a culture distinctively different from their own. An analytical rubric was design to distinguish among three levels of performance on the five components of paper: (1) personal growth as a result of interaction with an unfamiliar culture, (2) ability to take on multiple perspectives in addition to own pre-conceptions, (3) interest in interacting with an unfamiliar culture, (4) motivation to explore unfamiliar cultures, and (5) connecting class concepts to field experiences. Twenty percent of all papers collected for the study were used to establish the inter-rater agreement at the 85% level.

RESULTS

The M-GUDS responses across the on-campus and the international courses were compared using one-way MANOVA and follow-up ANOVAs. Significant group differences were revealed on 5 scale items suggesting that, compared to their peers in the on-campus course, the students in the international course are more interested in getting to know bilingual persons, more willing to interact with persons from diverse backgrounds, more inclined to de-emphasize the importance of similarities in friendship, and more often attribute their own multicultural growth to diverse cultural experiences.

The Reaction Journals of participants in the on-campus course and the international course were compared in terms of the total score and scores on each component of the Reaction Journal Rubric. The results of one-way MANOVA and follow-up ANOVAs yielded no significant differences. Further, the two groups were compared on the total score and scores on each component of the Cultural Activity Paper Rubric. The results of one-way MANOVA revealed group difference on the total score approaching significance. Follow-up ANOVAs showed that the international course group received significantly higher ratings than the on-campus course group on the following rubric components: (1) personal growth as a result of interaction with an unfamiliar culture, (2) ability to take multiple perspective in addition to own pre-conceptions and (3) connecting class concepts to field experiences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current results support the effects of the format of multicultural course (i.e., the traditional on campus versus the international course) on student multicultural learning. The add-on value of the international format is evidenced by the self-report data and permanent product analyses. Compared to counterparts in the on-campus course, students in the international course reported more interest in interacting with diverse populations, particularly by seeking interactions with persons from unfamiliar cultures. They also more often attributed their own personal growth to their experiences within unfamiliar and diverse cultures. These results are further supported by these students' ratings of their analysis of interactions within an unfamiliar culture that were reflective of the increased depth and scope of self-reflections, ability to take multiple perspectives, and novel connections between experiential field experiences and the course concepts.

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