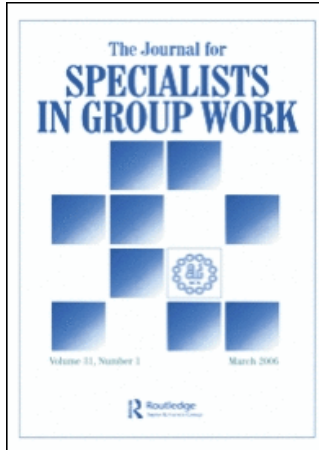


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### Allies Against Hate: A School-Based Diversity Sensitivity Training Experience

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# Allies Against Hate: A School-Based Diversity Sensitivity Training Experience

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*This article describes a nine-year partnership between a counselor education program and school district forged to address the rapidly expanding diversity in a Midwestern city. Approximately 350 counselors-in-training have participated in a service-learning project required in their group counseling theory class to facilitate small psychoeducational groups on diversity for approximately 9000 high school students. The authors describe the multicultural education; school/university partnerships and service learning; the program and participants; application of group work; program evaluation, and recommendations for future research.*

**Keywords:** *diversity; multicultural education; psychoeducational groups; school-based*

Over the past several years, numerous diversity sensitivity training programs have evolved across the nation (Dunn 1997; Keim, Warring, & Rau, 2001; Sue, 1991; Warring, Keim, & Rau, 1998). These programs are a direct response to the growing need for multicultural education in schools based on the changing notion of the "typical" American public school student. Gollnick and Chinn (2002) reported that students of color comprise more than one-third of the public school student population. It is estimated that by the year 2020, students of color will represent nearly half of the elementary and

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secondary school population (Miller, Strosnider, & Dooley, 2000). The United States Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s marked the beginning of recognition of the need for multicultural education in the public school system (Lee, 1995). The Civil Rights Movement signified the initial awareness of the differing, but equal, needs of minority students, as well as the need for additional training for school professionals in the area of multiculturalism (Lee, 1995). Although progress was initially slow, the current trend indicates that the nation has become more aware of the pluralistic nature of the American educational system (Hobson & Kanitz, 1996).

Sue (1991, p. 99) stated "... We will need to face and convince others about the inevitable challenge of cultural diversity." As such, administrators, counselors, parents, and educators across the country are confronted with the overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society. Students need to learn to live in a world in which some groups have greater societal benefits than others do because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, language, religion, ability, or age. The National School Safety Center (NSSC) (Stephens, 2002) recommended that communication and recognition of one's own cultural background were the first steps in preparing today's youth to live peacefully in a culturally diverse society. Carnes (1999) stated, "Now is the time to start a project or a series of projects that draw students together in a commitment to prevent further bias incidents. The key to success is student involvement" (p. 33).

Carnes (1999) further suggested that school administrators encourage student activism to solve the problems associated with racism and discrimination in schools and communities. He pointed out that students often have highly developed senses of justice and would often be great advocates for change, if intervention occurred at a time when their energy and dedication to ideals could be focused in the direction of anti-discrimination. He encouraged schools to utilize the enthusiasm of students by conducting yearly programs about diversity sensitivity issues.

The purpose of this article is to describe one such yearly program that has been conducted for the last nine years in a large Midwestern school district. Multicultural education; school/university partnerships and service learning; the program and participants; application of group work; program evaluation and recommendations for future research will also be discussed.

## **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education emerged in the 1960s as a result of the United States' Civil Rights Movement and the long-standing policy

of assimilating immigrant children into dominant culture school systems (Lee, 1995; Sobol, 1990). What began as an attempt to help immigrant students adjust to a new environment evolved into a process that assisted school personnel and dominant culture students with understanding and appreciation for the diverse backgrounds of minority students (Sobol, 1990).

Today, the majority of multicultural training programs for school systems focus on two main goals: a) increasing academic achievement of minority students and b) promoting greater understanding and sensitivity to cultural differences in an attempt to reduce bias within the student population (Dunn, 1997). The latter of these two goals was the focus of our diversity training project, *Allies Against Hate*. As such, the curricula were designed with the intent of increasing sensitivity towards issues of diversity with a focus on cooperative learning theories. Dunn (p. 76) explained "Some of these programs emphasize pluralism and cultural equity in American society as a whole, seeking to apply critical thinking skills to a critique of racism and sexism." This description best described the goals of the *Allies Against Hate* diversity sensitivity training program, which included:

1. Assisting high school aged students in gaining comfort in the differences that exist between themselves and others in terms of race, ethnicity, beliefs, communication norms, etc.
2. Providing opportunities for students to gain knowledge and understanding about how oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping affects them personally and in their work, thus allowing them to acknowledge their own racist attitudes, beliefs, and feelings
3. Helping students perceive their own role in the continuation and/or abolishment of discrimination, racism, and stereotyping of culturally diverse individuals.
4. Providing students with information regarding the history of discrimination and oppression of diverse populations.
5. Increasing student recognition and understanding of sociopolitical influences that may impinge upon the life of racial and ethnic minorities.

These goals were accomplished through the implementation of specified program activities, as well as through small group discussions which were facilitated by masters and doctoral level counselors-in-training.

### **Service Learning and University/School Partnerships**

University faculty members have long been challenged to move beyond their campus community to make the connection between research, public policy, and people's lives. As such, collaborative action research has been a major thrust of today's efforts in school reform

(Denner, Cooper, Lopez, and Dunbar, 1999). Our entrance into the schools came through a service delivery request for diversity training in 1997. Following a teacher-in-service training on diversity sensitivity, the program coordinator was approached about developing a similar training experience for 1,000 high school aged students. In order to provide training for this many students, a service-learning project was developed for the master's level group counseling theories class. That initial training marked the beginning of a long and meaningful partnership that is now in its ninth year. To date, some 350 counselors in training have facilitated small group diversity training for more than 9,000 high school students and 1,500 middle and high school faculty.

Service learning is an instructional method that was first introduced by Dewey and Kirkpatrick in the early 1990's (Conrad & Hedin, 1991). The purpose of service learning is to help students make the connection between classroom learning and professional practice by placing students within the community to utilize skills being learned in their graduate training programs (Barbee, Scherer, & Combs, 2003; Berson, 1993, 1994; Conrad & Hedin; Gose, 1997). Additionally, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 1990) recommended that counselor education training programs utilize service learning projects within the curricula through collaboration between the universities and counseling agencies and schools.

As such, the *Allies Against Hate* program was developed as a service learning opportunity for counselors-in-training. By moving the learning out of the university classroom and into the public schools, students were able to utilize the skills they studied and begin to move toward practice. The service learning project was designed to allow counselors-in-training to facilitate group work in a diverse school setting while under supervision, thus gaining insight into their own attitudes toward diverse groups, multicultural competencies and first hand experience in group facilitation. By having the opportunity to help in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of such a program, counselors-in-training developed greater confidence in these areas, thus making it more likely that such service learning projects might become standard practice in their work as professional counselors in the future.

A key component of the university/school partnership is communication between the two institutions. For this project, the high school counselors have served as the liaison between the university and the school district. The counselors were best able to articulate the needs for cultural understanding based on the school profile, types of counseling services provided, population served, number of opportunities for diversity awareness, etc. School counselors were also vital to the

success of the program, because they helped to involve students and teachers by creating a framework for the teachers to understand and appreciate the program goals. Additionally, program evaluations were distributed and collected by the school counselors who were active in compiling a summary report for the school district.

### **Allies Against Hate: The Program and Participants**

The *Allies Against Hate* diversity sensitivity training program was developed for high school students and presented for the first time in the spring of 1997. Since that time, various versions of the program have been presented to two Midwestern high schools. School administrators initially believed that juniors would be at an appropriate developmental level to relate their encounters with differences to the program content. In addition, the principals hoped that an intervention for juniors would carry over to their senior year. The belief was that if the students could learn to value differences and become more sensitive to diversity as juniors, then as seniors they could model multicultural competence and influence the social climate of the high schools. In 2003, the program was presented to high school freshmen for the first time. It was the hope of the program developer and the collaborating school administrators that student participants of the training would be able to utilize the skills they learn throughout their high school careers, thus creating a culture of diversity sensitivity within the schools.

While there have been several versions of the diversity sensitivity training curricula, all have centered on at least one of the five previously mentioned themes. Researchers (Banks, 1994; Carnes, 1999) suggested that learning is enhanced when students are active participants in the educational process. As such, experiential learning activities are the primary component of the program. The small group activities were developed from the research on multicultural education (Atencio, 1987; Carnes, 1995; Jaramillo, 1998; Pate, 1994; Pine & Hilliard, 1990; Polakow-Suransky & Ulaby, 1990; Sobol, 1990; Sue, 1991; Yagi, 1985), developmentally appropriate teaching practices for high school-aged students (Banks, 1994; Carnes, 1999; Dunn, 1997; Polakow-Suransky & Ulaby; Sobol), and small group practices in schools (Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Prout & Prout, 1998; Zinck & Littrell, 2000). Specific small group activities for the training were found and adapted for use by the program developer as a multi-layered, experiential approach to multicultural education. The program focused on five areas specific for young people as they considered issues of diversity and culture in their own lives in an increasingly diverse student population by starting a dialogue with young people

about the history and causes of hate, the impact of jokes on discrimination, the students' own level of self-efficacy in decreasing discriminatory behaviors, and increasing awareness of the problem of racism.

Based on the research for developmentally appropriate teaching practices for high school students (Banks, 1994; Carnes, 1999; Dunn, 1997; Polakow-Suransky & Ulaby, 1990; Sobol, 1990), the *Allies Against Hate* program was designed as a multi-layered, experiential approach to education. Researchers (Banks; Carnes) have suggested that learning was enhanced when students were active participants in the educational process. Additionally, high school aged students have been reported to respond positively to the use of technology in education (Cohen, 2001). As such, the *Allies Against Hate* diversity sensitivity training program consisted of two 50-minute sessions in which students were asked to participate in several layers of video and experiential activities. Students were also given a pre-test and a post-test, which allowed researchers to evaluate program efficacy.

The first training component was designed as an integrated social studies lesson plan, which included the video *The Shadow of Hate* (Guggenheim, 1995). The students viewed the video with their social studies instructor. *The Shadow of Hate* (Guggenheim) video recounted historical stories about racial discrimination and hate crimes in the United States. It included the true stories of individual and group discrimination based on religious, racial, and sexual orientation differences. The stories from American history that were featured in the video began with incidents from the Mary Dyer story about religious persecution in 1660 and concluded with the story of an altercation in Brooklyn between two rival gangs that took place in 1991. Additionally, the video recounted the foundational principles upon which America was built and that "We the people clearly did not include everyone" (Carnes, 1995, p. 4).

The second component of training took place a week after students had viewed the first video with their social studies teachers. It was a 50-minute session, designed to illuminate hate in today's world and to provide students with a brief experience in either being dominant or dominated. Program presenters, consisting of university faculty and masters, specialist, and doctoral level counselors-in-training, implemented the training. The high school students were randomly assigned to either a *brown eyes* or *blue eyes* group when they entered the school auditorium. The activity was based on the work of Jane Elliott, an elementary school teacher from Iowa, who in 1968 developed a lesson on discrimination for her third grade students following the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Elliott, 1991). Throughout the *Allies Against Hate* diversity sensitivity training session, a sticker distinguished student membership in either of the

groups. One group was subjected to discriminating remarks during the session, while the other group was praised for being "superior". The "superior" and "inferior" groups were alternated each session.

Additionally, during the second session, students participated in an activity called *Ups and Downs*. This activity was developed by the Ball State University Psychological Service Center's Diversity Task Force (Payne, Zimmerman, & Warner, 1991). During this activity, students were asked to stand, if they were able, if they identified themselves as belonging to a group when it was called. Like the *Brown Eyes/Blue Eyes* activity, the intent was to assist students in understanding the feelings associated with being "different" from the crowd and in recognizing that diversity exists within groups as well as between groups.

Following the *Ups and Downs* activity, students viewed the *Real People: What Is Hate All About* (Fisher, 1998) video which included a number of young people talking about their personal experiences and understandings of hate. It included discussions about the use of jokes, stereotypes, and racial slurs as forms of oppression. Additionally, the video recounted the experiences of youth who have been victims of discrimination based on racial, ethnic, religious, gender, ability, and sexual orientation differences. Finally, the video addressed ways in which young people could help stop the problem of hate in our country (Fisher)

After viewing the *Real People: What Is Hate All About* (Fisher, 1998) video, students were separated into small groups and processed the experience of the workshop. Small groups of five to twelve high school students were facilitated by two or more graduate-level counselors-in-training. Each facilitator was given a set of small group discussion prompts adapted from the *Real People: What Is Hate All About* Teacher's Manual (Jaramillo, 1998).

## Application of Group Work

Research (Fleming, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Prout & Prout, 1998, Zinck & Littrell, 2000) has supported the notion that using a small group format in a school setting can be an effective and efficient means of working with students in an experiential or hands-on approach, as well as one of the most effective instructional strategies for promoting a climate for cultural self-awareness and diversity appreciation. Therefore, this diversity training was approached through a psychoeducational and primary prevention preventative delivery model, keeping in mind important group processes and dynamics.

The small groups were structured psychoeducational groups as defined by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (2000) classification system. Each activity had an educational component of



presenting new information or perspectives to group members, as well as a psychological component designed to promote attitude awareness. The goal of this program was to assist area schools with the challenges of a rapidly growing diverse student population by starting a dialogue with young people about the history and causes of hate, the impact of jokes on discrimination, the students' own level of self-efficacy in decreasing discriminatory behaviors, increasing awareness of the problem, and learning multicultural communication skills. The time-limited, structured psychoeducational groups were pre-planned, focused on a single issue (i.e., diversity training) and attempted to raise consciousness and educate.

The diversity sensitivity training program experience was composed of two 50 minute sessions. The video training component was shown in one session and small group activities were conducted in the other. Multicultural training, prejudice prevention, and critical thinking require a great deal of risk taking. Therefore, a climate of respect and trust needed to be established in order for participants to be able to share their personal thoughts, feelings and challenge their own thinking and that of others. Ground rules were established at the onset of each training experience, such as respecting others' opinions and confidences during disclosure, understanding that it may be disturbing to encounter differing opinions, permitting others to finish their statements before responding, avoiding personal criticism and put downs of peer reactions or positions that are not shared, and the recognition that value is placed on multiple perspectives rather than a "correct" or "right" perspective. As suggested by Marbley (2004), facilitators were also trained to recognize the paradox of trying to create safety when addressing unsafe topics such as racial issues in groups of mixed races.

A process oriented approach to group work was used. The groups emphasized the member interactions and participation to facilitate therapeutic factors most seen in beginning groups, such as universality, imparting information, installation of hope and altruism. The role of the group leader was to engage in various roles and tasks, such as seeing and giving information, responding to feelings, summarizing, confronting, modeling and the transfer of learning to real life. Facilitators were especially trained to listen for and facilitate multiple perspectives by attending to homogenous and heterogeneous group composition risks and advantages as described by Aponte and Wohl (2000). Group membership reflected the diversity within the high schools which consisted of a majority of White students and about 17% minority students. Of particular meaning to the group leaders was preparation for managing and understanding verbal participation as it relates to cultural norms and values.

Supervision of the counselors-in-training was provided by counselor educators, school counselors, teachers, and school administrators through in vivo group participation and large group processing and debriefing following the diversity training. In vivo group supervision allowed immediate feedback and modeling as supervisors join group leaders in the classroom through co-facilitation. Supervisors were also available in the school counseling office in case group leaders needed assistance in managing a situation or crisis that was not anticipated. Directly following the group work at the high school, all group leaders were brought together for a reflection of group dynamics, what worked well, and a discussion about the challenges and the solutions for the next diversity workshop. The mass group processing was considered the primary integration activity which served to cement the link between experience and theory.

### **Program Evaluation**

This program was evaluated based upon action research models (Denner, Cooper, Lopez, & Dunbar, 1999; Small, 1995) that place local schools as partners, not just recipients, in the process of research knowledge acquisition. The questions proposed were joint inquiries between the program developer and school administrators. Recent trends in the rise of minority populations in the Midwest and the research pointing to a lack of belonging and safety for the minority children in the schools stimulated the administrators to consider the methods they used to address diversity issues (Denner et al., 1999; Pine & Hilliard, 1990; Stephens, 2002). Since the questions reflected those of community members, the study's findings were more likely to be taken seriously and impact current practices (Denner et al., 1999).

Although several psychometrically sound instruments were found that measured varying components of multicultural counseling competence, (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991; Pomales, Claiborn, & LaFromboise, 1986; Ponterotto & Alexander, 1996; Ponterotto, Rieger et al., 1996; Ponterotto, Sanchez, & Magids, 1991; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Pope-Davis & Nielsen, 1996; Robinson & Bradley, 1997; Sadowsky, 1996), an extensive review of the literature found no empirically based instruments designed to measure student awareness of the problems and causes of racism and discrimination, the role of jokes on perpetuating racist attitudes, changes in understanding the historical background of prejudice, or changes in students' perceptions of self-efficacy in eradicating the problems associated with racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Consequently, the program

evaluation for *Allies Against Hate* was conducted with an instrument designed by the program creators to measure the goals of the training.

The *What is Hate all About* evaluation instrument consisted of a 25-question pre-test and post-test in which these five areas were directly addressed. The purpose of the Likert-scale questionnaire was to examine the degree to which participants' perceptions of racism, oppression, homophobia, and stereotypes were impacted by the intervention. Participants were asked to respond to statements using an A–E (1–5) Likert-scale by marking a scan-tron sheet representing Strongly Disagree (1/A), Disagree (2/B), Neutral (3/C), Agree (4/D), or Strongly Agree (5/E) with statements that addressed issues related to multiculturalism. The original survey (1999–2002) did not include a Neutral (3/C) option for students. A higher score on the *What Is Hate all About* pre-test and/or post-test survey indicated more sensitivity to cultural issues. A lower score indicated the less sensitive to diversity. Several item responses were reversed, which indicated that a higher score on these items implied lower cultural sensitivity.

The *What Is Hate All About* pre-test and post-test instrument was first implemented as an evaluation tool during the third year of the *Allies Against Hate* program. The survey was evaluated using Chronbach's alpha. This reliability analysis of the over-all pilot study yielded alpha levels of .83 ( $n = 194$ ) and .83 ( $n = 107$ ) for the pre-test and post-test, respectively. These alpha values were considered "good" measures of internal consistency by conventional standards (George & Mallery, 2003).

## Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

As with any type of program, outcome research for the *Allies Against Hate* program is ongoing. In keeping with the ideals of action research, the goal of the outcome studies has been to determine program efficacy in changing attitudes and perceptions of participants. Students were asked to complete pre- and post-test surveys in an effort to measure changes in beliefs and attitudes regarding diversity sensitivity issues. Over the past nine years, outcome results have been favorable, indicating that students have obtained a greater understanding of multicultural issues. However, the authors believe that changes in the evaluation component of the program might provide more information for modifying and improving program development, implementation, and outcomes.

The addition of a qualitative component to the instrument might be considered for future research. Tomlinson-Clarke (2000) recommended the use of qualitative research methods when evaluating the impact of multicultural trainings. Qualitative questions in the instrument, or the inclusion of a student focus group, would allow

participants the opportunity to express their views about the topic of racism and discrimination, thus providing a richer understanding of the experience.

Additionally, future research about the efficacy of the *Allies Against Hate* diversity sensitivity training program could include some longitudinal research of changes noted within the school itself. Information about the possible changes in the amount of money spent on vandalism repair, the number of racially motivated incidences of violence within the school, and graduation rates of cultural minority students would provide important information about long-term program efficacy (Toews & Barker, 1985; Yagi, 1985).

## CONCLUSION

The Allies Against Hate program served as a model for service-learning partnerships with schools and communities. It also provides a social justice intervention to assist area schools with the challenges of a rapidly growing diverse student population by starting a dialogue with young people about the diversity. The use of psychoeducational group work served as an effective method for implementation of this diversity sensitivity training program.

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