Diversity Training in VA Psychology: Applications and Approaches

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Introduction

Sarah Spain, Ph.D., ABPP
The Race Card Wall: VAPLC Version

The Race Card Project

- Developed by Michelle Norris in 2010 to foster dialogue about race and identity.
- Thousands of submissions from across the world.

How to Participate Today

- Think about experiences, questions, hopes, dreams, laments or observations about race and identity.
- Distill into one sentence, with six words.
- Complete a card, and put it on our wall.
Objectives

- Introduce approaches for applying cultural competence in a VA Medical Center.
- Explore strategies and rationale for self-assessment.
- Discuss an example of diversity training in application in a VA setting.
- Provide education of best practice models.
Why does cultural competence in training matter?

- APA supports the idea that cultural competence is a valued goal during training and actual practice of psychology.

- Cultural competence is a static aspect of overall competence and has proven difficult to measure in actual practice after licensure or board certification.
How does cultural competence during training impact practice?

- The most prevalent area for ongoing assessment and observation of practice competency is during internship and postdoctoral training.

- Provides an important approach to most effectively meeting the diverse needs of our patients.
Self-Assessment

Jamylah K. Jackson, Ph.D., ABPP
Self-Assessment and APA Multicultural Guidelines

“…the population of the United States is racially/ethnically diverse, and that students, research participants, clients and the workforce will be increasingly likely to come from racially/ethnically diverse cultures.”

Self Assessment

• Our job is to offer the best care possible

• Standards of care evolve

• Are you current? How do you know?
What does cultural diversity mean to me?

Let’s create definitions for the following terms:

- Culture
- Inclusion
- Diversity

Relationship/differences between your definitions and the definitions of others
Personal Reflections

- The identities I’m most conscious of...
- What this means for me on a day to day basis.
- A time that I felt excluded because of who I am... How I felt and what I did...
- A time that I’ve participated in treating others as less than, How did I feel and what did I do?
- The parts of my identity I’ve done the least amount of work around include...

Washington, 2009
Improving Diversity Training in the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

Angelic D. Chaison, Ph.D.
MDSC Formed to Meet the Challenge

- To increase diversity programming as part of the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship, the Multicultural and Diversity Subcommittee (MDSC) of the Psychology Training Program was formed in the Fall of 2009.

- MDSC was composed of a diverse group of psychologists and a postdoctoral fellow who met regularly to address diversity issues related to training and staff development.

- Initial areas of focus included:
  - Promoting awareness, understanding, and appreciation of diversity among Veterans, trainees, and staff
  - Fostering a training environment that promotes the development of multicultural competence for trainees and staff
MDSC Initial Efforts

• Developed an advanced-level, monthly diversity seminar series, consisting of alternating VTEI presentations and journal club discussions

• Hosted a diversity potluck luncheon to recognize and appreciate diversity among psychology trainees and staff

• Developed a mentor matching system for trainees

• Developed a virtual diversity library (e.g., articles, book chapters, PowerPoint presentations, etc.) to increase trainee and staff access to diversity resources
MDSC Initial Outcomes

- Diversity potluck luncheon was well-received and is now an annual event at the beginning of each training year.
- Fellows indicated that efforts of the MDSC enhanced their training experience, particularly for fellows who participated on the MDSC.
- Trainees in the mentor program reported increased confidence in their careers and staff reported increased career and personal satisfaction.
- Popularity of the Diversity VTEL seminar series grew and the number of sites participating has expanded.
- Efforts of the MDSC has attracted increasing numbers of diverse trainees who apply to the training program each year.
- MDSC productivity has been highly regarded in multiple venues.
MDSC Lessons Learned...

- Creating the MDSC and choosing members who have a passion for diversity and a commitment to work on MDSC projects beyond regular clinical and training responsibilities was vital to developing and implementing a new approach to diversity training.

- Providing MDSC members opportunities to take the lead in MDSC projects built energy, increased positive feelings about additional workload, and led to a higher task completion rate.

- Meeting regularly to develop ideas, set deadlines for task completion, and celebrate successful implementation were key in facilitating productivity.
MDSC Lessons Learned…

• Collaboration with other sites in the VISN to identify creative, innovative approaches to diversity training was beneficial in enriching training efforts across both sites.

• Including postdoctoral fellows as members of the MDSC helped identify and develop relevant training opportunities of interest to fellows while preparing fellows to contribute to and enhance diversity training in the institutions where they found subsequent employment.

• Including MDSC representation in the psychology training program infrastructure (e.g. training committee, postdoc steering committee) was helpful in gaining support for MDSC activities by psychology staff.
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MDSC Members
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Ellen J. Teng, Ph.D (Training Director)
Perspectives from a Trainee

Helene E. Cook, Ph.D.
Perspectives from a Trainee

• Things we know
  ◦ Multicultural environments of training programs (i.e. pre-doctoral internship) have been found to possess more aspects of a multicultural environment than academic environments (Peters, Krumm, Gonzales, et al, 2011)
  ◦ Training programs have the specific charge of preparing trainees to deliver a range of clinical services
High and Low Points

- Active diversity committees
- Trainees are able to see themselves reflected in staff
- Multiple hour-long seminars on cultural diversity
- Practical hands-on discussions
- Disorganization
- Lack of in-depth discussions
- Focus of diversity can be limited
- Standard didactics
- Inability to process multiculturally related issues in supervision
Challenges

- Limitations of time/resources
- Getting everyone on board
- Gap between knowledge and practice
Best Practices In VA

Samuel S.C. Wan, Ph.D.
Multicultural and Diversity Committee (MDC)

- Created in 2009 by VAPTC EC
- Charged with developing best practices training guidelines
- Ensure that trainees gain competence
- Aid training directors and supervisors with tools to disseminate information
Projects

- Best Practices Document
- Training modules
  - Assessment
  - LGBTQ practice
  - Native Americans
  - African Americans
  - Latinos
  - Asians and Asian Americans
Initiatives

- Diversity Discussions listserv for VA
  - Created in 2012
- Monthly Article Discussion
Training Needs

- Little formal guidance
- Linking coursework to practical experience
- Measurement of training outcomes
- Time to devote to training
- Opportunities to practice
- Supervision
Approaches

- Begin with didactic, cognitive instruction prior to using experiential, affective-based instruction
- Journal clubs
- Brown bag lunches
- Case conferences
Example(s)

- Safe Zone Project
- Reading group
- Supervision
  - Active evaluation of supervisor and supervisee
  - Supervision of supervision
- Continuous faculty development
- Explore Social Justice as a frame
References


- [http://theracecardproject.com/](http://theracecardproject.com/)