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Reactions In The Field: Interviews With Helping Professionals Who Work With Biracial Children And Adolescents

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REACTIONS IN THE FIELD:
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WITH BIRACIAL CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The number of interracial couples and marriages are growing in the United States, and it is expected that the number of biracial children will also increase. It is estimated that within five years, a third of America’s youth will be the offspring of an interracial relationship (Synder, 1996). The future design of support services to meet the needs of the biracial population is obviously crucial.

The literature review has revealed a lack of training of helping professionals and a framework for identifying and understanding biracial populations. Counseling professionals have recognized the need to increase research in the area of working with biracial children, but no previous study has gathered information from helping professionals in the field.

This study was designed to explore the knowledge, skills, attitudes and expectations of professionals who work with biracial children. Twenty male and female participants were interviewed from various helping professions including social work, mental health and school counseling. Each participant was required to have two years work experience with biracial children. Data was collected through a structured interview. Years of experience for helping professionals ranged from two to twenty-five with 85% of the respondents being Caucasian.

Helping professional’s top concerns for working with biracial adolescents and children were a lack of training, real-life experiences, awareness or comfort with identity, and acceptance of biracial children by others. The expectation for the future professional
development and growth included the desire for more interaction of all people within their community.

This study supported the identified area of need in previous literature regarding a lack of training and experience. Long range sociopolitical issues appear to be upcoming issues for biracial individuals as well as the desire of helping professionals to be better prepared and supportive to biracial children and adolescents.
Acknowledgements

Preparing for and planning this study has been a lifelong desire and effort. I have worked over the past six years with interest and enthusiasm to cultivate ideas and this research. Yet even so, I wondered if all the work would be worth it. As I toiled there were times that I considered giving up. I found myself wondering, “Does my research matter to anyone else? Who else cares?” During some of the longest hours of research, reviewing tapes and numerous revisions, I could hear the voice of one of my committee members, Judith Frankel, cheering me on. I remember a poignant conversation at one of my lowest points when I was feeling very small and very low. She simply told me to not forget who I am and where I came from. This meant so much because I knew then that she believed in me and she believed in my study.

My dissertation was designed to learn from helping professionals what they felt was important when assessing their own skills, attitudes, knowledge and expectations when working with biracial adolescents and children. I have to believe that it measured something else as well. I feel that by conducting these interviews I tapped into the hearts and minds of individuals and that perhaps by their involvement, it changed their work with this population. I know this work is important and will impact the lives of biracial children. I continue to feel that this study has allowed me to share something special and worthwhile with the profession of counselor education. I plan to continue my research with other helping professionals for comparative information with other populations.
However before I do any of that, I realize I must give praise to a handful of individuals who made the publication of this study a reality. Each of these individuals was instrumental in helping me achieve my dream and each has my deepest gratitude.

The leadership and teamwork of my committee made the prolonged process of this study worthwhile and complete. My committee, comprised of Bob Wilson, Mei Tang, Judith Frankel and Patricia O’Reilly, gave of themselves unselfishly and tirelessly. Thank you Dr. Wilson for telling me I had “music in my pen” for helping me tune that music when I needed to and for your dedication to my finishing this research. Thank you Dr. Tang for your caring, your balance and your consistent commitment to an enjoyable process. Thank you Dr. Frankel for never faltering in your perspective and vision as you advised me. Thank you Dr. O’Reilly for your honesty and perspective which kept the study moving forward throughout the many months.

Personally there were originally three individuals who inspired me to stay focused and steadfast in my commitment to the dissertation. A fourth joined a little late in the game, but her participation “turned it all around” to say the least.

First I would like to thank my mother, Bethel. My mom has shown me over the years what it means to own my voice even when I could not find the courage to speak. Thank you mom for encouraging me to never give up and for listening to me. You helped me believe that I had important things to say. I know I would have never come this far in my life had it not been for you.

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Lastly, I must thank my newest light, my daughter Kennedy Isabella. Thank you for reminding me of what this was all about in the first place, the children. Thank you for serving as a guide as I neared the end of this journey and begin new ones. One look at your face tells me this is important for you and for all the children this research may influence. Looking back on it all, I am proud of this accomplishment. I hope that in the end this research will inspire more exploration in the profession. I hope more individuals ask if it is worth and implore themselves to find out who cares. I hope through learning this we never forget who we are depends on where we have been.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Review of the Literature

Introduction

Interracial marriages and partnerships are increasing and those numbers are speculated to continue to soar (US Census, 1998). Consequently, the biracial population is one of the fastest growing segments in the United States (Federal Register, 1997; Synder, 1996; US Census 1988; 1989). Estimates are that in the next five years, more than a third of America’s children will be from a blending of ethnic minorities (Synder, 1996). This increase in ethnic minority children challenges counselors to find appropriate resources for meeting the needs of the population. As exciting and rapid the increase is for the population, there is also lack of attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and preparation of mental health professionals working with biracial children. It was not until recently, within the last fifteen years, that explicit attention was paid to the biracial children (Salzman, 1995). Therefore, since statistics shows increased diversification in the population, it is likely that more and more students and members of the community will be biracial children. Providing counseling to biracial children remains novel to the profession. The pace of training or learning how to work with these individuals arrives more quickly than tested technique and researched intervention. Literally, professionals are venturing into unexplored territory stumbling to find out what works and what does not in providing support to biracial children and adolescents (Brandell, 1988). So many changes have accompanied the increase of the biracial population that professionals are puzzled with what techniques might be most beneficial and where to include these new learning opportunities in training and curricula.

Throughout the literature, much attention has been paid to the multiracial couple and how to support their specific needs; however, the niche that has not been filled is
how to support and work with the offspring of such a union (Kenny, Salazar, & Walker, 1999). Most research has addressed the working relationship of biracial couples and biracial adults, yet there remains scarcity in the literature to address working with biracial children (Ho, 1992; Mindel, Haberstein, & Wright, 1988; Synder, 1996). Biracial children may require specific services from helping professionals who may be required to provide unique, additional knowledge and skills (Seabring, 1985). As a result, contributions need to be made to the literature that will assist counselors as well as raise awareness and understanding of client issues in working with biracial children.

Several counseling professionals have already recognized the need to increase knowledge, skills, and expectations currently associated with working with biracial children (Atkinson & Thompson, 1992; Ivey, Lee, 1997; 1995; Williams, 1999). Students in training programs have shared that working with a biracial child is most difficult because individuals cannot be placed into a simple racial/cultural category. It is difficult for new counselors-in-training because they do not have a framework for comprehending problems, such as being a complicated race from two or more races, simply put since they are not as straightforward (Williams, 1999). At times these inexperienced counselors may cite prejudices and assumptions or relied on improper categorization of individuals (Robinson, 1993).

There is also evidence in the literature to support the number of under prepared mental health care providers who are struggling to connect and relate to biracial children (Dana, 1993; Herring, 1995; Lyles, Yancey, Grace & Carter, 1985). Helping professionals share feeling particularly challenged as they are not as in touch with the specific sorts of experiences and issues for the biracial versus monoracial child. Collectively or on their own, each of these issues is a stumbling block for the newly trained mental health provider.
Consequently, a particular focus on biracial adolescents, as the new face of multicultural clients, steers an increase and urgency for helping professionals to gain multicultural competence. There is an increased need for helping professionals to be able to relate and counsel biracial children effectively. This is a direct result of ongoing societal changes and in response to the demand in the future, as more new counselors join the profession (Lee, 1997). This prominent population growth and increasing need in our modern time necessitates a sincere concentration of research. Research and literature have addressed the issue of a changing multicultural society but we, as a profession, still do not know how to provide the best support to the biracial population. Research has not addressed specific needs of counseling professionals as how to provide competent and culturally sensitive counseling to biracial children and clients. Therefore, one area to consider addressing is the uncertainty that most helping professionals deal with when working with various biracial children and families. Since the needs of biracial children are so diverse, where helpers need to start may be more ambiguous than when deciding how to support other clients with different racial backgrounds (Synder, 1996). Understandably, the training and knowledge of the developing counselor may have different needs, strengths and weaknesses; but what those remain uncertain at this time. Individual differences may influence the quality of one’s experience and the willingness to take risks while embracing new learning.

As far as enhancement of the understanding for counselors, Brandell (1988) examined the status of psychotherapeutic treatment of minority children and found that to date “virtually no attention, in training, has been directed to the treatment of the biracial child” (p. 176). Wardle (1987) observed that professionals have shown little to no interest in the increasing biracial population. There is a need now more than ever to understand how professionals are working with biracial children and adolescents. In
order to increase all the aspects of self, to become a more effective helper, it is important
to spend time examining the current knowledge, skill and attitude one possesses.
Therefore, gaining a counselor’s perception about their work with biracial children is a
logical and needed beginning point for improving the preparation of new counselors.
This study will explore these components as it ascertains the perceptions of those
working in the field. In gauging the baseline information from current professionals,
information can be gained about what is most helpful and what is least useful when
working with biracial children. Also, we may hope to learn more about what other issues
need to be examined and what the more critical concerns are in other areas.

Statement of Problem

This study is designed to explore the knowledge, skills, attitudes and expectations
of mental health care providers who work with biracial children. Those interviewees are
at various levels of practice and experience in the profession. Currently there has been
not more than speculation on what might be useful or helpful to helping professionals,
when working with this population. In fact, no study has been conducted to identify an
individual’s perceptions of factors such as their own knowledge, skill, attitudes and
expectations when engaged in service with biracial children. Specifically, this study will
answer the question: What are helping professionals’ knowledge, skills and attitudes
when working with biracial children

Review of the Literature

A thorough review of the pertinent literature regarding biracial children and
counseling follows which includes two distinct sections. The first section pertains to the
biracial child specifically and includes information on commonalities and differences
among biracial adolescents, developmental stages, physical characteristics, language and
The issue of identity is explored so as to examine influences on identity from the standpoint of culture, family, and peers.

The second section of the literature review focuses on counselor education and training issues. These issues are highlighted by examining the biracial child and adolescent population, from the standpoint of helping professionals, counselor education and training, multiculturalism, multicultural competency in training, and challenges facing the helping profession. Lastly knowledge, skills and attitudes are reviewed for current and future helping professionals.

*Characteristics of Biracial Children*

I remember it like it was yesterday when I met ‘Amelia.’ She was a young, almost eleven years old, and she had come to my office to talk with me about the difficulties she was having adjusting to her new school. She was an extremely bright young lady, verbose and friendly, though shy at first. She had previously attended the same school for all her prior grades, but as a result of her father’s company relocating the family she was now in a new school this fall in a brand new city. She was the youngest of three and according to her parents, was the only child exhibiting difficulty adjusting. She wasn’t making friends, was performing poorly in her classes and was withdrawn. Her parents enrolled her in several extracurricular activities only to notice the problem and her attitude were worsening.

As I talked with Amelia, she shared with me that she had previously lived in a predominantly black urban neighborhood and attended classes where most of her peers were also black or biracial. I knew from meeting her parents that Amelia’s father was African American and her mother was Caucasian. Amelia’s physical features were predominantly African American, but she had light skin and straight hair. Several of her closer friends were also biracial and the likelihood that others would be comfortable with
this was common. However, this new school was more rural than urban with few black student and even fewer biracial children. Amelia described the other children as treating her differently and that she often felt like she was “under a microscope” at school. She told me that she was often asked insensitive questions. Also she received long stares and snickers from children she did not know.

This particular day, the teacher had administered a survey to the class. Each child was instructed to put their name on the first line and then to check a box to designate their racial group. Amelia said she sat for several moments, dumbfounded and too embarrassed to raise her hand. She stared at her paper wondering what box to select and becoming more upset with each passing minute. After several more moments of confusion, she burst into tears and ran out the classroom crying. Her teacher followed her into the hall and told her to go to my office if she could not follow directions.

Amelia implored me with her questions. “What am I supposed to mark?” she asked me. “My parents taught me to be proud of who I am, but lately I don’t know who that is. That paper had four choices – White, Black, Hispanic or Other. I am not ‘Other’! I just can’t stand this anymore!!” Then after a steady flood of tears she quietly, yet firmly stated, “I don’t fit in anywhere.”

This encounter has not left my memory since that session. Indeed, what do we as counselors say to children asking these questions? How do we reconcile the differences or similarities when supporting biracial children? How one prepares, gains understanding or awareness as to where a student “fits into it all” is just the beginning. In addition, one needs to ask and know what exactly does the term ‘biracial’ means. In most contexts this has been defined as “the child resulting from parents of separate racial groups” or children and adolescents who are “first-generation interracial children” (Sebring, 1985). As exciting and rapid as these changes are taking place in the population, there is delay in
the knowledge, skills, attitudes and preparation of mental health professionals working with biracial children. So far, research has yielded very little as far as what might be useful or helpful to professionals.

Research does indicate that governing factors such as developmental stages, family structure, worldview, identity development, acculturation, and adjustment are critical in their impact, contribution and limitation to concerns for biracial children (Brandel, 1988; Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Herring, 1995; Lyles, Yancey and Carter, 1985; Robinson, 1993; Scott & Borodvsky, 1990; Valsiner, 1987). This information indicates that these factors may influence biracial children and monoracial differently. The reality is that developmental stages are different for all individuals, not just these two populations. All other factors, such as the family structure and consequent development of identity may also influence the coping and adjustment of biracial children.

Commonalities and Differences for Adolescent Biracial and Monoracial Children

Problems and issues for any family are complex based on individual differences and group dynamics. For the biracial child and biracial family, there may be more than one set of values and more than one culture to consider when handling any new situation. Within these types of blended families, biracial adolescents are often challenged to understand and work within two environments (deAndra, 1984; Marta, 1997; Schlegel, 2000). Difficulty arises when this individual feels discomfort or distress with both their races leading to marginalization of self. Marginalization occurs when ethnic persons can identify with neither the traditional culture nor the majority culture (Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992; Gibbs, 1987; Torres-Matrullo, 1980). For biracial children gaining understanding of their self that is congruent with the person they want to become can be particularly poignant problem.
There are many issues to consider when examining what commonalities and differences exist for the biracial adolescent. One of the most critical issues is a foundational understanding of development for both monoracial and biracial adolescents and children. A grasp of the fundamental components of development is critical for recognizing the “red flags” during this time period when behavior is progressing differently for a child. A basic understanding of developmental stages, physical development, language, socioeconomic status and identity are all most critical in the evolution of the adolescent and need to be explored.

**Developmental stages.**

Children in biracial families grow up negotiating family dynamics on an internal and external level, as well as interactions with and reactions from children from mainstream European American families (Ho, 1992). The sociocultural messages vary from their families, other children and from society. The messages from these resources serve as the basis for “normal” physical and mental health development and their impact is significant. Complicated messages from support systems, which may or may not include bias or false information, can be detrimental to the confidence and understanding of self that biracial children and adolescents are striving to attain.

Also other concerns, problems and tasks differ according to lifespan stage regardless of racial affiliation (Mindel, Habenstein & Wright, 1988). One suggestion is that some problems are not racial at all, but rather are a result of being in a developmental crisis or transition (Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg & Nisan, 1984; Piaget, 1947 & 1955; Selman, Beardslee, Schultz, Krupa and Podorefsky, 1986). The reality is that a multitude of reasons may be at the root of any given problem that may be completely separate from culture. Addressing each possibility is necessary to fully understand the problem rather than to make assumptions based purely on the fact that the individual is biracial.
Developmentally, all children or adolescents differ cognitively, emotionally, physically, and psychologically and these differences require special knowledge and sensitivity by the helping professional (Synder, 1994). Consequently, the impact of developmental differences may be compounded by culture-related differences. According to Piagetian theory (1929; 1930), one of the chief concerns for a child during adolescence is one’s ability to grasp concepts. A child’s ability regardless of racial background is maybe less developed than an adult’s ability to do the same reasoning. For example, a child having negative experiences in the mainstream culture such as weak language and communication skills or an unsupportive environment may be at risk for magnification of these problems in his or her later adolescence. This would contribute to the development of abstract reasoning ability that might place that child at a disadvantage. This could be particularly true when that person is trying to generate alternative courses of action, predict outcomes, comprehend cause and effect, and resolve moral issues at adult-expected levels of moral reasoning (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). Therefore, particularly underdeveloped abilities like these, combined with a lack of information could be particularly problematic for the biracial adolescent.

Along that same vein of development, one also begins to think about and understand the world differently. Adolescents entering Piaget’s formal operational stage soon begin developing higher levels of thinking ability. It is during this period that adolescents come to realize that adults do not always have the correct answers to all questions or some answers are more ambiguous, than just black and white (Baruth & Robinson, 1987). The discovery who they are and who they are becoming can be very liberating for the biracial adolescent as they too begin to enjoy freedoms. Adolescents will have the opportunity to embrace new learning, as they do not get stuck in the same routine to answering questions as they had in the past. They can rely on ways to find
solutions and process the world that allows for more flexibility in themselves and others (Bowlby, 1973; Erikson, 1950; Fromm, 1970).

Not only do some children lack abstract reasoning ability, but according to Piaget’s (1929; 1930) theory they may be “egocentricly stuck” in the preoperational stage of development and truly unable to see another person’s point of view. Children need time and nurturing to be able to develop this kind of thinking and compassion in order to connect with others. Likewise, Erikson’s stage theory reminds us that children often struggle with issues that are age appropriate and necessary to resolve in order for the child to move onto the next stage of development (Erikson, 1959). These changes will continue throughout the life cycle for every child, not just the biracial child, as a part of maturation and life span development. However, one key difference for biracial children is the degree of environmental influence, which either serves to compound problems or assist in problem solving. For a biracial child in a hostile environment it may be particularly painful when there is discord between the two parts of self or family (Torres-Matrullo, 1980). Therefore, the ability of the biracial adolescent to resolve conflict and progress onto further development may be stagnated or hindered by past experiences in the environment.

One can see the likelihood that socialization and developmental processes of biracial children and adolescents can become more complicated than it may be for non-biracial children (Herring, 1995). Biracial adolescents are facing an entirely different set of problems on top of the ordinary issues that other peers face. There is strong evidence that indicates that biracial youth have more positive outcomes when are reared in supportive family systems, possess competence and high self-esteem and are involved in positive social and recreational activities (Lyles, Yancey, Grace & Carter, 1985; Sebring
The prevalence of these external and internal supports continues to gain power in research for biracial children.

*Physical Characteristics, language and socioeconomic status.*

In addition to developmental stages, there are other factors that contribute to the biracial child’s development such as physical characteristics, language, and socioeconomic status. These factors are, completely out of the control of the child since they reflect what one is born with or born into in relation to how it shapes one’s life. The effects, either positive or negative, of any of these factors have bearing on the quality of experience during adolescence.

First, there are numerous physical, emotional and cognitive changes taking place within any adolescent during puberty. Often most noticeable, the adolescent has to cope with the significant physical changes that alter growth and development. Also, on an emotional and social level they are leaving the world of childhood. One’s physical characteristics are harder to disguise and serve as a more noticeable basis for discomfort or separation from the mainstream. Two of the key differences physically for biracial children are skin color and physical features (Ho, 1992; Lopez, 1972). Biracial adolescents experience discrimination along with the expectations of others based on what they look like. There are obvious and subtle reactions due to skin color and physical appearances as a result of particular characteristics that can rarely, if ever, be changed. This has been difficult to avoid since society has long been comfortable defining children and individuals based on the color of their skin or appearance. One’s predominant physical features have often been relied upon, however accurate, as “first glance” judgment for classifying cultural or racial identity (Lopez, 1972). Skin coloration that differs greatly from the minority culture in varying degrees of lightness or darkness can also be especially difficult. Between racial and ethnic groups, one’s skin
tone may have significantly different meaning. For some biracial children, color may evoke pride and honor while others feel oppressed by visible differences (Ho, 1992; Walker, 1982). It may also affect a child’s thoughts, attitudes and perception about beauty, intelligence, worth and self-esteem (Walker, 1982). However, one needs to acknowledge that there are internal thoughts about the external assumptions and stereotypes for every person. The notions or ideas held by others regarding biracial children can vary more significantly as they are considering the opinion of the mainstream culture, their particular cultural groups and other biracial adolescents. The curiosity of all of these groups may have different implications as far as the meaning and feeling about and from the biracial individual.

Secondly, one’s language is a large influence in the biracial child’s environment. Regardless of whether an adolescent is from a nuclear or extended family, the diversity in language or preference of language is often pre-selected by the family. Language can be very powerful because by learning, understanding and speaking a particular language one is solidifying a connection to a particular group (Ogbu, 1985). This can be linked to and supportive to one’s level of acculturation and biculturalism. Even the choice not to utilize a language has power since one is opting to remove oneself from being associated with a particular culture (Lucero-Miller & Newman, 1999; Rivera-Sinclair, 1997).

Although it is true that there are some cases where language may not necessarily differ between parents and the society in which they live, for a significant number of biracial adolescents the difference is problematic (Scott & Borodvsky, 1990). Language may be the differentiation between younger and older generations in the home. When the older generation or majority of the caregivers in the home speak the native language fluently, but have a poor grasp on the dominant culture’s language this can be problematic for the biracial adolescent who has stronger skills with the dominant
language (Barker, 1975). This communication gap has an adverse affect for the adolescent as there may be a loss of integrity to the majority members in the family. In these situations, the elderly experience loss of self-esteem while the adolescents lose connection with their family and extended family support. This may contribute to anxiety, poor self-esteem and acting out behavior among biracial adolescents (Barker, 1975).

Additionally, a biracial child’s social class can be very influential for the degree of social acceptance of one’s biracial identity. If a family is a member of a society that is particularly affluent and diverse, being “different” is more easily accepted versus an environment of racial majority composition (Combs, 1978). Economic disadvantage can cause some groups to feel more vulnerable to family stress, single-parent status, residential overcrowding and poor housing (Adams, 1990) Children who are raised in poverty have different circumstances to negotiate in addition to their biracial status. Children and adolescents growing up in poverty or lower income homes must cope with socioeconomic realities and barriers that profoundly limit their opportunities and negatively affect their normal development and mental health (Ho, 1987). Family income appears to be crucial in assisting the cultural adjustment of groups (Riveria-Sinclair, 1997). The more financial resources that were found to be available, the more easily the individual could navigate the differences between cultures. Therefore, the membership one holds in a certain social class provides boundaries within which the adolescent will experience a restricted range of opportunities, choices, and challenges in particular social contexts (Ho, 1987).

As one considers these pieces of personal traits and characteristics, it is natural then to wonder how other decision processes and developmental tasks, such as the forming of one’s identity, impact the status of these factors. All individuals have a
starting point in their life from which to build their own personhood before they have to accomplish the important developmental tasks, like reconciling identity. Uncertainty about what life has to offer and the ability to cope with the world on their own often causes the adolescent to waiver between a search for independence and the safety of dependence.

Identity

Perhaps the foremost characteristic is that the biracial adolescent is considered is biracial, as well as adolescent. Adolescence is the recognized legitimate age span between childhood and adulthood although several theorists have argued the actual length of the period. Contemporary theorists and cultures agree that adolescence begins at age twelve and ends at age eighteen (Muss, 1996; Santrock, 1998).

Adolescence can be a difficult time for any child. The very fact that one is considered a child in some situations and an adult in others contributes to a problem not only for the child, but also for those working with the child. The physical and emotional changes experienced during this time of “not quite a child” and “not yet an adult” can be a time full of turmoil and upheaval. Adolescents of all cultural backgrounds experience frustration, as some people perceive them as children while others perceive them as adults (Kidwell & Dunham, 1995). The behavior may often seem divergent with moments of revolution then love toward family and friends. Uncertainties may also increase as some adolescents experience problems resulting from differing parental and peer expectations. They are practicing decision-making, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills within the two groups while expressing extreme levels of anxiety and confidence concurrently (Roll, 1980). The skills one acquires may be applied to new learning as one becomes more comfortable producing and expressing a sense of self, which in turn reinforces their investment in themselves. This is important for a biracial
child in balancing both “halves of self,” finding their distinct identity and working on their future decisions regarding who they want to become (Schiamberg, 1986). In fact, it was discovered, in a recent study performed by Riveria-Sinclair (1997) that individuals who were able to identify themselves as Cuban-Americans, for example, seemed to reduce their psychological stress produced by guilty feelings for having to choose one set of value orientations over the other. This eliminated the conflict of divided loyalties between the two groups for this study’s participants; therefore, not having to make this choice seemed to reduce their anxiety levels.

Not only individuals experience raging emotions, but they are also influenced by many factors during the quest for identity. Identity has many different meanings for individuals and complexities layered into each facet of oneself. There are several different influences that challenge the attainment of identity at any given time. These influences include culture, family, peers and society as a whole. Through years of developmental research, we have learned that adolescence is the opportune time for children to be exploring this issue of identity (Erickson, 1963; Meeus & Dekovic, 1995). Early research supported the belief that children and adolescents were not able to develop a bicultural competence in the quest for identity (Kidwell, 1995). Kidwell also stated that our personality patterns during this time of identity crisis are influenced by the degree of self-doubt, confusion, conflict with others such as parent or authority figures, impulsivity, physical changes, and weakened ego strength are necessary. These elements are influencing factors that need to be taken into consideration as a biracial adolescent comes to terms with his or her own identity. It is very important to see all the factors that overlay within one’s biracial heritage and understand how the subsystems work.

The task for the biracial adolescent is to “develop and distinguish between a personal identity and a racial identity in order to form a cohesive sense of self”
(Stonequist, 1964). In contemporary research (Ho, 1984; Ramirez & Castanada, 1974) the advantages and possibility of shared biracial identity have been postulated as a solution. The results of years of examination conclude that today forming identity demands that a child, as well as that child’s family, demonstrate creativity and flexibility (Ho, 1984). The solution that works well for one child and one particular family may not work as well for a similar child or family. One needs to get to know the individual needs and desires of that family to fully realize the benefits of any solution. This can be particularly treacherous since there is increased stress for the biracial child in learning to sort out, and then tolerate, the mixed messages of two cultures (Gibbs, 1987; Welsh, 1988). The weight of each is dependent on the individual and their unique circumstances. Therefore, it is not fair to assume that one factor in an individual’s life is more important than another or that one is less influential. It is however, necessary to acknowledge each and appreciate how they may affect the biracial adolescent.

*Cultural influence on identity.*

First, the importance of identity formation and personality development during the adolescent years necessitates examination from a cultural perspective. For the biracial adolescent, a sense of identity can be a time of conflict, compromise or resolution. During adolescence one’s chief task is to gain a sense of self-affirmation to this issue. This sense of personal identification may mean discerning racial, ethnic or cultural connection to a particular group of people. Racial or ethnic identity refers to membership in a group where the individual “shares a unique social and cultural heritage passed on from one generation to the next” (Mindel, Habenstein & Wright, 1988). Race has also been referred to as the biological category that is primarily found in physical appearance and is not related to learned cultural characteristics that are relevant to ethnic groups (Phinney, 1996). This belonging to a group is often at the root of conflict since it
leaves little room for the “other” group affiliation (Hatcher, 1987; Herring, 1995). For biracial adolescents and children, allegiance to one may mean removal from another. A foundation of cultural affiliation is essential in knowing one’s beginning point and then knowing where else one needs to go in obtaining identity.

Secondly, as a biracial individual, a young person’s cultural groups play a significant role in determining the extent of identity difficulty or success. For example, Western society may be adverse to other cultural components when an individual is seeking balance between the two cultures (Gibbs, 1989; Grove, 1991; Winn & Priest, 1993). One’s societal beliefs, cultural values and traditions from different parts of the world have the potential to be oversimplified or ignored if they are not consistent with other more traditional values of the mainstream culture. The attainment of self-concept and blending of individual cultural identities will often occur as the adolescent transitions from a family-centered world to a larger social world (Ladner, 1984; Wehrly, 1996). Biracial adolescents need to do this in order to fully understand who they are and how they fit into the context of the world around them. Completion of this is critical in achieving happiness and resolution for the young person (Erikson, 1963, 1959). The manner in which one’s opposing cultures join together is determined by the influence that each cultural component has on the other.

The rippling of factors affecting biracial children may spread to include societal messages and ideas about acculturation and assimilation. Messages within the environment can also be very impacting to the way one continues to develop. For example, a biracial adolescent who lives in an environment that encourages assimilation can then expect that world to be affected by this blending. A biracial adolescent living in a world that does support gradations in the family of acculturation will result in different kinds of comfort within that family (Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992). In additional
research, Katz (1985) identified several opposing cultural values, when blending two groups, that may make a significant contribution to developmental problems of children or adolescents such as language, emphasis on the individual versus emphasis on the group, time orientation, and the importance of long-range versus short-range goals.

Thirdly, biracial children face hardships that include a lack of resources, available physically or emotionally, in the environment to assist in making identity attainment successful. For example, parents may be struggling with how to support their child because they do not understand all the implications that accompany their child’s interaction with the world outside the home (; Ladner, 1984; Rivera- Sinclair, 1997). In general, children often lack control over many important resources and aspects of their existence. Parenting techniques at home, economic status of parents, neighborhood, physical or emotional abuse, or substance abuse in the home are but to name a few. Therefore, the positive or negative influence of the two dueling cultures may contribute to friction for the individual. Limited resources that influence the adolescent may in fact be as simple as a lack of knowledge about what specifically the child needs or what those in their lives may be able to give. Therefore, the influence of culture’s that are attuned to one another has a powerful impact on the young persons achieving a satisfied state of cultural identity.

Certainly negotiating two cultures would suffice as an area that causes confusion and lack of advanced coping skills. Figuring out why the child is uncomfortable or ill at ease may be a separate issue all together. Conversely, the biracial child may have multiple stressors as a result of their life complexities (Hagedorn & Hayes, 2000). It is important to try to understand this complex time in a child’s life and make a commitment to acquire the knowledge of the each of the differing cultural characteristics and circumstances. Findings from a recent study indicate that a sense of belonging to one’s
ethnic group is predictive of more positive attitudes towards other groups (Phinney et al., 1997). In fact, some research evidence suggests that for people living in bicultural communities, biculturalism may be a healthy approach to cultural adjustment (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980). Therefore, accomplishing the task of blended cultural groups is likely to lead to more positive personal growth.

Another developmental theorist, Norton (1983) believes that a child, especially a biracial child, must acquire a dual-cultural perspective during developmental growth in order to reach a simultaneous understanding and perception of self. The values, attitude and behaviors of the society, the family, and community are core to this perspective. The belief is that every child is part of a social and physical environment and a larger society (Ho, 1992; Norton 1983). In order to reach the homeostasis that drives human beings overall, each of the three must come together. Internal and external worlds need to come together for the individual to feel comfortable exploring the other. As one works to reconcile and understand the impact of the person, inside and outside himself or herself, there is important growth in obtaining dual-cultural perspective. Therefore, Norton believes that it is necessary for a biracial child to achieve success to some degree within the family before attempting an expanded sense of self in society. Achieving this is an important developmental milestone to conquer and influence on further growth and balance.

*Family influence on identity.*

Some of the areas that culture can have influence over the individual are closely related to the influence of family in the formation of identity. A deep feeling for family permeates all culture and often becomes the basis for individual and group decisions (Fitzpatrick, 1987). For many adolescents, the family plays a critical role in determining an adolescent’s capability and readiness to develop a sense of self and identity (Cogner,
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They serve as a group network as well as functioning as a source of comfort and support to its members on various levels and realities (Rueveni, 1985). The overall beliefs and values of this core support play a fundamental role in shaping the emerging adult. The size or structure of the family is important in this respect since different family norms are based on the composition of the family (Rueveni, 1985). The family is a reasonable beginning point for each person, monoracial and biracial, since the presence or absence produces an outcome. The perception of being encouraged and supported, of being able to “count on someone”, helps the adolescent with the rules and roles within that family. They are in turn able to venture out into the world feeling connected but not stifled by their family and the experiences they have had as a part of that unit (Marta, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Bowen (1978) believes that the family’s level of differentiation determines the offspring’s level of self, which in turn determines the individual’s level of adjustment.

Also adults in the child’s home environment may be inconsistent, uncaring or unavailable - again situations over which the child has little control (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). A child’s world is one in which judging adults often dictate what to eat, wear, dress, where to be, when to be there and whom to be (or not to be) with because of their relative lack of autonomy (Nelson, 1979), children may perceive adults, including the counselor, in roles of authority such as provider, rule maker, and disciplinarian and advice giver. Although it may be true in any child’s home, a biracial child’s household may not convey harmony based on the battling viewpoints of two different cultures and races. Children in these environments are in conflict over which value to adhere to or follow based on their parent’s conflict over which to teach them (Newman & Newman, 1999).
Problems also arise when families include inter-generational members that are at different levels of the acculturation continuum (Padilla & Ruiz, 1974; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). Parents or even grandparents may not have established a higher level of acculturation as the adolescent or child and this may result in conflict for the family. The adolescent is therefore left with a stronger sense of dual identity and this “collapsed version of self” is viewed as problematic in the family since others do not share the belief that it is necessary. It is vital to mention the influence of family and parental beliefs as a significant ingredient in the development of one’s identity (Bluestein, 1994). Often times it depends on whether or not the adolescent comes from an intact family, a large extended family or a single parent family for the gravity of the mood in the home. Blending of heritages within the family and how that affects the home life is critical in the happiness of the life of the biracial adolescent. It is necessary to experience some degree of familial conflict so that the adolescent is able to successfully separate from the family and settle their own identity crisis (Bluestein, 1994; Georgas & Kalantz-Azizi, 1992). There is a link between aspects of family functioning and psychological risk for adolescents. The presence of support and communication have been positively correlated with the individual and social adjustment of the adolescent and negatively correlated with deviant or delinquent attitudes (Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Barnes & Farrell, 1993; Hess, 1995; Noller, 1994; Noller & Callan, 1990).

The reality is that the biracial adolescent exists in a society that expects or may also demand the navigation of such an identity and this in turn causes internal and external conflict for the individual when it cannot be achieved or when there are problems. Developing a social consciousness that diminishes parental input and expands peer influence reflects the adolescent transition from a family-centered to a peer-centered environment (Ladner, 1984; Wehrly, 1996). Therefore, identity confusion for the biracial
child results from the impact of dual-cultural membership in combination with the messages being received from family (Goodenow & Espin, 1993; Torres-Matrullo, 1980; Soomers, 1964). The maintenance of harmony within the family influence and peer input can sometimes be the most difficult part of adolescence. The family and society are considered “contexts of challenge” for the development of the adolescent. The balance between the two, for challenges and resources, can at times be risky (Patterson, 1988). At the start of adolescence parents occupy the central position in a personal network. Gradually friends and significant others become increasingly more important and will take the place of parents as the most important reference persons in one’s life (Meeus & Dekovic, 1995).

**Peer influence on identity.**

The subculture of adolescent values may be very different than the values being taught at home. These values exert a different type of peer influence, through peer pressure and interaction with other peers who have their own view of identity formation. In all cultures, feeling accepted by one’s peer group is fundamental to the development of positive identity and self-image (Riveria-Sinclair, 1997). Being a member of a minority group or a blending of groups in the United States can be very difficult especially if the mainstream values of individualism and materialism conflict with cultural values taught at home (Lloyd, 1985). The biracial adolescent faces alienation or rejection of the peer group when there is the perception that one or both cultural backgrounds are inferior (Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992). Not being understood or accepted may affect the adolescent’s perceived ability to cope successfully in future peer groups (Herring, 1995). Some biracial individuals may feel “stuck” because they want to retain the cultural heritage with which they feel comfortable; however, they may also feel that some acculturation must take place for economic and psychological survival. In these ways
one’s peer group is influential in the support they provide an individual who is making these transitions. The degree to which one is satisfied or accepted has a greater impact than the fleeting moment of friendship as it relates to the extended sense of self one establishes.

Adolescents want to be accepted and understood by others and they need to feel connected in other ways to those their own age struggling with similar problems. At this stage the core of personal development increases to include interpersonal resolution, decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills. Any one of these can be an issue for any individual, biracial or monoracial, but the complexities of the problems may be significantly different for the biracial adolescent. How one is viewed by peers while making this transition can greatly affect the feeling of success or failure one feels as a biracial person (Herring, 1995). Therefore, the influence of peers is critical during adolescence since this group so heavily relies on the feedback and support of a group they find similar and necessary for support.

The peer group affiliations of the biracial child are distinct in that the individual may be operating between two very opposite belief systems. The context of these peer groups may be at opposite ends of beliefs, practices, and values that are dependent on that groups peer context (Bennett, 1998). Rejection by the peer group or the perception that one’s cultural background is inferior can result in feelings of isolation and powerlessness to effect change in the majority-culture society. Learning how to develop and maintain balance between the two groups remains extremely challenging to one’s sense of identity. During adolescence one is focused on wanting to grow up, existing in their “real self” but hungering for their “ideal self” (Olds & Papali, 1987). For a few individuals reconciling self has begun to change as the idea of having a blended identity has become more acceptable as a healthy and ideal personhood. However, the blending of racial identities
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from a racially dominant group to a minority group or two minority groups can be extremely difficult if one feels powerless and discriminated against (Ho, 1987; Omi & Winant, 1986). Having successful peer interactions can be difficult if not being a part of what is most socially acceptable or preferred when individuals are perceived at an even lower racial level than single race minorities. To some individuals to ascribe to a biracial identity is more demeaning than to select one race and bear allegiance to that group (Herring, 1995; Hatcher, 1987). This can make it difficult to make friends or fit in with others who are prejudiced against them and bar membership to peer networks.

Also as mentioned earlier, often the family and the peer network do not work in agreement with one another. When the family system is conflicted in its level of support this can make affiliation to a particular cultural group even more difficult. The fact remains that these two groups continue to serve as the biracial child’s support system and foundation during adolescence (Chen & Yu, 1997; Hughes, 1997; Ladd & Sieur, 1995; Mounts, 1997; Smith & Crockett, 1997). The need for the two to be able to work together to offer a positive influence in the life of the biracial adolescent is essential. As the blending of peer and family cultures occurs, emphasis continues to be placed on the associated problems with a clash in cultural values between the two groups. At times it may not problematic, but merely uncomfortable or awkward for the biracial adolescent to negotiate the different influences.

Learning to cope with these sorts of choices contributes to a biracial child’s developing self-esteem. The type of friends and support one has from their peer network along the way is essential during this time. Research over time has proven that the development of a healthy self-concept is necessary in order to develop a strong sense of identity (Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 1980). In becoming adolescents, biracial youth learn to process decisions on a much deeper level considering and weighing consequences for
their actions with a lack of certainty or familiarity. Several of the decisions faced include drugs, sex, conforming to groups, expressing oneself, and making new friends (Dunham, Kidwell, & Wilson, 1986; Grotevant & Cooper, 1981). These types of decisions rely upon peers and peer influence more so than they may be given credit for. For example, one’s security, belonging, and self-confidence all serve to enhance the ability to learn and adapt from school to culture and vice versa. Adolescents who are unable to develop a positive self-concept due to a lack of peer connection and support may withdraw from others or develop a negative self-concept. Vontress (1991) contends that successful mastery of the developmental tasks that lead to healthy self-concept is even more difficult for minority group members, such as biracial children. In obtaining these successes one can make changes for a more cohesive sense of self by considering ways to assimilate or acculturate themselves to peer groups. The existence of positive or supportive peer cultures is then an even greater need and area of concern for the biracial adolescent. The types of relationships and individuals who could be helpful in the formation of other peer relationships are dependent on success with adolescents later. This again underscores the importance and need for positive peer interactions and supportive peer groups for the biracial adolescent who may be struggling to develop a cohesive sense of identity (Herring, 1995). It speaks to the necessity for the biracial adolescent to have support of their peers that would be a “stepping stone” to developing a strong sense of self while anticipating new experiences.

Those biracial children who are alienated are missing at some of the guidelines, interests, and skills from being a part of a group (Sherman, 1997). Biracial children struggle to feel a part of or connected to something in their life that grounds them to the person they are or feel they should be. Although it is true that all people are in constant cultural transition as they cope with changes within each culture, there is still the need to
behave appropriately as they move from one culture to another (Sherman, 1997). This is particularly true as one considers biracial adolescents and their working between or within two cultures. The complexities and issues facing biracial children and adolescents will continually challenge helping professionals. In providing helpful support, one must address the challenges of working with a biracial population. Professionals’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes, or in other words, their education and training, influence their work and need to be examined to determine whether they are prepared to deal with the challenge. How this is addressed with counseling preparation programs is a pinnacle issue in expanding multicultural training and counselor preparation overall.

*Counselor Education and Training Issues*

The first step in examining the educational and training issues pertaining to biracial children and adolescents is to determine exactly which groups of helping professionals are doing the work. Due to the varied settings, the needs and philosophies in those environments would be different from one another. For that reason it is necessary to examine the different as well shared implications for training and future challenges for all professions.

*Helping professionals working with biracial children and adolescents.*

The first category of helping professional to discuss is the mental health counselor. The mental health counselor addresses a variety of personal, social and emotional concerns based on the needs of the individual. Each modality of service is unique in that it is specific to the individual and cannot be a “cookie cutter” approach of treatment for other clients. This is especially important as one provides support to more and more biracial clients. The mental health professional’s role is important because it allows the adolescent, or family, to receive services that build the family unit and help strengthen the bonds between families (Marino, 1995).
As the United States population becomes diverse, the field of mental health counseling commands that attention is paid to the increasing cultural diversity in communities and the changing socioeconomic conditions of families (Hollis, 2000; Israelashvili, 1998). Through research we have learned that specialized training is essential in providing competent care and services for unique populations (Hosie & Mackey, 1985). The recent trend in maintaining an ecological overview of the adolescent and family has set the tone for more ecologically-focused counselors (Conyne, 1987). This is due in large part to a stronger push to know the actual, existing needs in order to know more about the unique characteristics of adolescents and children. In fact, now more than ever there is a need for individuals who are willing to work in these arenas, in these ways, to support the needs of the children in different circumstances, particularly those of biracial adolescents and their families (Baker, 2000; Hollis, 2000).

The second type of helping professional in this study, the school counselor, has taken on a whole new identity in recent years due to issues of school violence and the prevalence of more social issues like drugs, sex and gangs as well as special group needs such as those for biracial children (Kozol, 1991; Dreikurs, Gunwald, & Pepper, 1971). Within the schools there are several different professionals, but the primary responsibility for working with children on social, emotional, and personal issues rests with the school counselor. It is because of this responsibility that school counselors have to best support the needs of students from any and all cultural backgrounds (Faust, 1968; Gladding 1996). Because of the complex family constellation and the circumstances in the life of the biracial child, the school counselor might be the only voice in the life of the biracial adolescent or child that encourages them to recognize the long-term connections between school success and economic well-being (Bruner, 1996; Dryfoos, 1994).
Education reform’s concentrated effort on increasing public awareness of a variety of social problems and concerns for children all point to the great need for improved counseling services in the schools. Today’s diverse public schools require the development of new service delivery models that better address unique relationships and individuals (Goodlad, 1990). It has been stated that, “these models should be sensitive to existing social, economic, political and pedagogical realities while being responsive to the developmental needs of students within a multicultural, technologically sophisticated and rapidly changing society” (Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 1994). A real component of the changing society would then be the biracial adolescent and family. Of primary importance is the individualized need of the biracial adolescent that cannot be overlooked in the delivery of services, resources utilized or support provided to this group. Research has told us that specialized training for school counselors is vital in order for the extension of competent care and services for unique populations (Hosie & Mackey, 1985). Knowledge of the unique characteristics of children, coupled with the sensitivity to cultural differences, dictate the need for school counselors to refine and to redirect their skills to respond to these issues. As early as 1981, Sue cautioned that the professions needed to make sure that information gathering reflected sensitivity and understanding of how racial differences shaped the individual.

The last group for consideration is social workers. Social workers have a role that is tailored around the special needs of the family, specifically the psychosocial stressors that impact family functioning (Healthy Families America, 2000). The social workers role is unique in that they may often become the additional resource personnel for families in addition to working with mental health counselors and school counselors (Moses-Zirkes, Hurley & Worbel, 1997). They have become the link that hinges together counseling intervention for families acting as the interpreter and facilitator for support.
They have the opportunity to gather vital information about the financial, educational, and personal needs of the family, which may or may not be known, yet is affecting the achievement of the individual. This is a particularly important person for the biracial family that may be experiencing hardship due to language or economic barriers. They begin by piecing together the links between adolescent or child, parents, family, community resources and school, with consultation and work that involves all participants in the process (Jackson, 1999; Lipka, 1998). Services provided by a social worker can address what research continues to teach us about increasing cultural diversity in communities and the changing socioeconomic conditions of families.

As our society continues to evolve and individuals and families become more astute at accessing services, it is important that all types of counseling and guidance services being offered to families across the helping professions (Israelashvili, 1998). Local governments are calling for integrated support services from counselors, administrators, teachers, social workers, school psychologists, nurses and community agencies (Yaes, Dagley, Horne, & Arthur, 1996). Models for professional preparation and service delivery must be developed that can respond more effectively to changing educational needs and changing social conditions.

There are many different barriers and problems that can be challenges for helping professionals to work for the success and well-being of the biracial child. Little is known about the education and training of these helping professionals working with biracial children. One of the first steps in facilitating understanding of this issue is to examine counselor education and training in regard to biracial training and adolescents. At this point, we need to ask ourselves what has been effectively or ineffectively in place in the past, how have we gone about training novices and what can we continue to do to improve the work being done in the field.
Counselor’s education and training with biracial children and adolescents.

For the most part, contemporary mental health counselors, school counselors and social workers are master’s degree-level professionals trained to provide a broad range of counseling services to populations. All are supposed to have the capability to focus on a range of individuals at different ages from various cultural and racial backgrounds, therefore including biracial children and adolescents. However the extent of actual success is the question. The capability is certainly one factor but the actual motivation and confidence to provide services remains in question.

A typical program of study includes course work in counseling theory, techniques and ethics; human growth and development; social and cultural foundations of individual and group behavior; development of career and vocational interests; group counseling theories and techniques; and use of standardized tests and measures in schools. Depending on program accreditation levels, student counselors usually complete supervised practicums and internships varying in duration from a term or semester to a full year and sometimes even two years (Hollis, 2000). The types of practicums and internships vary based on the type of program one comes from as well. Whether or not the program is accredited by such bodies as CACREP influences the kind of stringent study and structure of the learning experience for the individual.

The social and cultural foundations required by CACREP demonstrate the need for multicultural training. The ethical standards of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 1998) require that a school counselor provide services that respect individuals and their unique experiences and needs. They adopted a position statement on cross-cultural counseling that was again revised in 1999 that states, “School counselors take action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to
appropriate service and opportunities which promote the maximum development of the individual” (ASCA, 1988).

Likewise the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (1995) of the American Counseling Association (ACA), which governs the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), requires that a mental health counselor to develop and maintain cross-cultural effectiveness. The standards are also related to diversity and cross-cultural counseling throughout the code. It is stated from the preamble that in the profession we, “recognize diversity in society and embrace a cross-cultural approach”. In addition, the code states that ethical counselors make active attempts at understanding different cultural backgrounds are aware of their own values and avoid imposing their values on their clients.

However, although recent graduates of counselor education program are likely to have had cross-cultural training, those who completed programs even a few short years ago addressing important cross-cultural issues may not have had these courses or experiences (Stein, 1997). To ensure that individuals remain current and conform to standards of practice in the field, all counselors are required to seek continuing education experiences that strengthen their skill in working with diverse client populations (Hobson & Kanitz, 1996).

Despite exposure and practice in counseling courses, the initial contact between new counselors and their initial clients is often marked by situations or clients for which they do not feel prepared. Indeed the first year of professional experience has been referred to as the time one, “laments all the things you should have learned or wish you had prepared for” (Kotler, 1993, p. 25). This frustration is often called to attention when the clients are children because of the modifications necessary when transitioning from adult counseling (Barker, 1990; Hughes & Baker, 1990; Moss-Kagel, Abramovitz, &
Sager, 1989). Working with a biracial child can compound all the nervousness and apprehension that accompanies the use of new skills or the awkwardness of these experiences (Schwartz, 1998; Wardle, 1992; Wehrley et al., 1999).

Through training, counselors have the opportunity to acquire a broad knowledge of diverse cultures. They are encouraged to use the learned templates to build on their awareness and respect for differences. In an ideal world, one’s knowledge would include awareness for human development and behavior, such as background and role of family; biological factors; and psychological factors, such as personality and individual dynamics (Ho, 1992). Though knowing which factors may have the greater impact to the biracial individual is unrealistic the potential impact of these factors could be destructive.

Training new counselors is essential since we know that with more training, more comfort occurs. Research findings indicate that a multicultural training program, such as one that explores levels of White racial consciousness, resulted in significant increases on three dimensions of White consciousness (contact, independence, and autonomy) and that training significantly enhances expressed interracial comfort (Ottavi et al., 1994; Woodrow et al., 1998). Regarding contact between White counselors-in-training and Black clients, White trainees reported that they were more willing to recognize differences between Black and White people, to perceive the cultural variations as valuable and important, and to acknowledge that such differences may have a personal impact on their lives (Sue et al., 1992). These findings illustrate that training can help beginning counselors become conscious and comfortable to work with people from cultural backgrounds different than their own. Trainees in these programs have shared that these opportunities provides a safe place for individuals to come face-to-face with their own responsibility for perpetuating racism without the social consequences of being berated by others (Woodrow et al., 1998). Richardson and Molina (1996) asserted that,
“if it is accepted that counselor self-awareness is a precursor for effective and culturally relevant counseling, then critical self-awareness factors must be identified and incorporated into multicultural training” (p.238).

One of the hardest lessons for counselors-in-training would be understanding helping relationships in general. Adolescents or children may be more suspicious and cautious regarding what to expect than a voluntary adult client. They may appear reluctant to open up and express problems and emotions in this setting because it is so unfamiliar (Kottman, 1990). In order to work successfully with children and adolescents, the building of a relationship takes time. Helpers, such as counselors, who elect to work with a child or adolescent, may be faced with an individual who lacks sophisticated verbal skills. The helper needs to be comfortable allowing the client to ventilate their thoughts and feelings without reproach (Hagedorn & Hayes, 2000). They need to be flexible and willing to unlock the doors of self-expression with play, stories and other natural keys (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). A primary function of the counselor should be to allow children to express themselves freely and openly, without the constraints of defending or protecting what they say (Landreth, 1996). An individual who chooses to work with children, especially biracial children, needs to possess the kind of desire to think creatively and take risks (Hagedorn & Hayes, 2000; Harris, 1998; Sue, 1996). This may mean being prepared to increase one’s own awareness of issues that are pertinent to the population (Hagedron & Hayes, 2000). This may be a challenge when the counselor’s own biases towards certain cultures interfere with the joining process from the beginning of the counseling relationship. Working with a biracial adolescent can be especially difficult because one or both parties may have issues with their racial background. Understanding multiracial, or biracial, adolescent clients in terms of their
values, aspirations, families, language difficulties and other personal and social concerns is beneficial to both counselor and client (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Counseling culturally different clients in varying developmental stages, such as biracial children, requires knowledge of the client’s cultural backgrounds and their physical, psychosocial and intellectual characteristics (Sue, 1991). This may be a difficult skill for counselors as well because their experiences may be limited. Additionally, they may lack the unique contextual perspective of the client necessary to see the issue as it affects the individual. Pedersen (1991) stated several changes need to take place if counselors are to effectively provide services to diverse clients. These changes include the need for counselors to develop a multicultural awareness of self, others and outside factors. Coleman, Casali, and Wampold (2001) reinforce the idea that “counselors need to look beyond their own and their clients’ group membership and focus on how within-group variations lead to problems for clients and solutions within counseling” (p.362). This suggests that after the point of honest examination, real change can begin to occur.

In order to develop self-awareness of multicultural issues, we must first look at the quality and content of the training and basic competencies being passed onto the developing counselor. As we are implored by our own ethics and our own need to learn and grow, we need to also examine our understanding of multicultural issues for ourselves, and the clients we serve. Also by examining cultural impact in counseling one can postulate implications for future learning and contributions to the profession (Locke, 1992; Pedersen, 1994). Now more than ever, education needs to be available to train culturally competent counselors who will be able to work with biracial children. Curriculum that addresses the need could then become an intervention for future counselors by exposing them to experiences and assignments that cultivate development

*Multiculturalism in counseling.*

To begin this undertaking, one needs to understand the roots of multiculturalism in counseling rather than on just a superficial level. Currently, multicultural counseling is described as “any counseling relationship in which the counselor and the client belong to different cultural groups, hold different assumptions about social reality, and subscribe to different world views” (Das, 1995, p. 45). What multicultural counseling has attempted to do is to clarify the role of sociocultural forces in its foundation, appearance and contribution to psychological problems for all people (Axelson, 1994; Marsella, 1985). The goals and values of a profession must be integrated with the goals, assumptions, aspirations and “commonsense” understandings of the communities that support it as well as the communities it claims to serve (Arredondo, 1999). By espousing values without awareness of context, counselors are being unproductive or unethical (Creas-Daron et al., 1993). It is necessary that these two mindsets be complimentary and in alignment with one another so that real understanding of cultural issues can be possible. This will naturally vary from community to community as it does from child to child in achieving cultural competence.

Traditionally, the focus of multicultural counseling has been on fostering competence among White counselors. A difference today is that the dramatic changes in the United States demographics have lead to a broadened focus that now includes educating the growing number of minorities employed in the helping professions. Today the “mutli” in multiculturalism means more than ever before as members of minority groups are about to become the majority as soon as the year 2040 (Wendel, 2000). Therefore, believing that one is prepared is a misnomer. Courtland Lee was quoted as
having said, “In this country, regardless of whether a person is a member of the majority or minority group, they hold preconceived notions and stereotypical assumptions about people who are different. As America becomes more and more diverse...assuming that people will be coming into the field without cultural biases is pretty foolish” (Parham, 1994, p. 4). “Insensitivity to cultural differences, whether affiliated with the majority or minority can destroy the therapeutic relationship” (Wendel, 2000, p. 14.).

In a multicultural society, cultures do not exist in seclusion; all have an influence in one way or another on the other. The need for professionals to recognize the different circumstances that affect biracial children and adolescents are paramount. For biracial youth, contact with another culture leads to cultural change and need for acculturation, which may or may not flow in a balanced way. Problems arise when people are treated differently and denied equal access to opportunities to raise their social and economic status (Segal, Berry & Poortinga, 1990; Triandis, 1994). Therefore, those who assume the role of counselor must become familiar and competent in issues of cultural diversity, problems that may arise between cultural groups, cultural change and acculturation, intergroup relationships, and social or economic differences (Das, 1995). Multicultural competencies have been developed as a way to ensure the counselor has the ability to recognize cultural factors like those listed as well as cultural factors in counseling (Fuertes, Bartolomeo, & Nichols, 2001).

Therefore, addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse group of people, such as biracial individuals, requires change and improvement on traditional counseling and practice (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). Multicultural counseling has been defined as “a counseling perspective that seeks to provide a conceptual framework recognizing the complex diversity of a pluralist society and acknowledging bridges of shared concern that bind culturally different persons to one another” (Pedersen, 1991, p.8). What this
suggests is that counselors need to move beyond their own culture and cultural group in order to understand and appreciate others, particularly biracial individuals.

Acknowledging one’s own worldview is the necessary initial step to building helping relationships. Worldview refers to how people perceive their relationship to the world of nature, institutions and other people (Sue, 1981). It is described as the conception of one’s “place in the universe” (Horner and Vandesluis, 1981) and is shaped by beliefs and assumptions as part of the social mores that makeup of the world we live in (Sarason, 1984). In other words, it is the way that someone learns to respond to the world around him or her. Sue et al (1992) stated that becoming more aware of one’s worldview and culture is a necessary step in growth past one’s own cultural encapsulation. Counselor self-awareness tends to be overshadowed by focusing on learning about culture of different clients. There does not appear to be enough time or attention paid to the more vital part of the developing self-awareness about their culture in the helping professional (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). Ivey, Ivey and Simek-Morgan (1993) suggested that examining one’s conceptual framework or worldview is necessary to become a culturally intentional counselor. In other words, one should intentionally acknowledge and pay attention to the distinct cultures of their individual clients, regardless of their background, so everyone receives the best possible care; not just the more diverse type of client.

Without worldview one would not have a grid of “meaning making” from which to compare and learn about the world. The individual providing the support and the person being supported both utilize worldview when working together (Mahalik, Worthington, and Crump, 1999). The state of one’s view, whether it is biased, objective, optimistic, or suspicious, impacts the work of the helping profession. For example, some parents and children might view counseling as a perceived threat based on their
worldview and therefore block the help from social services. From the cultural perspective of poverty, for example, this would not be looked upon as a positive interaction even before beginning because there is a history of poor opinion and disdain for the underprivileged. Some groups of cultural minority, including the blending of cultures as biracial children, have a particularly subjective view of support services based on their experiences (Mahalik, Worthington & Crump, 1999). By honestly addressing these feared biases, as mentioned earlier by Lee (1992), the cause can start to get the attention needed to facilitate change in counselor preparation. An important skill of multicultural counseling is the ability to work nondefensively with distrust, or in this case, the lack of empathy, and to build an effective therapeutic alliance (Pedersen, 1988). Ramirez (1991) described this multicultural counselor’s stance as “empathy projection . . . trying to understand the point of view and the feelings of someone whose values and cognitive styles may be very different from those of the therapist” (p.54). Ivey (1993) and Sue (1992) go on to say that for effective multicultural counseling to occur, a counselor must understand their own worldview, which guides responses in addition to the worldview of the client who is responding from their own perspective. This cannot be emphasized enough because in therapy, the values and attitudes of the counselor bears weight on the counseling relationship in terms of counselor behaviors, therapeutic goals and treatment planning (Axelson, 1985).

Understanding and paying attention to the counselors’ own values and worldviews then would lend itself to the development of other growth processes. Since worldview is a central concept that makes up one’s cultural value system, then the formation of values and value acquisition would become very important (Carter, 1991; Ibrahim, 1991). The therapist’s multicultural perspective shapes goals, tasks and direction in counseling and has been called the “value influence process” (Beutler, 1981;
Reactions in the Field

Heppner & Claiborn, 1989). An examination of the therapist’s values is especially important in multicultural counseling. Studies have shown that client’s perceptions of counselor values were more powerful predictors of client preference for counselor than the ethnicity of the counselor (Atkinson, Furlong, & Poston, 1986; Atkinson, Poston, Furlong, & Mercado, 1989; Ponterotto, Alexander, & Hinkston, 1988). Others have also emphasized the importance of counselor’s values by suggesting that clients preference for ethnically similar counselors are tied to inferences they make about counselors’ values and attitudes (Coleman, Wampold, & Casali, 1995). Thus, White counselors need to be alert to personal and cultural values and the ways in which these values may influence counseling practices (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). The examination of one’s values needs to occur before, during and after counseling culturally diverse clients. As values have a tendency to change over the course of the experience, multicultural counseling courses, as a part of training prior to entering the profession, should teach the importance of values and examine these processes with trainees.

The issue of multicultural competence also forces one to consider all the helping professionals currently working in the field. There are many individuals who graduated from programs before the emphasis on multicultural competencies had risen and before classes on the subject were ever mentioned. Still others graduated from programs before multicultural counseling was ever emphasized as critical feature in ethical standards (Ponterotto & Casas, 1987). Given these concerns, many counseling centers, schools and agencies are encouraging staff to become multiculturally competent. What they are not realizing however is that accomplishing this is not as easy as it sounds since one cannot achieve this whenever they want (Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodvsky, 1991). The reality is that counselors are individuals and will be at different points in their own development and may not be ready, willing and able to accept new learning and ideas regarding
multicultural competence. Therefore an adherence to multicultural competencies could be a beginning point for current students in training programs to examine how and where work needs to be done to better prepare those in the helping profession.

*Multicultural competency training.*

Years ago Pedersen (1988) began the call for improvements in multicultural counseling in five critical areas. The first was the need to pay more attention to the cultural variables that increase the effectiveness of counseling efforts and to more accurately try to measure counselor competency in multicultural situations. He felt it was first necessary to understand what factors were influencing change before one could understand how to facilitate this new change. In his second point, he shared that a global understanding of multiculturalism needs to be increased. This is not pertaining to specific issues, like biracial populations, but the more typical types of encounters counselors will likely have more frequently. This is necessary so that when more complex issues arise the trainees have had at least some minimal experience in other ways with culturally different groups from which to pull a basic understanding (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). His third belief was that multicultural training needs to be integrated into the core of counselor education curriculum, rather than just as course often tacked onto a part of a training program. Often courses do not do justice to the multicultural material to be taught if they are sandwiched into other courses instead of being a dedicated course of its own (Essandoh, 1996). The fourth step that needs to be taken is to make efforts to include more multicultural studies in professional journals of counseling and psychotherapy. The more that journals highlight the work being performed the more attention is paid to critical issues in the field. The attention is encouraging and the real commitment to legitimize the work of counselor educators takes shape (Essandoh, 1996; Niles, 1993). By exposing counselor trainees to research, fresh
ideas can foster and grow for counselor educators who are beginning their learning process. Lastly, counseling strategies need to reflect cultural differences and how these are impacting future work. Arredondo (1994) concurred with these postulates recently when he observed the profession “needs to move forward . . . what we have been doing is not enough . . . we are still reexamining reasons and possible models for multicultural training program development” (p.309). Decisions need to be made as to what criteria all should measure and work from rather than just having open policy without guidance for implementing change.

So the question remains, how do we teach counselors-in-training about multicultural competencies and how do we begin to ensure that the way we teach is most effective? Many educators feel that real progress has been slow to come to graduate programs across the country (Lee, 1994). Multicultural counseling programs have gaps when it comes to relating race and culture-specific incidents for skill acquisition (Sue & Sue, 1990). Therefore, multicultural counseling has not been as effective because of the lack of organized and integrated approaches to teach skills to use with diverse clients (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). Sue and Zane (1987) remarked the need has been expanded to include a push to enhance competencies, within programs, that will require counseling tasks such as conceptualization of problems, intervention strategies and establishing client objectives from the standpoint of diverse clients.

At present, coursework in multicultural competency is included in roughly 90% of counselor education programs (Das, 1995). However, Sue (1992) stated that few counselor education programs offer systematic training in multicultural counseling. According to Lee (1994), the counseling community has merely “paid lip service to issues of multiculturalism.” Instead he believes that, “rather than requiring students to take a multicultural class, we need to make issues of multiculturalism and diversity a
major part of the entire training experience. That, in turn, will force students to deal with their own issues regarding diversity in every course they take” (p.22). Multicultural training courses often expose trainees to information that will assist individuals in better understanding themselves as racial / cultural people, acknowledging the importance of similarities and differences, and identifying the feelings and reactions to a variety of cultural issues (Arnold, 1993; Constantine et al., 2001). Most of the programs do not integrate the multicultural counseling training in the overall counselor education program. In a word, the quality and depth of training provided in the majority of programs are not deemed sufficient to meet the growing mental health needs a culturally diverse population (Das, 1995).

A major limitation cited in the literature, is the assumption that just having acquired appropriate knowledge and skills is sufficient to be a culturally skilled counselor (Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovsky, 1991; Sue & Sue 1990). What we know is that is not nearly enough for an individual to be prepared. For years the helping profession has lacked a firm adherence to professional standards, which could serve as a guide for how to make teaching competencies a reality.

Preparing and achieving multicultural competence are complex tasks. It requires that part of the counselor-in-training is willing to take risks and expose vulnerabilities, while learning. One such beginning point would be to understand and follow the professional standards about multicultural competency. For several years, a set of multicultural competencies has been endorsed by the Association for Counselor Education (ACES), which is responsible for training mental health and school counselors. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 1994), the primary accrediting body for graduate programs, specifically requires that programs demonstrate that students acquire the knowledge and skills needed
to provide services to ethnically and culturally diverse populations. In addition, Sue, Arrendorro and McDavis (1992) have supported over the use of such standards as they have been widely accepted as guidelines for culturally competent counselors. The following discussion about challenges of counseling and working with biracial children and adolescents will be organized by addressing each of these areas—knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Challenges of counseling and working with biracial children and adolescents

Preparing to work with any type of client, including a biracial youth is difficult until one is exposed to the knowledge, skills and attitudes to do the work (Arredondo, 1999; Robinson, 1999). This can become more complex as one is faced with how to best support racially and culturally diverse clients. Then it becomes even more challenging as one faces working with a very specific population, such as biracial adolescents and children. Each layer of the client’s personhood, in this case adolescence, deepens as multicultural counseling continues to change.

Guidelines for providing culturally responsive counseling services are available within the multicultural competencies for counselors as originally described by Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis (1992) and further elaborated on by Arredondo et al. (1996). These competencies identify and concentrate on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes an individual needs to function as a culturally sensitive and competent counselor. They are organized around three major topics: counselor self-awareness, clarification of worldviews of culturally different clients, and appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. These standards provide an excellent overview and guide for practitioners and counselor educators as they identify ways to work effectively with biracial individuals. However, merely reading these guidelines is not enough. It does increase the level of knowledge one may have, but a critical part to enhancement of counseling is
also obtained in acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary to do effective counseling (Lee, 1994). For example, when considering work with biracial adolescents it would be necessary to understand these challenges in order to find out what knowledge one needs to obtain. Next, a review of skills for working with biracial individuals needs to occur so that the basic abilities and specialized techniques are addressed before practicing in the field. Last, but certainly not least, attitudes need to be examined when considering what each helping professional could be continuing to work on in future work with new biracial clients. Each of these components of the standards is critical in achieving competency.

Knowledge.

The knowledge of cultural differences in individual development, family life, value, attitude formation, and changing societal trends can be massive. In respect to the amount of knowledge, there is indeed much to know and learn. Probably the most fundamental piece of knowledge for any helping professional would be gaining understanding of counselors’ and clients’ culture. Obtaining this knowledge and then knowing how to use it, most effectively, remains a challenge for many helping professionals.

Culture was originally created by people as a way of understanding experiences, dealing with the challenges of life, and creating community atmospheres. Griffith & Gonzalez (1994) defined culture as, “shared patterns of belief, feeling, values, and knowledge that ultimately guide everyone’s conduct and definition of reality. Culture refers to a multiplicity of elements that define human life, such as social relationships, religion, technology and economics” (p.1379). It can mean the social reality of each individual, which is certainly at times complex, but necessary to help individuals adapt to their social and physical world. This could not be truer for the biracial adolescent whose
social reality and culture is often multifaceted and extremely complex. Being able to fit into one’s culture requires that the members become socialized to the norms and traditions in their environment (Pinderhughes, 1989).

Levine (1984) placed some emphasis in meaning and communication when he conceptualized culture “as a shared organization of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral and aesthetics standards prevalent in a community and the meanings of communicative actions” (p.66). Therefore, feeling a sense of community and a sense of belonging is a critical piece to identifying with one’s culture. Each culture provides opportunities and constraints, guidance on what is and what is not allowed and expected, and the language to think about the about experience, myths and traditions (Sherman, 1997). For biracial adolescents this may be information that is hard to articulate or information that they do not fully understand yet. Part of the support provided by helping professionals may be the way to express or safe environment needed to explore these feelings. Additionally, the challenge for helping professionals is how to best support biracial youth using the knowledge and information gained.

In order to apply knowledge with biracial adolescents, counselors must first gather some information about the cultural background of his or her clients. In these days of interethnic, interfaith, and interracial marriages, as well as families’ cultural backgrounds acceptance can be complex (Sherman, 1997). At present, rapid changes and an incredible mix of cultures in our society continue to contribute to brisk evolution. Gone are the days when one can rely on the past in thinking about a given culture or subculture. Knowledge needs to be expanded to include the contemporary vision of culture and all that it entails (Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Sherman, 1997). This would certainly include the knowledge that would address biracial adolescents and their families as their background continues to change. This too certainly presents a challenge to
helping professionals as they learn and struggle with ways to communicate with youth and families while maintaining respect and relationships.

In our society we live with many types of cultures mixing simultaneously and it is possible that feelings and ideas can get mixed up. For example, one may distinguish themselves by age, gender, occupation, school culture, family culture, or peer culture to name only a few with its specialized language and ways of dealing with the world (Kaselica, 1998). The complexity only swells when one considers how the biracial adolescent layers multiple parts of culture on top of one another. There is a great deal to know and a great deal to learn to apply when working with all these concerns. How the complexity of the issues is addressed with counseling preparation programs is the pinnacle of the issue in expanding multicultural training and counselor preparation overall. This also remains a fairly unexplored area in the literature as research has not addressed this specific need for counselor-in-training. The absence of classes or the minimal scope of attention paid to this need is becoming more and more evident.

Parham (1994) stated, “The belief that everything a student needs to know about multicultural counseling can be taught in one course, during one semester is a joke. That means that every ethnic minority group gets roughly one week of coverage. Does that type of superficial study make our future counselors culturally competent? I say, absolutely not” (p.125). It has been cited by more than one source that adequate multicultural instruction to develop competency in all three dimensions, particularly knowledge, requires more than a 3-hour course in a semester. Counselors-in-training are required to have supervised counseling experiences with clients who represent the cultural diversity found within the community they serve (CACREP, 1994). This is one way to ensure that the quality of knowledge is expounded upon in real life situations with clients, like biracial adolescents, they may be practicing with in the future.
Knowledge is not gained until the individual is able to increase self-knowledge, integration of knowledge and counseling behaviors and knowledge of different cultural groups (Kaselica, 1998). The acquisition of knowledge one needs in order to learn how to be competent in working with biracial children cannot possibly be gained in the span of one week or one course. The lack of information regarding specialized populations, like biracial children, presents another challenge. As the field continues to recognize the growth areas for instruction and training, the profession can only hope to improve as they take steps to institute support and guidance for those in the learning process. Again, due to the lack of literature and research regarding this specific population, there is still much to learned from studying how to make this process more valuable.

Skills.

The next issue to consider, when questioning how to create a more competent helper for biracial adolescents and children, is that of skill level. Educators are learning more and more that a single course does not provide adequate preparation in the skill competency (Parham, 1994). There is a marked lack of emphasis on advocacy competencies in the skill area in many graduate programs (Sherman, 1997). Throughout the multicultural competencies one can note the missing opportunities for assessment of student growth. What we know instead is that students are not being prepared to implement institutional or community interventions on behalf of their clients (Dinsmore, 1999). As this is still a struggle for individuals working with multicultural clients, one can only assume the level of skill being applied to biracial clients. Case conceptualization skills, understanding the flow and process of the counseling relationship, attending to multicultural dynamics, and the use of the theory when working with clients all call for increasingly complex cognitive processes and skills on the part of the counselor (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000; Stoltenberg, McNeil & Delworth, 1998). This
basis of skill is then further challenged by the introduction of special populations like biracial adolescents and families.

Pedersen (1994) asserts that counselors need to “translate the skills, strategies, and techniques of counseling appropriately to many culturally different populations so that the counselor is prepared to match the right approach to each culturally different population” (p.250). For work with the biracial child, being able to discern what skill may be more effective is layered on top of the amount of knowledge one has acquired. Each of the steps in becoming multiculturally competent is therefore a building block for the next phase of development in the helper. If the first phase of knowledge is weak then the next step, skill level, will not be on a steady foundation for future learning and formation of attitude. Yet, the development of the counselor, for their own level of skill over time and questions about the specific training methods necessary to facilitate growth in counselor’s level of understanding, have been largely unexplored (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000). What is known is that given the chance, counselors operating at more conceptually complex levels show greater clarity in clinical judgment (Holloway & Wolleat, 1980). Therefore, counselors who are challenged to think more critically about interactions with clients would have an advantage over those who are not given the opportunity to do this work.

One of the more contemporary ideas about addressing these kinds of shortcomings would be the expansion and diversification of instructional methods to help teach counselors-in-training (Kaselica, 1998). For instance, the use of guest speakers has been highlighted as an excellent beginning point for those who are learning to discuss, ask questions or brainstorm ideas with others who have already been practicing with diverse clients such as biracial adolescents (Heppner, 1994). Additional ideas to expand skill level include the use of experiential activities, time in class and supervision for
processing, intervention skills through workshops, and more emersion experiences with
the culturally different (Heppner, 1994; Kaselica, 1998). Those in academia have pushed
more and more for the kinds of experiences where one would be able to become a part of
communities and learn with families what interventions and strategies are producing the
greater impact (Dinsmore, 1999; Sherman, 1997). Taking the risk to expose
vulnerabilities and opportunities to self-educate could serve as a genuine gesture to others
that helpers are interested and want to connect with clients regarding their needs. This
willingness to become a part of the environment lends integrity to the helper who is
seeking skill as well as knowledge (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000). This type of investment
on the part of the helping professional would serve as building point for biracial
individuals who could see legitimate attempts for understanding. The level or breadth of
skills would therefore be most significant if the attitude one had toward their work and
the clients they serve were also strong.

*Attitudes.*

As stated before, the ways one can become multiculturally competent are
reflected in the way that one learns to layer new skills. So the next phase of this
expansion of self would be to address the attitude one has toward working with clients
who are culturally different, like biracial adolescents. Just as with multiculturally diverse
clients, biracial clients need to be treated with the same care and consideration. If the
counselor is not capable of or interested in working with a person then that counselor
needs to find some other way to be supportive to the client or refer that client to someone
else who can (Ponterotto & Casas, 1987). The negative attitude of a professional can be
quite damaging to the potential client when communicated in the helping relationship.

Much of the literature treats the negative attitude regarding cultural differences as
a handicapping condition either for the therapist or the client, in this case biracial
adolescent. It is the fear of the unknown, something to adjust to or overcome (Sherman, 1997). This attitude has the harmful potential to supercede the counseling process and overwhelm both client and helper if it goes unaddressed. On the other hand, researchers could look at culture as an advantage, as a source of strength and skills or as a source of belonging and encouragement and an ally for therapeutic change in order to change this negative attitude. What remains so different about biracial adolescents should be what contributes to them being interesting and exciting to work with instead of a burden or something to run from in the therapy arena (Lee, 1994). One’s own discomfort can hinder the possibilities for change and interaction that may be extremely therapeutic and encouraging for both parties. This can be an overpowering part of one’s training process if not prepared.

One of the ways a helping professional could obtain support around this concern for competency is to consider and institute ways to develop a culturally sensitive attitude. This can be accomplished, as a primary function of counselor growth, by the helper working to develop a strong sense of ego strength. Swenson (1980) called the mastery of ego development proved that one had organized and integrated all other parts of personality. This can be very difficult to do at times, yet necessary and be something that continues to evolve for the helper. It is imperative while providing this training, to recognize the importance of ego development and racial identity together because they have been proven to affect counselor effectiveness (Watt, Robinson & Lupton-Smith, 2002). Borders, Fong & Neimeyer (1986), found that students who were operating at a higher level of ego development showed a greater awareness of the process of the client-counselor relationship than did those who were not.

The attitude one has towards a group of people or a person, such as a biracial individual, greatly affects the type of care that the individual receives from the helper. If
one is prejudiced or biased towards a person or group of people this will become evident in the type of support they extend that person, whether intentionally or not (Lee, 1994). Therefore, special care needs to be taken when training individuals and shaping them into counselors to support biracial adolescents. Borders (1989) found that counselors with higher levels of cultural understanding, which also influences attitude, were less likely to have a negative attitude toward their clients and were more objective when reporting interactions with clients.

Attitudes can begin to change if these individuals are accepted within their cultural contexts (Adler, 1998; Conyne, 1987). That is to say that individuals need to be accepted for who they are, where they are. One of the toughest parts about doing this is to admit that the counselor must examine his or her own attitudes, values and perceptions on interracial marriage and biracial identity (Sherman, 1997). Movement forward will not occur until either of these occurred. First, the counselor needs to be honest with him or herself about these issues since they are so fundamental to doing the work in the first place. Secondly, training programs would need to become more involved and accept more responsibility in helping individuals to cultivate the learning opportunity. Yet, there is still much to learn about how this can be achieved since little research in this area has been completed.

As more research has been conducted what has been learned now is that one of the most important goals in counseling biracial students and their families is to increase awareness of their heritage and to enhance the dignity and attention given that heritage (Adler, 1998). Facilitating this kind of acceptance, especially when children or adolescents are suspicious of or opposing the helper may not be easy (Kranz & Lund, 1993). This is why realistically and earnestly one really does need to address their own feelings in relationship to the work being done (Coleman, 1997; Ramirez, 1991). How
one thinks or feels about a person has great impact on the attitude that same individual has toward that person. The two are very connected in their impact on the client.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes being addressed and tied together, would help counselors deal with the challenges of counseling biracial children. Each is important in its influence over another and each needs to be given time and guidance to develop. Competency in these three areas will not occur without the advocacy and support of counselor educators who are willing to teach and foster learning for new counselors (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000; Handley, 1982; Holloway & Wolleat, 1980). Each area has the potential to expand as research and study are conducted in the future. However before this can occur counselors and other helping professionals need to accept the challenge to do some critical self-examination and work to make this meaningful research.

Summary

By examining literature regarding biracial children and adolescents, is it clear that commonalities and differences exist in developmental stages, physical characteristics, language, identity, and socioeconomic issues. In order to work effectively, helping professionals need to be culturally competent. While there is still a lack of information on how to train individuals to be culturally competent, a closer examination about counselor education and training issues would help. We know from a review of the literature that many challenges still face the strengthening of multicultural competency, because there is systematic theory of multicultural counseling. Professionals’ knowledge, skills, and activities are important to evaluate effectiveness of working with biracial children. They need to practically organize these with a facilitative attitude to be applicable to clinical and preventive settings (Ho, 1992). This research allows the
researcher to gain an understanding of what areas still need work and where the profession may consider concentrating efforts.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question for this study focuses on learning more about the mental health care provider’s perception of self when working with biracial children in terms of knowledge, skill and attitudes. These answers can be provided to learn more about what counselors are doing in order to be culturally competent and deliver more supportive services to biracial children. In gaining more specific information about this group the following research questions will address:

Q1. How do counselors describe their own knowledge and skills in working with biracial children?

Q2. How do counselors describe their attitudes towards working with biracial children?

Q3. How do counselors describe their expectation for changes in demand for services to biracial children?

**Significance of the Study**

In considering the significance and contribution that examining this issue would make to the field, one needs to keep in mind the many reasons that such a study should be performed. Foremost is the noted increasing size of the United States population of biracial kids. As the number of children increases so will the need to know how to help and support them. Secondly, there is a need to gain more knowledge about such an increasing and interesting new population. The rapidly budding changes in society are taking place at such a fevered pace that they bring along many complexities that need special consideration. Finally, but certainly not least, there is an overall lack of literature on how to work with biracial children. This study is needed so that society can better
understand what directions to take in training others, learning about others and learning about oneself. Since this population is erupting so swiftly the profession needs to increase its efforts in order to keep up with the rapidly changing society and its needs. In considering all of these factors, one can see the obvious need for such a study to be performed.

*Increasing Biracial Population*

The number of biracial children is on an undeniable on the rise. In fact, the US Census Bureau indicated that by 1990, there were at least two million people who were identifying themselves as multiracial. Estimates are that in the next five years, more than a third of our children will be from a blending of ethnic minorities (Synder, 1996). However even with this increase there is the distinct possibility that not all biracial children are being accounted for.

In fact because of the way census data is collected, we may have underestimated the number of biracial children. Through Census collection in the last ten years (US Census 1998; 1988) it has been suspected that not all biracial individuals were properly identifying a particular race or ethnicity of a parent, or with both race or ethnicity of parents, or with one or the other at different times. Previously, the choice in negotiating this decision had been carried out by individuals and their particular families, as mandated by Census instruction. Over the years, as the demographics changed, this has fueled significant debate in Congress over the delivery and collection of multiracial data from the National Census (Multiracial Children and Adults of Minnesota Forum, 2000).

In the past, Directive No. 15 in the previous Census (1990) stated that persons of mixed racial and ethnic origins should “use the single category which most closely reflected the individual’s recognition in his or her community”. The public response to this directive was that most multiracial people objected to this instruction. The feedback
reflected feelings that a single category did not reflect how individuals felt about themselves or their full heritage. This is not to mention the applied pressure to make a choice between parents. It was reported that to make such a choice would be the equivalent to asking for false information (Magagnini, 1998). Other individuals felt more comfortable selecting “Other” while still others wanted freedom to select as many multiple races as relevant by choosing from the existing broad categories (US Census Debate Report, 2000). Federal officials concede that the system, which attempts to force people into a single racial category no longer, reflects America’s diversity. “The numbers may be precise, but they are precisely wrong”, said Representative Thomas Sawyer of Ohio, who chaired hearings on the subject two years ago. When we consider that the number of interracial couples has nearly doubled in since 1981, we can expect the multiracial population to continue to increase as these couples produce children (Multiracial children and adults of Minnesota, 2000). With so many different ways to self-identify it is no surprise that confusion and erroneousness demographics have resulted. Therefore the call for a classification system needs to be as accurate or close to accurate as possible to capture accurate data.

Even as the number of biracial children continues to rise there remains an uncertainty as to the number of number of biracial children that actually exist. This ambiguity is largely due to the manner in which census data is collected. The nation continues to strive to improve ways to document the actual number of biracial children and will continue to fine-tune the system that is currently in place.

New Issues in the Helping Profession

Associated with the increase in the population is the recognition of new issues when working with biracial children. For the individual negotiating a complex and newly recognized identification brings with it a myriad of unfamiliar issues and challenges. The
lack of positive media coverage for the increasing biracial or multiracial population does not help support the likelihood that individuals will embrace these sorts of dilemmas. What does seem to get media coverage has been the recent wave of acts of violence perpetuated by today’s youth, which is clearly linked to feelings of prejudice, misunderstanding and racist attitudes (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2000).

Despite the steadily increasing number of multiracial and biracial populations, today’s society and media continue to overlook the positive aim in understanding this population better. Mixed race people living in “white” America struggle with different social, political and personal dilemmas than their counterparts (Brandell, 1988; Sanders, 1994). In this nation one’s actions are largely dictated by racial identity and solidarity. More and more in the society, multiracial individuals with two or more separate racial heritages are caught at an ethnic crossroads (Robinson, 1993). Some of the challenges they face center on self and group acceptance not unlike what other single race minorities face daily (Schlegel, 2000). Therefore it would be helpful to examine dynamics in the counseling relationship with biracial children in order to curb occurrences of conflict.

Instead various media forums have not embraced opportunities to educate society about racial groups. Over the past decade what does receive media attention are episodes of school violence due to racial tension (Schlegel, 2000; www.usanews.com, 1999). What starts as minor racial conflict is now exploding into major problems for everyone, not just biracial children. Most schools simply are not prepared to handle issues of racial unrest (Hayes, Dagley & Horne, 1996). At times, they may inadvertently worsen the already tense racial atmosphere through well meaning, but often-misguided attempts to solve problems. Among these attempts are diversity training and culturally sensitive workshops. Most often, these training sessions or workshops are offered as crisis intervention, after a racial incident has occurred. They are usually too little, too late.
More and more in the media, we are learning about school attacks, violence perpetuated against other students, and unjustified hate crimes among students (Pedersen & Carey, 1994; Synder, 1994).

The ever increasing change will no doubt continue to cause confusion as we become more familiar with how to handle concerns, effective interventions and what issues cause difficulty (Ho, 1992; Wardle, 1992). No individual can be expected to solve these problems independently or without input and direction. The opportunity to unite as a network of professionals and learn from the experiences of others makes performing this study so exciting. By connecting with others working with similar populations, and sharing ideas and strategies, effective support can be realized.

Recognizing the Need to Act

Prior to the increase in the number of biracial children, there were only a handful of historical studies that examined racial identity for biracial or minority children. Studies performed by Winn and Priest (1993), Grove (1991), Hatcher (1987), and Teichner (1968) cited overwhelmingly a common theme of identity confusion. In all studies, children recalled experiencing a time in their life when they questioned their racial identity in terms of what set of cultural rules to follow and where they “fit in” racially in a wider society. The children of biracial families are faced with issues such as “economic and political oppression; discrimination; personal experiences within their schools, communities and peer groups; and in addition to these, to their specific family structure and heritage” (Ho, 1992, p. 8). Today, these concerns remain prominent in the relationships and lives of biracial children. We know that although the children have changed, similar concerns and worries still remain (Romero & Roberts, 1998). However, what we do not know enough about is the way in which mental health care providers have gone about preparing themselves and providing service to this population.
This study is significant in that we as clinicians still do not know what the actual knowledge, skills and attitudes that have been at work in helping guide professionals in the care of biracial children. Information to consider includes addressing the commonalities and differences in effective service for these children. Certainly, perceptions of how individuals feel and behave in different complex social and environmental conditions will factor into the responses of any surveyed helping professional. The findings from this study will provide insights into enhancement of multicultural counseling in that one might gain a better understanding of what is needed. Inevitably, it is hoped that findings from this research will contribute to what could be used in the formulation of future training programs. It is expected that further understanding will arise as this study is completed, as will implications for even more research with professionals working with biracial children.

This study will also be useful in advancing methodology as it includes the creation of a questionnaire that may be helpful to others in similar settings. For example, it would be useful as other regions assess the needs of mental health care providers working with biracial communities. This type of research will increase the amount of practical information for counselor educators and counselors interested in multicultural education, as well as those interested in extending culturally competent care to diverse clients. The findings of this proposed study could be used to raise awareness, enhance techniques and plan new strategies to other counselors. Based on the projected increasing population, we know that this study is quite timely in learning more about this expanding population. New statistics note the continuing rise of the biracial population with each census collection (US Census, 2000). Finally, this study will contribute to the knowledge of how to more effectively support and counsel biracial children based on information gathered from those “on the front line” working with children on a daily basis.
CHAPTER II

Methods

An outline of the population and sampling plan for the study are included in this chapter. Following that is an in-depth description of the interview questionnaire’s development. Next is the procedures section including recruitment, how permission was obtained, risk management, how the interview was conducted and how data was stored. Lastly, there is a description of the collection and analysis of questionnaire data.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of helping professionals who have worked with biracial children. In particular, the population included counselors/therapists, school counselors and social workers from both school and community settings. The specific criterion for population membership was as follows:

(a) Membership in one of the targeted professions of counseling, social work or psychology with two or more years of professional experience.

(b) Experience in working with biracial children from a blending of the various races such as African American, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, Native American, European American as well as other more specific races, where applicable.

For this study, participants were pooled from the city of New Albany, Indiana in Floyd County. It was acknowledged that focusing on Floyd County, Indiana limited generalizability of the results, but as a case study it provided an interesting focal point for understanding dynamics and competency in a particular region with a diverse population.
Floyd County, Indiana was unique in that it has a mixture of socioeconomic groups, racial diversity and biracial families that contributed to the usefulness of this as a pilot site for the study. The region has a series of family vineyards, large working farms, factories, and industry that promote migrant work (US Department of Commerce, 1997). The county also rests on the cusp of Louisville, Kentucky, with varied economic and social opportunities. Individuals living in the Southern section of Indiana have a fifteen to twenty minute commute to the city. In the latest statistics for the county the population had changed from 90.6% of the total population being Caucasian in 1995 to 80.6% of the population being Caucasian in 1996. The minority groups in the county consisted of an increasing number of Hispanic, African American, and Asian American/Pacific Islander people (US Department of Commerce, 1997). However, current county statistics at the Floyd County Health Department and Floyd Memorial Hospital have estimated population demographics in the last year for minority groups to have increased to as much as 35% of the population, apparently due to a rise in newly delivering families and increased live birth counts. Statistics on these minority families indicated that at least half of the 35% reported as a biracial household (HFFC Quarterly Statistics, 2000). In the next federal census report for Floyd County, it was anticipated that a definitive trend in changing population demographics would be evident as more families self-identified.

The sample consisted of twenty helping professionals who fit the criteria for membership in the population. All helping professionals worked at either a school or social service setting in New Albany, Indiana and were employed as a school counselor, social worker, mental health counselor, or therapist. School and mental health settings
were targeted because they served adolescents from a broad range of socioeconomic and racial diversity. The school settings were junior high schools while the social service settings included community-based sites with programs ranging from counseling to case management. Choices in this geographic area limited the likelihood that treatment would be sought elsewhere if a child needed to work with any type of helping professional.

The participants were selected for participation through voluntary consent. Only individuals with at least two years experience qualified for participation in the study. This was required so that participants would have various sources of experiences, expertise and knowledge of biracial clients. Individuals were asked to use this two year time span to reflect and respond to questions.

*Design of the Questionnaire*

The purpose of designing and conducting this oral, semi-structured interview was to collect information from helping processionals about how they had prepared to provide culturally competent counseling to biracial children. Since no empirical study had been performed addressing the views of professionals who worked with biracial children, a new questionnaire was developed. The first step in development was to review the literature to examine what sorts of issues counselors working with biracial children encountered. Also, information was gathered regarding the most central and contemporary issues in multicultural counseling for counselors (Atkinson & Thompson, 1992; Brandell, 1988; Dana, 1993; Ivey, 1995; Nishimura, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Ponterro & Benesch, 1988). In order to be as thorough as possible, a variety of resources were considered, including counselor education, multicultural competency and counselor
supervision literature. Additional consideration was provided for current issues, trends and concerns specific to biracial children in the school and social service setting. Since there appeared to be a gap in existing research from the perspective of helping professionals, it was decided that the focus of the questionnaire would be gathering ideas regarding preparation and actual work with biracial children. After reviewing the literature, several themes emerged as essential for investigation. These themes included basic definitions of knowledge, skills and attitudes when providing support to the client in a helpful relationship.

Sections were compiled from questions regarding the helper’s knowledge and skill when working with biracial children. Various sources were pulled together from the literature pertaining to fundamental knowledge when counseling culturally different individuals, working as a new counselor, and to more current “hot” topics for more seasoned therapists. The literature (Neito, 1999; Maruish, 1999) indicated that it was important to determine what helping professionals needed to know in order to do an adequate job. What appeared paramount was that individuals, regardless of level of practice, still had a responsibility to learn and stay current in order to provide sound and ethical treatment to clients (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, Stradler, 1996; Hanna, Bemak, & Chung, 1999; Holcomb-McCoy, 1999; Lonner, 1997; Pieretti, 1996; Sue, 1998). Therefore, questions were designed to gather information about how helping professionals prepared, stayed current, sought information and utilized resources in the community in order to work with biracial children. The amount of
working experiences helping professionals had with biracial children and adolescents were also assessed.

In the literature, there was great difficulty finding a specific formula or procedure for assessing attitudes and expectations (Brown, 1997; Nemeses, 1998; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Robinson 1993; Sue, 1996). Assessing attitudes and expectations was of interest as it provided insight into one’s personal values and biases that may or may not compliment culturally competent counseling. In the literature (Fudnerberg, 1994; Neito, 1999; Maruish, 1999) focus was on making sensitive adaptations to working with those that were culturally different. Therefore, questions for the survey were designed to look at how the helping professionals would rate comfort in working relationships, sources of support, training received, attitudes including stereotypes, biases and acknowledgement of growth areas then finally expectations for the future in working with biracial children.

One of the first areas of survey interest was the gathering of demographic information such as: occupation; ethnicity; gender; age; education level; experience in the field and experience with the biracial population. This section was a helpful second measure of screening to insure that individuals fit the criteria for participation.

Overall, questions for the interview were not designed to be all encompassing of the separate subject areas; rather they were considered a springboard for more feedback and a beginning point for future research in these areas. After carefully reviewing the literature, (Granello, 2000; Grove, 1991; Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Horne, Chaney, & Doughtery, 1976; McConatha & Ebener, 1992; Spruill & Benshoff, 2000) survey items were selected. The items included in the final version were intended to cover topics of
concern for the novice and seasoned helping professionals. Items were categorized into “topic groups” in the layout of the questionnaire before being reviewed by other professionals. A panel of experienced mental health professionals was formed to provide feedback about the questionnaire. These other professionals included two school counselors, two therapists, three counselors and two social workers. Discussion provided direction and feedback on current issues, trends, and concerns in the school setting and the social services setting. These consultants reviewed the draft and made suggestions so that modifications could be made based on their feedback. Items were reviewed in order to eliminate the use of possible jargon, slang or sexist language. Questionnaire construction used open-ended questions and a small number of Likert scale questions, which allowed for measurement of interpersonal comfort and levels of activity in the community.

The interview questionnaire was selected over other research methods in order to learn unique, insightful information about the topic. It had been noted in the literature, that “an attempt to gain an understanding of complex social and historical issues is likely to require observational or survey techniques rather than straight experimentation” (McCain, p. 108, 1988). The interview questionnaire design reflected concerns or issues that were believed to be most important for helping professionals in the particular settings.
Procedures

Approaches to recruitment.

Participants were drawn from both a school setting and a social service setting for the interviews. The two settings, with two subsets each, were identified and selected due to the large portion of biracial children currently within each. Both settings were located in an urban inner city with a mixture of biracial youth from varying socioeconomic, family structure and culture characteristics.

Securing Permission to Conduct the Study.

The initial step was to solicit participation from the two sources in the community. First, within the school districts, two school principals were contacted via a telephone call for permission to conduct the study in the schools. At this same time, two mental health center directors were contacted, through a telephone call, for permission to conduct the study in the mental health centers. These four individuals, at each setting, were the initial contacts before individuals were approached. During each phone call, the administrators were told about the purpose of the study and why the particular setting was being contacted. Until a decision regarding participation had been agreed upon, all communication was with these chief personnel.

After permission had been granted, additional meetings with school and mental health counselors, therapists and social workers were under advisement of the directors, principals and other necessary administrative powers. A face-to-face meeting took place to clarify the purpose of participation in the survey. The evolution of the research project to its present focus of selecting and interviewing helping professionals was reviewed. All
personnel were informed that the purpose of interviews was to find out what helping professionals’ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes were when working with biracial children. The survey process and forms were also reviewed. Any questions or concerns were addressed in order to help solidify a decision for participation.

**Recruiting Participants.**

Recruiting participants involved making contact, explaining the study, and securing informed consent forms. A list of all eligible staff was requested from each setting so that contact could be initiated and interviews scheduled. Then a telephone call was placed to all possible participants in order to discuss the interview process. As before, each participant was provided information about the researcher, of the dissertation process, and the purpose of the study. The participants were told that they were being invited for voluntarily participation based on their experience in the profession working with biracial children. Individual’s who had not worked with biracial children for a minimum of two years were screened out of the study at that point. Fortunately, no participant contacted had to be “screened out” of participation due to limited years of experience. All questions were based on individual knowledge, skills and attitudes about working with biracial children.

Additionally, possible participants were told that the questionnaire would take anywhere from an hour to an hour and thirty minutes to complete, depending on individual responses and feedback. After consenting to an interview, a time was scheduled with each participant. No inducements were offered; however, individuals interested in the outcomes of this study were offered an opportunity to receive a summary
of key findings. Upon completion of the interview, those interested in obtaining a summary of the findings were invited to sign up on a separate mailing list.

*Risk Management.*

As a result of participating in the study, it was not foreseen that any harm to the participants would arise because the interview questionnaire only included questions about feelings and perceptions arising from working with biracial children. However, participants were informed that they were free to terminate participation should they have happened to experience adverse feelings at any time. Participants were also informed that all information shared during the research process would be kept confidential. Additionally, they were told that there were no direct benefits or repercussions for participation in this study. Prior to administration of the interview, each participant was provided an informed consent form that described the purpose and procedure of the study. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, in each setting, as required by the University of Cincinnati’s West Campus Human Subjects Review Committee. (See Appendix A for a blank copy of this form).

*Data Storage.*

To ensure confidentiality all materials gathered during this study including informed consents, questionnaires, and notes were stored in a locked file cabinet until after the completion of the study. No personally identifying information was recorded on the interview and consent forms. Separate files were maintained to assure anonymity of interview responses.
Conducting the Interview.

The first section of the questionnaire that participants were asked to complete was purely demographics. The subsequent parts of the survey were divided up into sections as follows: knowledge/skills, attitudes, values and expectations (See Appendix B for a blank copy of this form). Since this was a semi-structured interview, the interviewer asked each of the questions on the interview form, but also asked additional questions for clarification of responses. Questions were asked in order by sections with the researcher making notes and comments as necessary. Notes were made by the investigator and a tape recorder was used as backup for the study as well.

Data Analysis.

Responses from coded questionnaires were analyzed using documentation from handwritten notes and audiotape recordings. Responses were carefully written out in narrative form, including occasional multiple responses. Each respondent had the opportunity to thoroughly explain his or her answers and elaborate verbally in the interview. After arriving at a complete list of responses, each response was ascribed a numerical value in order to aid in theme analysis and grouping. This was particularly true for demographic information on the questionnaires. For example, number one indicated a male and number two indicated a female. The same method was used throughout for other personal characteristics of participants such as occupation, ethnicity and educational level.

Response categories for interview questions were created based on the themes that emerged from the participants’ responses. Response frequency was tabulated within
each category for each individual question. Reviewing the range in responses allowed
the examiner to note areas of discrepancy or consensus in identifying the themes. After
arriving at a complete list of responses, each was ascribed a numerical value in order to
aid in theme analysis and grouping. Examination for overall themes was conducted using
all the data from each helping professional. Questions were checked for consensus or
variability in comments. It was considered whether evidence for commonalities resulted
from responses supplied from different groups.

Quantitative data analysis was performed for each question with the number of
participant responses sorted into response categories. After this sorting was complete, a
percentage calculation was performed. Next, qualitative analysis was performed in that
exemplar responses were quoted to enrich the interpretation of the data analysis.
Chapter III

Results

This chapter covers the results of the study performed, beginning with an overview of the collection process and review of data. This includes an examination of the data analysis steps as well as the question and theme analysis. Included is the rationale for analyzing responses in the form of themes.

In beginning the discussion of results, the data from the sample demographics portion of the questionnaire were examined before the actual questions. This allowed the reader to gain a clear understanding of the types of helping professionals included in the study before examining results. Next, the actual questions in the interview were examined for themes in responses. Throughout this examination, several tables were created to illustrate the findings in this chapter and clearly describe responses and results. Additionally, these themes were outlined for the questions based on the responses from individual questions. Lastly, the frequency, consensus and disparity of responses for participants were tabulated for each individual question.

Initial Analysis

Data Analysis Steps

All twenty individuals who were invited to participate completed the entire process. The interviews were conducted according to a structured interview script. Each participant answered every question; no items were omitted. Interviews were conducted in a facility that was private and conducive to candid responses from the participants. Aside from the participants, only the primary researcher was present for the interview.
Since individuals answered the questions orally, their responses were recorded verbatim on paper as well as recorded on an audiotape recorder for later verification of statements. Several steps were taken before actual data analysis of the information collected began. Clarification of individual responses was completed for questionnaires by reading each interview while listening to the interview audiotapes. Interviews had been read once without the inclusion of the review of tapes and a second review, including the audiotapes, was important for absolute accuracy to elaborate on lengthy comments. For each participant, a typescript was made of the person’s responses. Then for each question and each respondent, responses were categorized into a small set of categories. For some questions, there was an opportunity to provide multiple responses and these were categorized as well.

**Sample Demographics**

The participants consisted of 6 males and 14 females aged between 25 and 60+ years with a median age of 41.7 years. The majority of respondents were of Caucasian ethnicity (85%, n=17). For the other ethnicities, 5% each were African American (n=1); Pacific Islander (n= 1); and Biracial (n=1), specifically African American/American.

**General Professional Preparation**

The health care professionals in the study were represented by school counselors (40%, n =8), counselor/therapists (25%, n=5), and social workers (35%, n =7). Length of time spent in the profession ranged from 1 to 24 years, with a mean of 9.65 years. Number of years participants had worked with biracial children ranged from 1 to 25, with a mean of 9.35. One individual had worked with biracial children prior to accepting his
or her current role in the helping profession in a different, but related capacity. 

Educational attainment ranged from high school diploma to doctoral degree. Participants also had a variety of certifications and licenses. Table 3.1 below provides an overview of the breakdown in the participants’ degrees.

By and large, the participant pool had graduate degrees, with fourteen holding a Master’s degree and two holding doctorates. Disciplines for those with graduate degrees included psychology, school counseling, education, public health, early childhood studies, social work, and community mental health counseling (See Table 3.1 for a breakdown of these disciplines). Of the remaining four, one had a Bachelor’s degree, one had an Associate’s degree and two had high school diplomas. Types of additional certification and licensure varied depending on the professional questioned. For example, for the school counselors, all (n=8) had counseling licenses and teaching licenses. Among the school counselors, one oddity was noted in that an individual currently working as a counselor had a law enforcement background. He had completed training and was certified by the Federal Bureau of Investigators (FBI) and the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy (See Table 3.1 for details).

Among the social workers, only one (17%) was a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The rest held a variety of certifications with the most being Healthy Families (85%, n=7), Denver Developmental Assessment (72%, n=5) and Family Assessment training (26%, n=2). Other individuals were additionally certified as a developmental therapist, certified nursing assistant, domestic violence trainer, service coordination specialist, CPR/First aid instructor, and HIV/AIDS trainer (17% each, n=1).
Table 3.1

Degrees Held by Helping Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Associate</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counseling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Mental Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=2       n=1  n=1      n=14  n=2       n total=20
For the last two individuals, one was trained in restraint holding, Cornell Method, and the other was certified in CPR/First aid.

Among the counselors/therapists who held a license, there was one Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), one Registered Play Therapist (RPT), one Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), and one Nationally Certified Psychologist (NCP). Like the other helping professionals, this group held a variety of certifications. The most common again was Healthy Families (40%, n=2) and Denver Developmental Assessment (20%, n=1). Other individuals were additionally certified as a clinical supervisor, case management supervisor, service coordinator specialist, and foster care trainer (17% each, n=1 each). As for the last two individuals, one was certified in Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) and the other was certified in CPR/First aid.

Participants were asked to describe “customary practice” by selecting the type of interventions performed and services provided to children overall. Those practices selected, for clients in general, ranged from individual counseling to play therapy. Individuals were given the opportunity to select more than one type of support since the work was so varied among helping professionals based on their settings. Also, they may have performed many different services in their particular setting. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the breakdown in customary practice with all populations served. It looks at each helping profession individually and the type of practice, for these professionals, is ranked with a percentage for each.
Table 3.2
Helping Professionals’ Customary Practices When Working with Any Child or Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customary Practice</th>
<th>School Counselor (n=8)</th>
<th>Counselor / Therapist (n=5)</th>
<th>Social Worker (n=7)</th>
<th>Total (n=20)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Counseling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Guidance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Psychoeducation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual counseling was the leading type of support chosen (90%, n=18) by professionals, with group counseling following as a close second (85%, n=17). Teaching was also ranked as a top choice (75%, n=15). Family counseling/therapy work (70%, n=14) and group guidance tied for the fourth most popular and often used form of therapy. Group psychoeducation (55%, n=11), child counseling/therapy (55%, n=11), and play therapy (50%, n=10) were all used about half the time with children.

Information about professionals’ choice of customary practice with all children was compared to the same professionals’ customary practice working with biracial children. Individuals were asked to select interventions performed and services provided to biracial children instead of clients served overall. Those practices selected, for biracial adolescents and children, again ranged from individual counseling to play therapy. As before, individuals were given the opportunity to select more than one type of support, since the work was so varied among helping professionals and they may have performed different services in their particular setting. The next table (Table 3.3) provides an overview of the breakdown in customary practice with biracial children served.

Individual counseling was again the top choice (90%, n=18) by professionals, with group counseling following (75%, n=15). The third most popular practice was tied between teaching (70%, n=14) and family counseling/therapy work (70%, n=14). Group guidance (65%, n=13) was selected next, followed by group psychoeducation (60%, n=12). Child counseling/therapy (50%, n=10) and play therapy (50%, n=10) were selected last for use with biracial children among helping professionals. It is interesting
Table 3.3

Helping Professionals’ Customary Practices Working with Biracial Child or Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customary Practice</th>
<th>School Counselor n=8</th>
<th>Counselor / Therapist n=5</th>
<th>Social Worker n=7</th>
<th>Total n=20</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Counseling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Guidance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Psychoeducation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Counseling/Therapy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to note that customary practice with general clients and customary practice with biracial children reflected similar services and therapy modalities. There was very little deviation among helping professionals with the type of interactions and support provided. Two slight increases in types of customary practice were noted for biracial children. Psychoeducation was used more frequently with biracial children (60%, n=12) than with the general population (55%, n=11). Similarly, group counseling/therapy was used more frequently with biracial children (70%, n=14) than the general population (85%, n=17). One also can refer to tables 3.2 and 3.3, depicting customary practice between monoracial and biracial children to see the nearly identical ranking of technique usage reported by the respondents.

*Experience Working with Biracial Children*

Respondents were asked to reflect on the kinds and types of experiences they had with biracial children. The purpose of these questions was to determine whether the respondents indeed had the required two years of experience and some degree of exposure to working with biracial children. Also respondents were asked to elaborate on the capacity within which they had worked with biracial children to get a sense of the different settings and methods being used.

As previously stated in demographics, the helping professionals interviewed had worked with biracial children for a period ranging from 1 to 25 years, with a mean of 9.35 years. The average number of years of experience for the helping professionals was 9.65, which suggests consistency in the work being performed. Prior to work in the last ten years, participants shared that there was very limited opportunity, geographically, to
work with biracial children because they simply were not a part of the population served. Almost all study participants shared that they had performed this work within the same discipline regardless as to whether they had changed job sites or school districts. One individual disclosed experience working with biracial children prior to accepting his/her current position.

During the interview, there was noticeable variability in the number of biracial children with whom the professionals had worked. At one end of the continuum, 13 (65%) of the respondents had worked with 40 or fewer biracial children during their career. On the other end of the continuum, 7 (35%) had worked with 100 or more biracial children. In the middle range, there were two individuals who estimated that they had worked with 41 to 100 biracial children. Some of these professionals shared that the community they worked within contributed to the high number of biracial children served. They felt because so many biracial children lived in the area, they would automatically go to school or seek services in that same area. Those professionals who had served lower numbers of biracial children stated they had noticed recent increases as more biracial families and children moved into their service area and the professionals had more opportunity to work with them.

In a related question, individuals were asked to estimate the number of biracial children that they had worked with in the past year. Fifteen respondents stated that they had worked with between 0 to 20 biracial children in the past year, while 5 respondents stated that they had worked with over 70 biracial children. Again the same respondents reflected the change in community demographics as being an important reason for the
number of children receiving services. This comment was made in a general manner, but elaborated on in later interview questions, particularly when discussing those biracial groups most comfortable with and the trends in the community regarding the prevalence of biracial children.

*How Do You Get Ready to Work with Biracial Children?*

Several questions were asked in order to ascertain how one gets ready to work with biracial children. Individuals were invited to share how they prepared, including special preparations, what had made a difference in their work with biracial children, and particularly what had helped them be successful. Individuals were also invited to reflect on what had been the most difficult issues when working with biracial children, their consultation process, and what their primary “source of wisdom” had been in their career.

The response to how professionals prepared for their work with biracial children was extremely consistent across the different professions. The majority of respondents (75%, n= 15) stated that client racial status had no impact on the manner in which they prepared to begin an interview. However, a small portion (10%, n=2) stated that although, in general, their manner of preparation did not vary with client racial status, they would make special preparations if this was requested by a teacher or parent. Those who engaged in special preparation (25%, n=5) stated that they took time to get to know the family structure by talking to the child’s teacher in order to gain a better understanding of the family’s issues.

To further clarify this piece of the helping process, individuals were also asked what special preparations, if any, they made for the first session. It is interesting to note
that there was a slight difference in the responses as individuals had to consider more critically a “point-in-time” during the therapeutic process where this occurred. Fifty-five percent (n=11) stated that child racial status would “make no differences in their preparation because they use the same skills and techniques with any client.” However for the first session, 30% (n=6) stated that they would gather information or seek consultation in order to prepare. Toward the bottom of the continuum, 10% (n=2) stated that they would introduce themselves prior to the session, while another 10% (n=2) stated they would make use of a specific technique or strategy. However, the specific techniques or strategies used were not shared by respondents.

Professionals unanimously chose “using basic counseling skills” as the most important thing to do in order to be successful when working with biracial children. Because individuals were able to list other ideas, several additional responses were expressed. Of these comments, 20% (n=4) of individuals shared that a positive and optimistic attitude toward the client made a difference in the way the client perceived them. It was their belief that the relationship was easier to establish and transitioned smoother if the other person felt positive regard from the helper. Stemming from this response, 10% (n=2) felt that working on the relationship was a necessary and important piece to being successful with biracial children as clients. Also, 10% (n=2) of the respondents shared that they make it a point to involve family members and use specific strategies and techniques. They shared that they felt this earned them credibility with those individuals in power who could decide to support or not support the helping
process. Also, by using specific strategies and techniques, they were trying “new” ideas and working outside of traditional therapy to find the most effective means of support.

Opinions regarding the most difficult issues for helping professionals were multiple in number. However, this did not stop individuals from reaching a consensus on what the difficult issues were when working with biracial children. Difficulties selected seemed to range from problems with peers and prejudice to socioeconomic issues. As before, individuals were given the opportunity to share more than one concern. Table 3.4 below reflects the types of concerns for helping professionals.

As seen in Table 3.4, half (50%, n=10) of the respondents felt that issues with peers were the main difficulties when working with biracial children. However, almost equally represented was the feeling that acceptance and support of parents and families was a critical issue to consider. One respondent defended this hierarchy with peers first because “developmentally, adolescents, regardless of race, are focused on friends and the issues in their friendships.” Although parents were noted as being important, they are not as influential as the peer network at school or in the community.

A few of the respondents reflected on the prevalence of racism and prejudice with the context of biraciality. For example, one respondent stated, “It is what the children tell me that matters most. Those words can tear children down a lot faster than lots of words of encouragement. Especially the damage that one word can do, like a slur.” Still another respondent shared that the way people are treated and treat others is a huge piece of development as children/adolescents “learn that racism exists and [they] start to
Table 3.4

Difficult Issues when Working with Biracial Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues with Peers or Prejudice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance and Support of Parents and Families</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort with Identity (Client or Helper)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Issues Difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
understand why they do what they do.” Respondents reflected that these are common lessons learned and they recognized the poignancy of these issues for biracial children. Within this group of respondents, some individuals chose to focus more on the effect of acceptance and support within the family of a biracial child. The issue of whether parents are married, divorced, separated or not connected came up often. For example, one respondent stated, “Students share with me that they feel that they are letting a parent down if they choose [one race over another]. This is especially the case in divorce or separation of families. People don’t wear signs around their necks that say ‘Biracial Child’, but they wear that inside their heart.” Another respondent stated, “The majority of the biracial children I work with are separated. The child grows up away from the father usually and the mom is left to explain to the child what happened. This is big.”

The comments for parent/family issues reflected feelings that helping professionals need to become more involved in family systems and integration of the whole family in supportive services. For instance, one respondent shared that discussing one’s background can be difficult, “if the child is biracial and the extended family does not support the child or condone the child’s background. This can often happen when younger parents are living at home [with extended family].” However, most of the individuals choosing to comment on this focused more on working with the parents of biracial children. For example, one individual commented that “often times parents make decisions for good or ill and that I [as the helper] don’t have the right to change or challenge that. I want to recognize the parent as the nurturer and the one in control of
decisions in the family, but I have parents of children I am working with who don’t want to be responsible.”

This need to support the nurturers of biracial children was also illustrated in the comments supporting education or therapy to the parent who may be struggling with how to care for their child during adolescence. This was found in one individual’s comments including the reflection that, “[the naiveté] people have that “love solves everything” because sometimes it doesn’t.” Another respondent stated, “Parents cannot protect their children from prejudice and discrimination. Sometimes, no matter how much they love them, caring is not enough. Some children who are given that message are shocked by the reality of truth. Sometimes people live in a bubble and when kids are in a place in the real world, they cannot cope. People and society can be very unkind.” Likewise, another interviewee shared that more care needs to be extended to parents “because people need to be treated to like human beings, not someone or something that is bad.”

Another important factor to consider, according to 25% (n=5) of the respondents, is comfort with identity from the standpoint of either the client or the helper. About one fourth of the respondents confided that comfort with their own identity was problematic. Respondents shared that at times their own issues as the helper can be counterproductive because they are not sure how to deal with their internal identity confusion. Related to helper comfort and need, it was interesting to note the overwhelmingly strong urge for increased understanding of the issues both with the child and within society. One individual shared that the client’s confusion about their identity can make the process a struggle because “they are not aware of how it is working against them in their
functioning or during the helping process.” As one individual exclaimed, “So much has changed and continues to change for the biracial child that it can be difficult [for the helper] sometimes to stay current and informed about how children feel about issues.” A few of the respondents stated that were simply not prepared or offered avenues to gain information by their current job site. Others stated that they felt helpless in the sense that society continues to classify people, regardless, and that there would be a very gradual progression of acceptance or understanding by society before their work would have an impact on change. From a social standpoint, there was an elaboration on the idea that children today ingest information differently and are therefore “making meaning” of messages from society in a very different way.

One helper shared an example of this discomfort by stating, “Kids are aware of race and sex at an early age. I believe that if a person says it does not matter they are just being unrealistic. That is the way it is, we don’t have to like it. Just be up front and move on. [More helpers need to say] I can’t change my color, background or age, but I can try to help you right now. This should be the focus instead of ‘What’s wrong with you and why are you having problems with this?’ We need to deal with the issues. All children, including biracial children, go through this and we need to handle this better as helpers.” Another individual shared a similar feeling when he stated, “Sometimes when working with different cultures I will see things done differently and sometimes it will clash with my values, for example when some cultures call a child ‘bad’ it is uncomfortable for me, but I realize that it is a cultural difference. I try to educate [myself] and understand that there is a different interpretation.” Educating and providing
support to the helper for handling similar, future interactions seemed to be a paramount concern as respondents addressed these questions. Finally, it is interesting to note that two respondents (10%) cited no issues presenting difficulty and only one person (5%) shared that socioeconomic issues were a difficulty. Specifically, this issue was focused on biracial children in poverty.

When asked to reflect on the single most difficult issue, helping professionals (40%, n=8) shared that acceptance, support and issues with parents and families were most difficult. One individual shared that, “How families, mostly parents, have struggled and / or dealt with the issue of biracialism affects how receptive they to dealing with their child’s struggles and concerns.” Also cited was whether parents may no longer be a couple and if one parent is degrading the other [race] to or in the presence of the biracial child. Several respondents shared that this could have very real impact on the kind of problem the child is having with their identity as well, depending on which parent was negative and which was custodial. The interaction of extended family members, especially grandparents, was often cited as a “door opener” to therapy or a barrier to therapy. Another interesting comment shared by a couple of the respondents was the potential harm that adoptive parents can sometimes unknowingly inflict on their children. One respondent stated that, for these types of families, there “needs to be not only the willingness to adopt a biracial child, but the willingness to become a family of color.” Respondents shared that more families need to spend the time necessary to understand or connect to that particular biracial child’s races or cultures.
In light of these difficult issues and hardest lessons learned, the subject of consultation arose as a question for helping professionals. Eighty-five percent stated they had sought consultation. The majority of these respondents (75%, n=17) stated that they sought consultation in order to gain information from other professionals. Respondents were asked to elaborate on why they found it necessary to seek consultation and 88% (n=15) of those who actively consulted shared that it was so they could gather more information about a particular group. The remaining 18% (n=2) shared that they consulted for personal reasons, but chose not elaborate on what that meant for them. Comments for those choosing to consult included statements such as a desire to learn from other individuals in the professional setting who may have more information or their own lack of experience and a need to utilize others in the setting with expertise. Several individuals felt compelled to seek consultation based on the needs of the children they served. One person shared an experience with a student who had attendance problems stating, “Many issues came along with this problem, friends, self-esteem and hopelessness. If she didn’t come back to school, she did not have to deal with it [not fitting in]. In fact, another student became upset when her friends were identifying her with their race and she did not. The real problem, as I came to discover it, was that she did not know what race to identify with.” Likewise, individuals (10%, n=2) felt the need to seek consultation in order to learn to work with parents. For example, these respondents shared that they needed to understand cultural differences regarding discipline, developmental expectations, domestic violence in the family, and the lack of or process of acceptance in families of biracial children when there is discord among
partners or extended family members. Overall, comments about consultation were very positive and feedback about the usefulness of this approach was very high. Respondents shared this was their most frequent and favorite way to stay connected and share information with one another in the professional communities. Respondents also shared that consulting was a very quick, practical way to get support and supervision if they were stumbling in a race-related area.

Finally, participants were also given a chance to share whether they had relied more on life experiences, work experiences, or training/educational experiences when working with biracial children. Comparatively, either life experiences or work experiences were the most favored "sources of wisdom" for 70% of each category (n= 14) of the professionals. Individuals shared that they felt they had learned more in their experience at work or life since it was more practical and provided more variety when working with different types of people. Also, individuals shared that they “enjoyed these experiences because they are able to attach personal stories or people to these experiences.”

When elaborating, life experiences, respondents shared that they learned from other friends who are biracial or have biracial children what the struggles were first-hand and these stories taught them how to handle problems. One respondent stated that his/her “own biraciality has been helpful because I know what it is like to be in the client’s place and it helps when discussing the problems to have this frame of reference.” Respondents reflected that the diversity within their own families was important because of the number of mixed marriages and biracial children they knew personally. One respondent
summarize this concept by stating that these experiences were helpful because, individuals had “to learn to respect others and it was important to treat all people the same and I carry that on in my own parenting [as well as work] now.”

Other respondents shared that what they experienced had taught them to do the direct opposite of what they were taught during their lifetime. The time period that individuals grew up within, the family dynamics and the effect of their own children and grandchildren are influential. One respondent’s story vividly captured this change. “I realize there are some prejudices that have carried on . . . I know my life has a bearing on who I am. I have two biracial grandchildren and I grew up in an area where mixed couples were okay. My school was one of the first in the community to integrate. I have friends and family who are ‘terrified’ of the environment I grew up in and my family dynamics. My dad was also racist and he used a lot of ‘name calling.’ I tried [and try] to be as opposite of him as I could.”

Work experience was equally important because of the impact that working with biracial children had on the confidence level of individuals and their chance to learn and grow for themselves. Several respondents shared their thankfulness for on the job learning and one stated, “Everywhere I go, I learn something new or have an experience. It is fascinating to me and when I have a new experience. I ‘bank’ it and use it for later.” Another respondent shared that “this is why I am here. I can incorporate it into everything I do,” and “my work experience has been the emphasis of all I do.” Still another shared, “Doing what I do has taught me a lot. There are issues I have dealt with that other people don’t want to touch, yet I have done it. Initially the client does not want
you there, but eventually they see that you are going to help them and they ‘allow you in’ . . . from an early point I have relied on these experiences.”

Training or education was less relied upon with 45% (n= 9) of the time. In fact, it was selected only five percent of time as being relied upon always. The respondents who were older graduates or who had been practicing longer, shared that in their programs courses did not exist that addressed biracial children and their needs. Respondents defended their reliance on life experience and work experience because they found these more realistic and practical overall. One stated, “What you read or hear about from others is not adequate preparation. One needs to experience these sorts of moments for oneself” Training was cited as important for 55% (n=11) of the individuals, because fundamentals are important pathways to learning and learning the basics could not be emphasized enough. However, it was shared that even these individuals preferred experience from life and work as sources of wisdom.

*What Special Training has the Counselor Obtained.*

Respondents were also asked to share special training they had obtained and whether it had come from readings, workshops or general education classes. Along with all this information, they were also asked to share what areas they felt they still needed more training and information in for future work. For each question, respondents were encouraged to give multiple responses and some of the statistics collected reflect the multiple responses. Table 3.5 reflects what special training the helping professionals obtained for their work with biracial children.
Slightly over half of the participants (55%, n=11) reported having read books, articles and news articles while half of the participants (50%, n=10) in a different section of the interview reported not having read anything at all in preparation for their work with biracial children. Note that the respondents were encouraged to select what kinds of material they had read; therefore the total number is a result of one individual having selected two categories (See Table 3.5 for details). Several respondents commented that even if they had read something on the subject, they did not feel it had been particularly helpful because they did not remember or use it currently.

From those respondents who had found helpful information in written material, 45% (n=5) stated that they found information on poverty, crime, family structure and religion to be helpful. Individuals stated that although they did not have a wealth of biracial people regarding their experiences and self-esteem issues were very beneficial.

Again, comments revealed that hearing and reading first-hand accounts about how individuals handled this personally were very insightful. One respondent shared that, “It was a very important glimpse into the life of the biracial person and was extremely applicable to counseling.” The remaining 18% (n=2) shared that reading about cultural differences and in-group differences taught them a lot about what to expect and challenged some of their preconceived ideas. A relatively small number, only 45% (n=9) of the participants, had actually attended workshops on working with biracial children (See Table 3.5 for breakdown of workshops). Of those who had attended workshops, 44% (n=4) stated that the workshops covered basic topics such as racial issues or discrimination. These were rated most helpful because they clarified and reintroduced
Table 3.5
Special Training Obtained by the Helping Professional for Work with Biracial Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Articles, books, textbooks, stories/news</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>breakdown of topics</em> –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty, crime, family structure, &amp; religion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal accounts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture and in-group differences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>breakdown of topics</em>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic topics i.e., racial issues &amp; discrimination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socioeconomic &amp; social issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group difference &amp; communication issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>breakdown of types</em>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology/Sociology course</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multicultural course</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contemporary issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
basic ideas the professionals may have missed in the past and needed to review. Others (33%, n=3) stated that learning about socioeconomic issues and social issues helped because they did not have that personal perspective from which to understand biracial children. Several respondents shared that this lack of information was due to scant program preparation or lack of exposure in work environments. The remaining 22% (n=2) of respondents shared they learned a great deal from workshops focused on group differences and communication issues. Overall, the topics were varied and individuals had attended many different types of workshops based on their progress or process in understanding and because they had different training needs.

Eighty-five percent (n=17) of those included in the survey had attended or acquired general education classes in cultural awareness. Several respondents listed various courses as having been helpful, with the most frequently selected type being a psychology or sociology course, followed closely by some type of multicultural course. A very small number, notably the most recent graduates with less experience, selected contemporary issues classes as helpful. These individuals had also had a multicultural class, but shared that the information learned in contemporary issues was more reflective of the needs of biracial children. They shared that the information taught in contemporary issues had a broader focus and included the types of issues, like biracialism, that could become more prevalent in the future. Likewise, every respondent, in some form or fashion, shared that they wished there were more courses available that addressed special populations or special issues for biracial children as well as other topics. One respondent shared that, “We discussed what it would be actually be like to
put yourself in the shoes of children [with special needs or circumstances], like being biracial.”

Participants were eager to share the areas where they needed additional training and information in order to work with biracial children. They did not appear hesitant when discussing other needs they had in becoming more culturally competent, especially in relationship to their shortcomings. Those areas ranged from better strategies, training and materials to more exposure to issues from other professionals. Individuals were given the opportunity to site multiple ideas, so more than one suggestion was shared by helping professionals. Table 3.6 provides an overview of the breakdown of the areas in which individuals felt they needed more training or information.

In the abundance of different ideas (45%, n=9) shared regarding more strategies, training, materials and skills, there were several thoughts about how to address current needs. For instance, several individuals stated that they wanted more useful experiences during internship and practicum, which would increase exposure to biracial children. One respondent shared the need for “research-specific curriculum to guide work with biracial children.” Others shared a need for more one-on-one interaction; more information on historical backgrounds of different races; information to help people who speak different languages, particularly assessment materials; materials about emerging issues and trends; and more training on biracial situations and possible problems so that there would be minimal misunderstandings during the helping process.

For those helping professionals who cited experience with children and families (40%, n=8), there was a strong desire to gain more information regarding basic
Table 3.6

Areas Where More Knowledge or Information Is Needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies, Trainings, Materials &amp; Skills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience with Children &amp; Families</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to the Environment &amp; Contemporary Issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure via Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know What Would be Helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relationship building and understanding. These individuals shared that opportunities to interact with biracial children and families were often limited because there are so few families in their community. One respondent shared discomfort with how to broach the subject of biracial heritage with a biracial child sharing, “[sometimes I am] so sensitive to not making it an issue that I don’t say anything and I worry about that. There is still the prevailing attitude or philosophy that there is nothing wrong with biracial identity/background, so don’t mention it. Don’t regret it. However, is this a healthy attitude? I never hear anyone referred to specifically as Muslim [do you know what I mean?].”

Thirty percent (n=6) of respondents shared a request for more exposure to the environment of their biracial clients and contemporary issues. One respondent shared that he/she would like a more personal accounting of the issues, perhaps by “reading their writings regarding their own experiences.” Another respondent shared his/her “need to be in the shoes of someone else who really understands it. [There is a] need to be there and have the bond. I feel a lot of the time I know one side, but you cannot relate to their other emotions, like joy or pain. [Helpers] need to see where they come from and the neighborhoods they live in. Training helps but it is not the end all. It is more important to experience their lives. I would have preferred more experiences with kids as a form of training.” Still another respondent shared that he/she “would like interactions with parents of biracial children.”

Of the two people (10%) who shared that they would be interested in more education from related professionals, they stated they would like more information about
the strategies that others have used and found beneficial. One individual shared, “Knowing what strategies to use would have helped and been so beneficial for me as I start to work with biracial children myself.” Curiously, only one person shared, “that I did not know what I needed more information about because I felt I had a relatively solid understanding of biracial children and what I needed to do.”

Attitudes Regarding Working with Biracial Children.

In this next series of questions, helping professionals were asked to reflect on a variety of different feelings and interactions when working with biracial children. Questions ranged from individual comfort to the types of clients one found more ease or greater difficulty working with and understanding. When rating individual comfort with biracial children, 95% (n=19) of the respondents shared an ease of relationship, with 50% (n=10) very comfortable and 45% (n=9) comfortable. Overall, individuals overall stated that they felt very confident in their working relationships and interactions with biracial children as well as their families. Comments included, “I love them for who they are…the only reason I did not give it a 5 was because I have not worked with all kinds of biracial children and it would be impossible [unfair] for me to rate, not knowing what their issues might be and what mine might be working with them.” Another respondent shared, “The way we work with children is not geared toward what they are, it is more toward who they can become and what they are learning.” Still another person stated, “People are people [and they] all have the same basic need and that is respect. Respect for one another is the element of caring work and can overcome barriers. You can work
through anything if you are open to issues.” And finally, one respondent shared, “I don’t see the child as biracial, just a child in pain.”

Having rated individual comfort, respondents were then asked to probe their own understandings and beliefs about biracial children. In rating one’s understanding of biracial clients’ holidays, religious observances, and other celebrations, a large number of respondents (40%, n=8) shared that they felt celebrations were for the most part Christian in orientation and since this was similar to what they practiced, they were not uncomfortable. For instance, one respondent stated, “What I have discovered is that a lot of celebrations are very similar to what I celebrate [Christian]. However I have been taught some interesting things in the differences.” Another person stated, “What they celebrate is similar to mine, on the outside anyway. This has not come up much and is not a problem.” Still another shared, “Most children are the same and have a basis of Christian faith somehow.” And finally a respondent stated, “Christmas is Christmas just with a different face be it Kwanzaa, Hannakuh or Christian.”

Twenty-five percent (n=5) of the respondents shared that the most notable difference to them was at Christmas during the celebrations of Kwanzaa and Ramadan. Respondents shared that these celebrations were unfamiliar to them and they were not sure about appropriate questions to ask although they were quite curious about the rituals and history. One respondent shared, “I have learned a lot [about the two] from friends and co-workers and that has helped me in the work that I do . . . I will admit I have somewhat of a prejudice regarding Kwanzaa, but I think I do not fully understand. I feel
like it is a created holiday. I really don’t know enough about it to understand or fully appreciate it.”

Another respondent stated, “Some knowledge, I know less about Hispanic holidays, but I have learned through clients more about fiestas and celebrations.” Also, “There are distinct differences in some cultures for certain holidays, like Kwanzaa. I understand some holidays are not acknowledged and celebrated because they are taboo. I celebrate Kwanzaa.”

Other responses (20%, n=4) acknowledge particularly important holidays like Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Black History Month and other individuals’ birthdays. Individuals shared that these celebrations were fairly universal in our culture and their comfort level was “good” regarding the celebrations and purposes for such. One respondent shared, “I have noticed that for birthdays there is a difference, they don’t go all out. I am not used to that since birthdays are a big, all day occurrence in my family. I do notice that they have large family gatherings, but not so much around holidays. Maybe because they celebrate different holidays.”

Some individuals (15%, n=3) cited a difference in the levels of spirituality, feeling that their clients had an increased attention to and connection with their faith. Biracial families were also noticed to be different in the type of family support and interactions they had during these specific holidays. One person shared that they have learned from their biracial children that the “biggest concern is figuring out whom they are going to spend time with. Some kids are Christian and Muslim and are in broken homes.”
I don’t know if any [of our] Jewish kids have problems with this. It is also a matter of whom they are with during the celebration time and whether there is acceptance by other family members of the other family. This affects the child a lot.” Another stated, “Some students hate the holidays. It is a reminder that no one is at home or at least together. It is two weeks off with nothing to do and no one around. Then when the holiday arrives, it may be a far cry from what it is supposed to be like. Being alone on Christmas for half a day is not uncommon for some of these kids.”

Interestingly, 60% (n=12) of individuals stated they were comfortable (n=4) or had no opinion (n=8) about how often they themselves participated in particular cultural events in the community of biracial families. These individuals shared that when an opportunity arose they were eager to learn and took the chance to become acquainted with new customs, food, music and people. One person stated, “I attend almost of all of the functions here and the lessening of the culture shock factor when attending festivals has helped a lot.” A second respondent shared, “I make it a point to involve myself in all the festivals I can. Jewish, Vietnamese and African. Knowing helps me know my students.” Another shared that cultural exposure came “through our church -- it offers more diversity and participation with other churches to experience cultural events and differences.” Still another shared, “Everything I attend is multicultural. My husband is the minister of a multicultural/biracial church.”

On the other end of the continuum, 40% (n=8) stated they were uncomfortable. Several professionals cited barriers such as language and the fear that they would be perceived as an “outsider” should they try to participate in events. This was interesting to
Reactions in the Field

note in light of the previously reported information that did not reflect the same type of discomfort in the professional/client relationship. One participant shared, “I try not to cross that boundary because I have to avoid getting more into their lives beyond our professional relationship.” Another shared, “it depends on when, and if I am invited.” Lastly, one stated, “I don’t participate in this community in an effort not to run into clients outside work. Obeying boundaries is an ethical bind and I realize it has its shortcomings.”

Respondents were asked to think about the biracial child on an even more personal level when they reflected on the clients’ physical characteristics. Twenty-five percent (n=5) of respondents shared that they either always or often inquired about the racial background of clients regardless of racial influences like speech, dress or appearances with an interesting split from other responses. One respondent shared, “I do all profiles on new students so I get them in my head before I meet them to have something to talk with them about. I may not always recall the name, but I try to be personable.” Another stated, “I utilize any opportunity to ask questions. Clients enjoy talking about their culture.” One other stated, “It is one of the first questions on my assessment. I am not assuming anything. You are not what other people think.”

Forty percent of respondents (n=8) stated that they rarely or never inquired, while 35% (n=7) were at a crossroads stating that they sometimes inquired about the racial background of the child. Based on statements, feelings appeared to be mixed regarding why there was such difference in directly broaching the issue of racial background. Several individuals shared that they did not want to be perceived as showing prejudice,
while still others shared that they did not want to appear to be insensitive if they did not ask. Still others stated they would wait to see if there was an evident accent in the way a person talks, parent request or reaction and also if there was an obvious need to ask. When asked to clarify by what one meant by "obvious," the most common reply was in reflection to physical appearances. A couple of the respondents shared that they did not want to appear to be discriminatory or to have prejudice either way.

Participants displayed little variability in the types of biracial children with whom they had contact or perceived difficulty working with in their particular setting. Those groups selected ranged from Hispanic/Asian to no groups that would prove challenging. Individuals were given the opportunity to site multiple groups so more than one category was selected by helping professionals. Table 3.7 provides an overview of the breakdown of the groups ranked by helping professionals as least understood or more difficult when providing support.

Sixty-five percent (n=13) of respondents shared they had the most difficulty working with or the least understanding of Hispanic-Asian biracial children. Individuals shared a variety of reasons for this choice ranging from not having much experience, knowing nothing about either group, lack of interaction and exposure, and the polarity of differences between the two groups. One individual cited “language barriers.” Another confirmed the same thought and added, “I also feel it makes a difference when you look at whether they were American-born Hispanic or Asian.”
Table 3.7

Of the Sorts of Biracial Children Who Come to Your School/Community Center, Which Do You Think You Understand the Least Well and Have (Or Would Have) the Most Difficulty Working With?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biracial Groups</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Asian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Asian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of this group, 35% (n=7) believed that Black-Asian would be a difficult population group to work with due to the difference in language and the perceived difference with intermingling of two distinct cultures. One person stated that they selected this group because of “the extreme differences. I think they [both groups] more strongly adhere to culture and discipline and I have seen these two cultures clash because of it.” Another person cited this group because, “it is furthest from my own background or culture.” The Black-Hispanic biracial child was selected 15% (n=3) of the time professionals selecting this type stated they wished they knew more because it is a growing group in their community. One person shared discomfort, stating, “I have never worked with any of these [kinds of biracial children]. I have no professional or personal exposure.”

A very small portion noted Asian-White (10%, n=2) Hispanic-White (5%, n=1) and Black-White (5%, n=1). The responses reflected that the greater the combination of cultural differences the more uncomfortable individuals were with the type of biracial child they would consider working with in their setting. These groups were cited as “less different” and the comfort with the groups was greater as a result.

Contrasting this group, the same question was posed with individuals considering the group they had the least difficulty working with or the best understanding of. A near majority selected Black-White biracial children (85%, n=17) in response to the question. Participants shared that they felt most comfortable with this group because it is the most common biracial group and there is rarely a language difference. Several respondents also stated that since they shared racial background on side or another, this lessened
concern for the possibility of difficulties as well. One respondent summed these comments up by saying, “I have the most knowledge and have worked professionally with several children like this. I also have a lot of friends and family who are these [kinds of biracial] people.” It is interesting to note that a couple of respondents made reference to the evolving and changing population demographics, recognizing specifically the growing Hispanic population.

Twenty-five percent (n=5) of the respondents shared that they were most comfortable with Hispanic-White biracial children. Those selecting this group shared similar, if not identical reasons, as those who selected the Black/White biracial child. Familiarity, shared culture and more professional experience were noted as the most influential reasons. Hispanic-Asian was selected by 5% (n=1) of the respondents as was Asian-White (5%, n=1) since the respondents had personal experience and interaction with these groups.

Responses also depicted a marked level of comfort when working with the parents of biracial children with 80% (n=16) of the respondents citing moderate to high comfort levels. Some noted the increasing infrequency for a child to have the same race parents, as well as the lessening likelihood to have interactions with parents. More than one individual shared that the more open one is to diverse families, the more easily the family accepts the support being offered. One respondent said, “Children are children and there are some parents who are easier to work with. I have to remember that the parents are the one who affect change. The more challenging it is, the more I like it. Hard to say if it is difficult to work with biracial children’s parents specifically because I try to put myself in
their shoes as a parent and understand that any parent could be difficult to work with when there is a concern with a child.” Another cited, “I think I am sensitive to both parents and the strong need to be comfortable with the child and to support them. I don’t have personal issues with the choices they have made. I can’t change that and don’t want to.” Another respondent reflected on the need to build relationships with parents in order to work effectively with the child. This respondent said, “The most important thing is to develop trust. Sometimes that requires going the extra mile. [For example] The most difficult issue is for me to understand language. If a student or parent does not speak English, then I will get a translator. That builds the trust.”

The remaining 20% (n=4) expressed mild discomfort or mixed reactions to working with parents of biracial children. Most of these individuals gave responses that reflected that some parents appear to have an "agenda" or are suspicious of the services provided. There is also difficulty in the amount of time it takes to develop a relationship to overcome these feelings when services are time-limited. One person shared, “I do have a level of anxiety around parents. I think I sense their anxious tone and they sense mine. I think that through the body language it is conveyed. Some of these parents have had such negative experiences. I have found many parents are careful listeners and catch inappropriate statements really quickly. Sometimes they can be too sensitive and place a wall around themselves, trying to be careful and cautious.” Another stated, “If [there is] trouble it has a different kind of meaning with a child or parent [who is biracial]. I don’t want to be the person who is ‘jumping their case’ about an interracial marriage or relationship.” Lastly, one respondent shared how personal own discomfort becomes a
problem in the helping relationship by stating, “I become the rescuer because I don’t know what it is like to have a biracial child. I don’t know those struggles. For the large part, parents [I have worked with] are separated, have never lived together and have never considered themselves a family. Parents degrade one another for their behavior or flaws. Sometimes they make racial slurs or comments in front of the child. I have to educate them on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. But, then I feel bad for not being a parent or a parent of a biracial child.”

Responses from 70% (n=14) of the individuals showed that their own racial background and experiences affected their work with biracial children. The majority of individuals (55%, n=11) cited specifics: one's own age, monoracialism, and sometimes biracialism were seen as hindrances to the relationship. One respondent shared, “I often feel I have to prove that I love these kids no matter what the race/age. I wish who I am and where I come from was not such a hindrance to relationships and potential relationships…I am so monoracial!! I wish in a way I weren’t working so hard! I find I love learning about their backgrounds to compensate for mine and we spend an equal amount of time learning from each other.” Another respondent shared, “Sometimes being white can be a detriment . . . I was viewed as the ‘white girl’ sometimes and I had to win them over. Prejudices exist in every group and culture. I just tried to educate them about me and not let it affect our relationship so much as it was effecting change.” Yet another respondent shared, “I had always thought our backgrounds were equal but separate, and I have learned that people don’t agree. I have really had to work on that.
Not everyone wants the support even from me, another biracial person. I can see face-to-face some of their problems with cultural views but there is still a buffer around them.”

Other respondents (35%, n= 7) stated that they did not have an issue with racism; instead they found other issues like poverty to have more of an impact. One respondent shared that, “[the other stuff is] not really an issue, but by no means do I feel I am better. I tell kids I was raised in a family where we struggled financially and I know what that is like. I appreciate my background because it has helped me be the person I am today. I wouldn’t change it. I benefited from the struggle and because it was tough at home I know what one can make out of life. Race is not a factor. Poverty and non-support are more something we have in common.” Representing those who did not have racial issues, one person shared, “I am very comfortable with people of color. We are all people of color, you know? I sense that people see me as an ally and a person who will be their advocate. Especially my kids. They know when people will give them the benefit of the doubt and not judge them.” Still another person stated, “Regardless, I don’t talk down to any person. I start where they are and gradually introduce expectations. I present myself as the ‘helping guy’ to show others.”

The rest of those questioned (15%, n=3) shared that their family background was full of stereotypes or misconceived notions that conflicted with their work experiences. They shared that this had at times made it hard when developing a relationship because of the helper’s discomfort with his/her identity based and faulty information from their pasts. One respondent shared, “I am guarded at times because I am an ‘old white guy’. I hope that my personality helps them overcome problems. I think it does.” Another
respondent shared, “I feel guilty because I am representative of the white male culture. I am perceived as a do-gooder and that concerns me. Sometimes I try harder, but I make it worse. I come across as a rescuer because I feel guilty for things that are not my fault. When I am genuine and can be myself, not acting out of guilt, embarrassment or privilege, it is better. I want to help children see what is available to them and that they do have a worth, a value and a talent.”

All respondents surveyed felt that biracial children, versus monoracial children, would have different needs regarding their passage through puberty. Individuals supplied a wealth of responses to this question as they felt there were significant differences to consider in addressing the issue. Those difficulties selected ranged from issues in society to developmental issues. All individuals were given the opportunity to site multiple concerns or issues, therefore numerous responses were given by helping professionals. Table 3.8 below provides an overview of these perceived issues for biracial children.

One-hundred percent (n=20) of respondents shared societal differences among families, parents, peers and others in the world are different for biracial children. Individuals shared a variety of reasons for this choice in distinct categories of sexuality, dating, and friendships; appearances; social identity; forced choices from society and acceptance by others, family members, parents and friends. One respondent shared, “Dating is a huge issue because it isn’t just kids. Parents get involved and in choosing up sides. Black/White is the big one because white families are not accepting like the other groups. In general, I see division of groups.” Another shared, “Biracial children seem to have a devastated sense of self-esteem, ‘making meaning’ or gender differences during
puberty... Biracial children have to cope with ‘jump race dating’ more.” Also, one shared, “I see some of the African American students being the ‘fad or trend setters’ for other students. Looks and appearances are very important at this age, what you wear, your jewelry, etc... I guess the biggest issue would be social identity. They feel it is important to lock that in first... they seem culturally lost.” Other respondents shared that children seem to be faced with several outside forces of racism regarding heritage and underlying stereotypes in the communities. Another respondent shared, “Adolescence is so different that being biracial and finding a peer group would be difficult to fit in. These children look different and have different beliefs, which makes adolescence all the more difficult. The big questions deal with identity, like who am I, where am I and where do I belong as they individuate from families and parents and different races.” Yet another stated, “Adolescence is such a hard time with body changes and when you already look so different it can be even more difficult. At this age, the features of a child are divided and categorized all the time. I don’t think this is fair because this a whole person, not piece and parts of one... clients try to make sense of it and fit in all the time. Specifically, there was a parent who was half Hispanic and half Caucasian and her children were equally Hispanic, Caucasian and African-American and she was very upset that she could not mark multiethnic or multiracial on forms we were using. Rather than choose, she declined identity choices on forms all together. This was devastating to her [because she wanted her children to be proud of who they were]. Her response was ‘I cannot deny who my children are. I can’t tell them
Table 3.8

Biracial Children’s Needs Versus Monoracial Children’s Needs Regarding Their Passage Through Puberty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, Economics, and Racism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem, Values and Morals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Developmental Needs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Developmental Needs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to deny.’ The children were also confused and upset because they felt strongly that what their mother had taught them about identity and pride for this was important.”

Twenty-five percent (n=5) of respondents shared that power differences among classes, economics and existing racism in the school or centers were also important to biracial children during puberty. One respondent shared, “I think the average student is supported and given opportunities that the biracial child is not given.” Another shared, “Racism is still prevalent in the area, there are aggravated circumstances here. Children are still open to racial slurs, derogatory comments. This can be really hard because the child is trying to figure out who they are and what it is about and then someone comes along and tears them down. And this makes the struggle even harder.” Another respondent stated, “Economics and a lack of funds to have what the other children have is a problem. A single mother living in the housing community is not going to have the same resources and abilities as a middle class family with two parents . . . all these things have power in common: sex, money, and status. It is all about power.”

The difference in self-esteem, values and morals was cited by 20% (n=4) of respondents. One respondent shared that, “They have an emotional struggle because they are different. This is often seen as a weakness, not a strength.” Another shared, “There is a rejection of social values and family issues that is very different, with grandparents and extended family for one. The family unit has changed so much and so many things are missing.”

Finally for 10% each (n=2 each), there was disagreement between the differences in developmental issues since there was a split with one half of this group categorizing it
as different and the other half feeling there is no difference. One respondent shared, “Biracial children carry other issues associated with who they are. Sexuality is a big issue, we have some concerns with children who are exploring gay/lesbian lifestyles and who are biracial. It makes it so much harder to get through.” Another respondent shared, “I think biracial children have much different needs. They do not feel as well connected to peers and there is rejection because they don’t belong to any group.” On the other hand, a respondent stated, “Biracial children have the same needs because of biracial issues . . . the biggest issue is their identity because society has a view of race that is quite different than what they experience in their family.” These differences were held together by a common thread of concern, regardless of the respondent’s viewpoint.

*Expectations for the Future.*

At the end of the interview process, individuals were invited to consider the future of their community and how the setting they are currently a part of may or may not be affected by the population changes occurring there. Respondents were very eager to talk about the future and how they felt population changes might influence the work they do and the people they do that work with in their particular settings. Reactions were strong as respondents were asked to focus on the trends one might expect to see in the community within the next ten years. The responses ranged from more acceptance and an increase in the population to more community opportunities for interaction and training. All individuals were given the opportunity to share as many thoughts as they felt necessary, therefore numerous responses were given by helping professionals. Table 3.9 provides an overview of the trends professionals felt would occur.
Table 3.9
In the Next Ten Years, What Trends Do You See in the Your Community Regarding the Prevalence of Biracial Children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance &amp; Increased Population</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Factors (Poverty, Substance-Addicted Youth, Illegal Citizens, Fewer 2-parent families)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Acceptance or Slower Rates of Acceptance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Community Opportunities for Interaction &amp; Training/Increase in Academic Areas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All respondents (100%, n=20) anticipated a greater level of acceptance of biracial people and an increase in the population. They felt the population would naturally increase because of the increase in interracial dating and marriages. One respondent shared, “Acceptance will be a trend. Interracial dating and marriages are increasing and there are so many variations of skin color now that it is hard to tell who is [biracial] and who isn’t.” Another shared that, “As these biracial children grow up, they will provide a better understanding for everyone because his or her experiences will be different. Kids become adults with powerful things to say.” Yet another shared, “I think that soon there will be an unidentifiable race of children…there will no longer be a need to choose. People are not as surprised as they used to be when a mixed child comes into the classroom.”

Participants noted that this dating trend was already on the increase in the schools and in the community. A respondent stated, “There are more Caucasian fathers and different race mothers. Monoracial boys are dating biracial girls. There are also more Hispanic families [who are] biracial moving into the community.” Another shared, “There will continue to be more biracial children in the community with White mothers without fathers present.”

Other responses 25% (n=5) tapered off sharply, but the idea that remained strong was that other issues like poverty, substance addicted youth, numbers of illegal citizens, and fewer two-parent families would become more of an issue than the fact that there were biracial children. One respondent shared, “Problems of children who are substance addicted continue to increase. So many kids are using now to cope with problems. Even
little kids are addicted. I am especially aware of the junior high students using Oxycontin. The housing issue continues to concern me for biracial children because a lot of those families are illegal.” Several individuals were in agreement that the issue of low socioeconomic status would start to take precedent over other issues. Most individuals believed that race would still be important, just not as important as it currently is.

The professionals felt that acceptance would be evidenced by less violence in schools/centers and more responsibility taken by those in charge to curb or extinguish this behavior. An increase in the population was linked by many participants to an increase in understanding. One respondent summed this up by saying, “A concern is that kids are growing up in a violent society and are around more violence. They spend more time in schools and this is the majority of where they can get a positive message and I see schools taking more responsibility to do this.”

Despite a feeling that acceptance would increase, there were still a number of individuals (20%, n=4) who responded that there might be less acceptance or slower rates of acceptance for the evolving biracial population. Individuals cited examples in the community, from their agency or school in the past, where others were slow to accept change and work with the push forward to be proactive. For example, one respondent shared, “Culture is lagging behind the changing times. I think we still have racial distinctions here in the housing community with ‘black court’ and ‘white court.’ That is so antiquated! I think the schools are growing and we are learning to mingle more and teachers are doing this more, but not enough.”
Individuals (15%, n=3) also remained hopeful for future development when the population change would result in more opportunities for interaction or training for helping professionals. Of particular interest was the suggestion of availability of foreign language training for younger children. This was cited as important because so many young children currently act as “translators” for the family and are relied upon to communicate between the families and the school/center. One individual cited the “need for and desire for foreign language in elementary schools” while another shared a desire for, “increased academic areas, especially graduation rates.”

Connected to the question regarding trends in the next ten years, respondents were asked to consider the levels of possible conflict that may or may not occur in the setting that they work within. Sixty percent (n= 12) of individuals stated that they expected less conflict in the future at their school or center. One respondent shared, “The more accustomed you are the more of a non-issue it becomes.” Another stated, “I think the days of mine [of conflict and racial unrest] are gone. The media and the education system do a better job of teaching us. I think folks with hang-ups and really ugly attitudes are dying out and the real hatred has diminished because so many families are now affected by this.” Another echoed this thought, saying, “Some [people] are more conflicted because they have old-fashioned beliefs and sometimes appear hypocritical in their beliefs and their practices, but maybe that is how they are ‘working it out.’ I remain optimistic.”

Thirty percent of respondents (n=6) shared that there would be more conflict, because there are still some “pockets” of the region, particularly the more rural areas,
where biracial relationships are taboo. For these individuals, the existence and acceptance of biracial children would still be looked upon as unacceptable in the school and communities. One respondent shared, “Yes it would continue to be a problem because the attitude of nonacceptance from other students spills over into schools.” Another shared, “[There is] the possibility for it to be worse. Ideally it would be great if it didn’t make a difference. I hope that we can realize the issues and relate better in the future.” Yet another shared, “The more we see, the more it comes out in conflict. Even from the bad there is good. I think there will always be conflict.”

A very small portion (10%, n=2) stated they did not feel that any conflict through change, one way or another, would arise because so many people do not get involved in or express connection to what they are fearful of or do not understand. One of the respondents shared, “[I am] not sure if there will be more or less conflict. Conflict already exists regardless of race. I feel conflict occurs when other things go wrong; some people have biases from one race to another. Something seems to precede it and the biracial issue may be secondary.”

Respondents expressed strong feelings when considering how each individual’s facility or center might respond in the face of conflict. Some respondents felt the school or mental health center would improve services (45%, n=9), but that this would depend on the attitude, either negative or positive, of the facility (45%, n=9). Respondents who foresaw improved services said they felt there would be more opportunities for staff involvement, training and education, increased use of translators, and nontraditional services utilized as creative ways to extend support to families in the community.
Respondents also reported that the facility’s attitude would come from varied sources, such as administrative change and professional change. Respondents shared that professionals and the administration would need to adopt new attitudes that would be more adaptive, proactive, open and supportive. It was strongly stated, by one respondent in particular, that this “needed to be a team effort and not just something that started on the frontlines with support staff.” Another respondent stated, “If those in power were more receptive to and supportive of creative services that would accommodate families, better relationships would result with biracial children.”

Still another portion of respondents (25%, n=5) felt that their facility would remain “clueless” and that only surface change would result at their site. One respondent stated, “Cluelessness. Whether or not they recognize it is one thing, it is more a matter of whether or not they will spend money on it [training].” Another shared, “It depends on what the event is for the outcome. I am afraid the agency wouldn’t do a good job handling it.” Yet another shared, “I am concerned that it will be a response that is ‘on paper.’ It may be in the form of recruitment of different individuals but it won’t happen on the front line, just management.”

Finally, given expected changes in the number of biracial children in the community, individuals were asked what they felt they as professionals could do to be more prepared for the future. This was a difficult question for individuals and caused much pause as careful consideration was given before responding. Several individuals actually commented on what a difficult, but important, question this was. A couple of the
respondents became a bit emotional as they stated they were somewhat at a loss as how to answer this question and asked for time to consider their answer.

The overwhelming majority of individuals (80%, n=16) expressed ideas reflecting a need for increased diversity training opportunities. This included parent programs, open houses, classes, groups and workshops. They also stated that they would like to see an increase in books, journal articles and videos in publication and at their site.

A segment of respondents (25%, n=5) stated that they would like more education through self-exposure and immersion in the various communities. Several respondents cited that not being known in the community or having a relationship in neighborhoods was a hindrance to helping relationships. The use of translators was cited as a way to alleviate this stressor for both clients and helpers. But this was cited as not being enough of a help to families. In fact one respondent shared, “We have teachers who won’t go into some of the neighborhoods where children live!” Another respondent shared the need for helping professionals to “be a part of the world, open your mind. Go into the communities and really find out what going back to the basics is and where the help is needed.”

Twenty percent (n=4) of respondents also cited the need for an improved understanding of their administrator’s expectations. Individuals shared that the boundaries were so vague that they were not sure what their supervisors wanted and what they needed to do in order to strengthen services. One respondent shared, “We need clarity about what we are expected to do. Where does the job end or begin? We can’t be everything to everyone, we aren’t paid enough and some of it is simply not our job. I
think we shouldn’t leave it up to administrators to define our jobs, we should have some say, but we should also have more support.” Another stated a similar desire for “increased expectations for helping professionals.” A few individuals commented on how “easy” it was to get a degree and practice in the field because there were not standards in place that would serve to regulate those practicing.

Another 20% (n=4) of respondents rallied in favor of becoming active at work to improve the environment. Individuals felt that it was the responsibility of the professional to request and acquire on-the-job training, spread the message of change, ask questions and develop programs. Several shared an opinion that change would not occur within facilities if there were not a few committed and courageous people who were willing to stand up and ask for change. One respondent stated, “[It is one’s responsibility to] educate yourself so you know what you are dealing with and respond accordingly.” Another stated, “[We need to] get involved in the community and become more aware of what is out there (For example, support groups). [We need to] find out what is working and what is not.” One other respondent stated, “We need to empower and communicate with others to spread a message of helpfulness.”

Summary

In summary, several themes emerged from the responses provided by participants. From the demographics portion of the interview, we learned that 80% (n=14) of participants hold a master’s degree or higher in their respective helping profession. Also, all school counselors (n=8) were licensed, all social workers (n=7) were certified and 90% of counselors/therapists (n=4) were licensed or certified.
Individual counseling (90%, n=18) was the most frequently used practice or intervention used with any child with group counseling following closely at 85% (n=17). The least often selected practice for providing support to clients in general was play therapy having been selected only 50% (n=10) of the time. When asked to extend this question to the customary practice when working with biracial children, professionals again selected individual counseling 90% (n=18) of the time with group counseling following at a close second having been selected 75% (n=15) of the time. Similarly, the form of customary practice selected the least often with biracial children was play therapy, cited only 50% (n=10) of the time.

The average number of years for helping professionals working with biracial children was 9.35 with a range of 1 to 25 years. The average number of years of experience was 9.65 years for helping professionals practicing overall. There was variability across participants for the number of biracial children served, ranging from 40 or less to 100 or more.

Seventy-five percent (n=15) of participants shared that client racial status had no impact on the manner in which they prepared to work with an individual. Likewise, 55% (n=11) of participants shared that racial status made no difference in first session preparation. When asked what the most important things one needed to do in order to be successful with a biracial client were, using basic skills was the unanimous choice for all professionals.

Health professionals cited issues with peers or prejudice 50% (n=10) of the time as the most difficult issue when working with biracial children. The second most
commonly cited difficulty was acceptance and support of parents and families cited 40% (n=8) of the time. In light of these difficulties, 75% (n=15) of participants stated that they sought consultation from other professionals. When asked to describe why consultation was necessary, 88% (n=15) stated it was so that they could gather more information about a particular group. Respondents also shared that their own life experiences or work experiences were relied upon 70% (n=14) of time in working with biracial children. Conversely, training and education were relied upon as a source of wisdom only 45% (n=9) of the time by professionals.

Ninety-five percent (n=19) of the respondents shared that the special training that had prepared them consisted of courses in their formal program of study. The second most frequent selection was reading articles, books, textbooks and news stories with 55% (n=11) of respondents citing these methods as helpful. In examining the information they felt they had not obtained, 45% (n=9) of respondents cited strategies, materials, trainings and skills as an area where they needed more knowledge. Experience with families and children was the second most frequently selected area (40%, n=8).

When reflecting on the type of relationship a helping professional had with biracial children, 95% (n=19) of participants stated that they felt at ease with their relationship. An additional, 40% (n=8) stated that they understood their biracial clients’ holidays, religious observances, and other celebrations. Furthermore, 60% (n=12) of respondents stated they were comfortable participating in cultural events in the community of biracial families.
When asked to reflect on whether or not they inquired about the racial backgrounds of their clients, 40% (n= 8) of helping professionals stated that they rarely or never asked their clients this question. Of those types of biracial children perceived as being difficult clients to work with, Hispanic / Asian was selected 65% (n=13) of the time. Eighty-five percent (n=17) cited Black / Caucasian as the least difficult type of client to work with. Overall, 80% (n=16) of respondents cited moderate to high comfort levels when working with parents of biracial children. When asked to examine their own racial background, 70% (n=14) stated that it did affect the work they did with biracial children.

All respondents shared that they felt biracial versus monoracial children had different needs regarding their passage through puberty. They stated that societal differences among families, parents, peers and others in the world were primary distinctions. Likewise, all respondents shared that they felt that racial acceptance and an increased population would be definite trends in the next ten years. When reflecting on how these changes may affect the environment professionals were working within, 60% (n=12) shared that they expected less conflict in the future in their work setting. Forty-five percent of respondents (n=9) shared that they felt there would be an improvement in services provided, while another 45% (n=9) shared that change at their agency would depend on the attitude of the facility. In the last question of the interview, respondents were asked what they felt professionals could do to be better prepared for future work. An overwhelming 80% (n=16) stated that there was a need for increased diversity
training opportunities. Individuals shared their various ideas about how this could occur for their particular work setting as well.
Chapter IV

Summary, Discussion, Future Implications

This chapter consists of a summary of the study’s scope and purpose with a brief review of the literature and research questions. Next, a discussion is included that highlights the major findings and implications in the study. This section also includes the limitations of the study and future research directions. Finally to wrap up the chapter, there is a section regarding future implications for counseling practice.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to gather information from helping professionals about how they prepare themselves to be culturally competent to provide counseling services for biracial children. Since no empirical study exists that addresses questions regarding practice with biracial children or adolescents, a thorough review of the literature is needed to search for themes in contemporary issues. This study is important to perform because of the lack of information and the need to advance training of future counselors in multicultural counseling competency. This study is an opportunity to gather fresh perspectives from helping professionals by learning from their insights. Questions are designed to learn more about knowledge, skills and attitudes of helping professionals regarding how they stay current, seek information, prepare, utilize resources and work with biracial adolescents and children. Other questions address individual’s ratings of comfort, levels of participation, and examination of growth areas.

As the multiracial population continues to grow, it is important to recognize that counseling professionals, human service providers, and educators will find themselves
working with members of the biracial population in increasing numbers (Synder 1996; US Census 1998). Accordingly, helping professionals need to assess readiness in providing effective and beneficial support to biracial clients. In order to become more effective helpers, professionals must spend time examining their knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding working with this specific population (Ponterotto & Benesch, 1988).

In this study, a thorough literature review was performed. The increasing diversity in the United States population only adds to the need to improve a variety of services for the future, especially counseling and support. Research continues to show a demand for all types of helping professionals, whether they are mental health counselors, school counselors or social workers, to increase and improve the assistance currently being provided (Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 1994; Faust, 1998; Gladding, 1996; Goodland, 1990; Hollis, 2000; Israelashvili, 1998). However, the literature also tells us that recognition of this need has been slow, even in the face of so many cultural changes (Lynch & Hansen, 1992). Little is known about the training related to the specific needs of helping professionals in providing culturally sensitive and competent care to the increasing demographic of biracial adolescents and children (Swartz-Kulstad & Martin, 1999).

In order to address these needs, it is necessary to begin at the basis of how professionals prepare through training programs. Students in training programs are now beginning to highlight their own desire to learn while struggling to work with biracial youth. The literature, shows that students struggle with assumptions and biases towards this population, deficiency in understanding of issues, and overall lack of preparation to
work with biracial adolescents and children (Dana, 1993; Herring, 1995; Robinson, 1993; Williams, 1999). Specifically, there appears to be a genuine lack of information regarding what helping professionals need to know and be competent to help biracial clients (Dana, 1993). Fundamental, basic knowledge is limited when it comes to counseling and working with biracial children. What counselors inevitably tell researchers is that they are not exposed to concepts and frameworks specific to biracial populations when providing support services (Herring, 1995; Williams, 1999). If it is available, there appears to be a lack of consistent training across counselor education programs regarding how one works through bias and stereotypes toward a particular population (Hollis, 2000). This lack of knowledge and preparation fosters a deficit for helping professionals who want to and eventually do begin to work with biracial children and adolescents (Dana, 1993; Herring, 1995). However, some professionals may be addressing these needs, but presently there is not enough in the literature to tell what has been done. What is unknown, but on the brink of discovery, is what helping professionals feel they need in order to prepare and provide support to biracial adolescents and children (Seabring, 1985). What helping professionals continue to share is their need to better prepare in a variety of ways including knowledge, skills and attitude with this population.

It is found that despite exposure and practice in counseling courses, the initial contact between new counselors and initial clients is often marked by situations where the helping professional did not feel prepared (Barker, 1990; Hughes & Baker, 1990; Moss-Kagel, Abramovitz & Sager, 1989). In fact, it is cited that working with a biracial
child could compound the nervousness and awkwardness accompanying the use of new skills and experiences (Swartz, 1998; Wardle, 1992; Wehrly, 1999). Barker (1990) and Sue (1991) cite that working with biracial children and adolescents would require more than just what textbooks teach. It requires an understanding of the client, an awareness of cognitive differences, and an ability to apply information that fit with that person’s developmental level. Self-awareness for the helping professional is also frequently cited as a critical first step for effective and culturally competent counseling (Hagedon & Hayes, 2000; Kottman, 1990; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). The practice of counseling in the future is underscored by the acknowledgement that counselors will definitely be working with adolescents and children who have different cultural backgrounds than their own (Coleman, 1995; Erdman & Lampe, 1996; Pedersen, 1991). Therefore, an exploration about practitioner’s knowledge, attitudes, and skills pertaining to counseling biracial children is important in order to advance the work of future counselors.

The purpose of this study is to gather feedback regarding knowledge, skills and attitudes when working with biracial children and adolescents across helping professionals. This study is designed to extend existing research about multicultural competency training. This is accomplished by gathering useful baseline data regarding reactions in the field from various helping professionals. The following specific research questions are addressed:

1. How do helping professionals describe their own knowledge and skills in working with biracial children?

2. How do helping professionals describe their attitudes towards working with
3. How do helping professionals describe their expectations for changes in demand for services to biracial children?

In performing this study, twenty voluntary helping professionals are recruited from community centers and middle schools with high populations of biracial youth. Individuals complete face-to-face, audiotaped interviews with the researcher. The helping professionals in this study are mental health counselors, school counselors or social workers. Data is collected in a private area within the school or community center where participants work. All of the interviews are complete, valid and useful for analysis in this study. All twenty participants are consensual having completed the entire interview process. Participants are asked questions from three sections that refer to knowledge, skills and attitudes when working with biracial adolescents. Interviews take an average one and a half hours to complete per each participant.

Overall, almost all helping professionals feel they need more training. Almost half the respondent’s share that they want more strategies, training, materials and skills while another half state that they want more experience with biracial children and families. For those individuals who share that they need more strategies, training, materials and skills, the emphasis seems to be with their lack of experience, in practicum or internship.

Individuals share that although during training there are opportunities to interact with other professionals there are no interactions with those who have expertise working with biracial adolescents. Also, although it is fairly standard practice during one’s
internship to complete hours of training in group therapy, participants share the lack of group experiences with biracial children. During practicum and internship placement there is also the lack of specific curriculum materials, books, and language specific materials for participants. Participants cite the need for more courses in training programs as well as supplementary trainings to help individual stay current with trends and population differences. Regardless of the helping profession, participants state that training in these ways is rarely available during their learning process.

Notably, the other half of individuals in the study cite a need for time to work with biracial children on a one-on-one basis. Due to a number of factors, like limited population, resistance from the child and family, language barriers and limited resources, the time spent with biracial children is cited as scarce. However, in order to do this, professionals share that they need more practical, contemporary information on relating to biracial children. Interestingly enough they also share the need for better understanding of sociopolitical experiences like poverty, domestic violence, family structure, teen pregnancy, and self-esteem which are not specific to biracial children per se. Participants discuss how they are not prepared to work with ‘real issues’ as much as they need to with families and children. Participants feel that this could be improved upon by more exposure by visiting or immersion in the environment of biracial children in order to gain insight and empathy, rather than just relying on a textbook description.

Over half of the respondents share that they feel their own racial background works against them at times often becoming a hindrance because students feel they cannot relate well to their need and concerns. Others cited knowing ‘who they are and
where they come’ from gives them a sense of pride and a way to connect with youth, based on their own experiences of ‘having been there’ or overcoming obstacles. Still other participants comment on the fact that they feel more comfortable if one of the biracial parents are Caucasian since they are Caucasian, allowing them to be at least halfway knowledgeable of the racial experience.

During the questions addressing skills and expectations, helping professionals provide valuable insights into the trends for the future regarding the issues of biracial children and adolescents. Unanimously, respondents agree that there will be greater acceptance and an increase in the population. In fact, some respondents share the hope that more opportunities for interaction and training will occur. They feel the change in the population will be unavoidable and undeniable for the community. However issues like poverty, substance addiction, illegal citizens and fewer two-parent families will become more of an issue than the existence or number of biracial youth.

Discussion

The discussion of this chapter focuses on major findings from the study along with a section regarding limitations of the research. The discussion addresses the basis of problems and issues for biracial adolescents, factors most important when working with biracial adolescents and children, levels of helper’s comfort or discomfort toward biracial adolescents and children, and finally helping professional’s future expectations for biracial adolescents and children.
Basis of problems and issues for biracial adolescents and children

One of the areas of interest to the researcher is whether or not the participants would cite difficult issues or problems from their perspective or if the problems or worries would center on the needs of the biracial adolescents. It is expected that there could be differences based on various factors like experience in the field or experiences with this particular population.

The issues of comfort with identity from the standpoint of the helper or the client are most important. Many feel comfort with identity cannot occur if clients are not ready to work through their own issues. They feel that regardless of how well trained or prepared the helper may be, clients would need to want to change situations for themselves. Comfort with their own racial identity was also problematic. Participants cite a lack of credibility because they are not biracial. They share a worry that they are not viewed as having authority to even talk about issues of identity and race since they do not share experiences that would gain them standing with the client. Respondents share that at times this is counterproductive because they are not sure how to deal with their internal identity confusion and guilt.

In response to questions of identity comfort, it is interesting to note participants have an overwhelmingly strong urge for increased understanding of issues, both with the child and within society. One individual shares that the client’s confusion about identity makes the process a struggle because “they are not aware of how it is working against them in their functioning or during the helping process.” In this example, what is being eluded to is the fact that when resisting and struggling with one’s identity, the child is
becoming more ensnarled in identity confusion. Instead of working to accept one’s identity, the adolescent is becoming even more confused with who they are. In the literature, the quest for identity has been found to have significant cultural influence and importance because of the role it plays in delineating group membership to facilitate a sense of belonging (Hatcher, 1987; Herring, 1995). Respondents share their own frustration with connecting with these children and adolescents and offering a sense of understanding and support. They feel that the children and adolescents they work with are blind to their own issues, and unaware of how they are contributing to the difficulties of their blended racial identity. They feel that biracial children are bombarded with differing viewpoints and messages from family and friends and feel overwhelmed. Research notes that the successes that biracial adolescents experience in blended racial backgrounds, from home and from society, are critical in development (Georgas & Kalantiz-Azizi, 1992; Hatcher, 1987; Wehrly, 1993). The respondents also share that biracial adolescents feel they are accepted and have a group to belong to makes a difference in addressing the severity of problems.

Final comments from individuals include thoughts about societal changes, which increases difficulty for helping professionals in staying informed. Several share that rapid development in the community, particularly the schools, makes it more challenging to stay abreast of concerns that children had. Still others share they are simply not prepared or are not offered avenues by their current job to gain information. This comes from either a lack of resources and funding at the employment site or a lack of support
for staff development. Participants share frustration throughout the interview for the lack of training and support to work with biracial children and adolescents.

The lack of resources and lack of support either financial or emotionally can be prevalent at any job site (Arredondo, 1994; Wood & Mallinckrodt 1990). This shortage of resources may be specific to lean budgets, administrators with different research interests, and community influence. Training in turn is often dictated by these factors and may be snubbed from future growth because of the lack of interest or energy for learning (Weinrach & Thomas, 1996). This can be addressed by helping professionals becoming more proactive in the training needs they have and by advocating to get their needs met.

However, the majority of individuals cite that issues of prejudice from parents, peers and families cause more difficulty than any other factor. Participants share that parents appear angry and not willing to trust support from others, particularly those in the helping profession. When offering support, it is not the biracial child, but often the parents or family who are more resistant or guarded. Helpers share that family members often rely on negative past experiences with similar social service agencies or helping professionals. Often the discords in adult relationships carry over into the parenting of the biracial child, resulting in the children being caught in the middle of the parents’ conflictual relationship. The conflict, in turn, adds to the difficulty of children’s sense of identity.

The extended family is also cited as problematic because they are at times unwilling to relinquish prejudice or acknowledge the child’s complete racial background. Helpers feel that grandparents and other relatives are often reliable for exercising bias or
contributing to arguments and hostility in the family regarding the biracial child. They believe that how the child is treated by the other individuals in his or her life is an indicator of the level of acceptance and understanding in the family. Research confirms that a family’s level of differentiation and racial satisfaction determines the child or adolescent’s level of self-confidence, which later reflects the individual’s level of adjustment (Bowen, 1978; Hess, 1995; Noller, 1994; Norton, 1983; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). In other words, if there is discord in the child’s family because of an interracial relationship this will impact the way the child feels about himself or herself. Based on the feedback from the participants the members of one’s family contributes to the child’s feeling good about who they are and where they come from significantly. Furthermore, if there is a lack of acceptance at home then a sense of self-esteem may be undermined as biracial children and adolescents start to develop relationships outside the home.

The literature, support the impact of the negative response and reaction in biracial families, and multiple and conflicted value messages on biracial children (DeAndra, 1984; Ho, 1992; Marta, 1997; Schlegel, 2000). Helpers believe that often biracial families project a negative self-conceptualization of their biracial family that in turn influences children’s perception of self and belonging. These internalized values are thought to be as harmful as negative or disparaging reactions from caregivers and family members. This is an important perception when research shows family influence to be very strong as one transitions from a family-influenced to a peer-influenced environment.
Reactions in the Field


The influence of peers, rather than other groups, is noted strongly for biracial children when searching for one’s identity. The feeling of being an outsider and not obtaining harmony within oneself is a major concern from the perspective of the helper. The literature corroborates that one’s peer group is fundamental in the future development of positive identity and self-image (Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992; Rivera-Sinclair, 1997). The acceptance or rejection by a group is also cited as greatly influential to the levels of satisfaction and security in self-expression and self-acceptance (Bennett, 1998; Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992; Herring, 1995). In fact, peer acceptance is considered so much of an influence that the literature describes biracial adolescents and children as being powerless and discriminated against (Ho, 1987; Omi & Winant, 1986). Helpers report that their clients express feeling connected and comfortable between groups while perhaps being more strongly affiliated with one group, as an important accomplishment when developing a sense of identity. Research supports the feelings of helping professionals which includes the need for biracial adolescents to become competent in operating between opposite belief systems (Bennett, 1998), ingesting and sorting societal messages, (Georgas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1992) and finding one’s “real sense of self” while making tough decisions that impact their social development (Dunham, Kidwell & Wilson, 1986; Grotevant & Cooper, 1981).
Helpers note dating and relationships with other children as extremely influential for how the adolescent negotiates coping with groups of other children and adults. Dealing with racial prejudice in these instances seems to be a concern to helping professionals because so many adolescents and children are not experiencing satisfaction with the outcome of their choices. Participants share that adolescents and children grapple with not being able to talk to others and are often left to deal with prejudice from a multiple of fronts like the home, school and society. Issues such as dating, friendships and relationships in general are cited as paramount because there is distrust and anger aimed at biracial adolescents and children. Helpers state that parents often become involved and placed parameters around dating relationships and friendships because they do not like their child’s involvement with a ‘mixed’ child. From the helper’s perspective, the biracial child does not have a group that accepts them based on their connection to other groups which makes them not good enough for either group. This opinion is shared more often when it comes to dating than to making friends since it seems perfectly acceptable to have a biracial friend, but not to date one. Based on experiences in their settings, it is believed that there is even distrust and animosity between students who were not biracial toward this group. Problems arise because biracial youth are seen as competing or “taking away” the dating choices of monoracial youth. Helping professionals cite that these conflicts create a great deal of confusion for biracial children and adolescents.

Herring (1995) also addresses what participants suggest regarding the increased likelihood for more complicated problems during socialization and development. These
issues are based on more tangible factors for biracial versus non-biracial adolescents and children and include physical characteristics, such as skin color and facial or physical features, (Ho, 1992; Walker, 1982; Lopez, 1974), language deficits and strengths (Lucero-Miller & Newman 1999; Ogbu, 1985; Rivera-Sinclair, 1997) and social class (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993; Scott & Borodvsky, 1990). Participants speculate that these are some of the reasons that biracial adolescents experience more difficulty fitting in with other peers. They feel that having distinctive features and characteristics make being different more obvious and difficult for them to blend “into the crowd.” At this developmental stage in their lives being different is not considered to be an asset and often adolescents like to be less noticeable. This is especially true if it is viewed as a detriment, like being of a lower social class or having a speech or language deficit.

Factors most important when working with biracial adolescents and children

The study also hopes to address which factors are more important when learning how to work successfully with biracial adolescents and children. The findings reveal that “basic counseling skills” such as positive regard, empathy, congruence and caring are essential in the development and enhancement of relationships with biracial children. In addition, a positive and optimistic attitude toward the client makes a difference in the counseling process. Specifically, participants believed that the establishment and transitioning of a therapeutic relationship is more easily accomplished when the client feels positive regard from the helper.
Through the interviews, respondents share a seemingly genuine desire to enhance the therapeutic relationship (Wendel, 2000). Some feel it necessary to involve family members and employ specific strategies. They share that they feel this earns them credibility with those “in power” [of the children] who could decide to support or not support the helping process. Participants share that not developing this relationship can be a detriment in providing support to children and adolescents.

*Comfort with biracial adolescents and children*

While focusing on attitudes of helping professionals, there are questions regarding the level of helper’s comfort or discomfort toward biracial adolescents and children. In performing this research, investigation focuses on the types of groups one feels comfortable with and how it affects relationships with a specific group. It is anticipated that there may be differences based on the commonality of certain groups or the opportunity in the community to work with one type of group more so than another. The results of these questions are not surprising and the logic behind the responses is interesting.

The majority of helping professionals share that they are more comfortable with biracial children and adolescents who are Black/Caucasian and an equally high number share that they are least comfortable with biracial children from Hispanic/Asian parents. Helping professionals state that because there are so many Black/Caucasian biracial children and adolescents in the community, they are more familiar with those customs based on more experience and interaction. They also share feeling automatically more comfortable when they are one of the races of the biracial child. In considering this
statement, it is important to recall that all but two of the participants in the study are Caucasian. Participants share that they feel less threatened by the blending of Black and Caucasian families and are not intimidated when initiating support. However, the reasons for discomfort are opposite from those responses expressing comfort. These responses include their lack of experience with Hispanic and Asian people, the differing levels of language proficiency and the lack of understanding of the cultural differences, particularly with the Asian or Asian American culture.

The lack of language proficiency arises time and time again as helping professionals admit discomfort with these groups. Helping professionals share their reliance on at least one of the individuals in the family, often the child or adolescent, to act as the interpreter between the helper and the caregivers. Professionals admit to their not attempting to become literate in their client’s language. They state that the use of translators would ease the burden of not being able to talk with families, especially in the absence of the child, the way they need to. The use of translators is cited several times during the interview as a needed and lacking resource in the community.

Findings support differences of comfort come from commonality of certain groups and the opportunity in the community to work more frequently with one type of group over another. Overall, helping professionals feel the differing levels of comfort and discomfort are based on their amount of experience, familiarity, affiliation and language proficiency when working with specific groups.
Expectations for training related to working with biracial adolescents and children

During the last section of the interview, individuals are asked to reflect on expectations for training future counselors to work with biracial adolescents and children, and their concerns, worries or anticipations, about the biracial population. The majority of participants, regardless of setting, feel that there will be more conflict in the community. Individuals feel the primary reason for conflict is that the more common the issue, the more of a ‘non-issue’ it becomes. Several individuals share that this has already begun since an increasing number of biracial children and families now are in the community. Research and participants share that at first the presence of biracial families was a big deal, but as the number of biracial individuals increases the discomfort eases (Axelson, 1994; Bryant, 1994; Collins, 2000). The literature support that as population demographics continue to evolve and the necessity for biracial adolescents to self-identify will occur less and less frequently (Wehrly, 1999). Respondents feel that with familiarity and growth in the population, individuals will be less likely to be scrutinized.

Participants feel that individuals holding onto the old views of bigotry are dying off and instead are being replaced by individuals who espouse values of acceptance and understanding. Still others cite social issues, like the increase of poverty and single-headed households as having more impact on the future community than the issue of biracialism. Again, research maintains the need to supply more effective support, to clarify misunderstandings about sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues (Aubrey & Lewis, 1988; Das, 1995) and to recognize the important cultural factors (Fuertes, Bartolomeo & Nicholas, 2001). Therefore, if the predicted trends continue so will the
need to prepare for future challenges by obtaining training and staying current with the pulse of change in the community.

Those individuals who concern an increase in conflict feel it will be foolish to be too optimistic because divergence exists in every relationship, whether in schools or communities. Participants share that there will definitely be more conflict unless some sort of intervention is applied like diversity training or education to address the myths and stereotypes about biracial adolescents and children. Others believe that the initial transition will be hard for many since differences are often accompanied by misunderstandings about individuals.

Therefore, the results of the study do not support the researcher’s hypothesis that change will lead to more or less conflict due to being in a particular setting. In fact, what is found to be more of a factor for conflict is whether or not social issues will continue to evolve. Also the degree of conflict will depend on whether education and support for the helpers will be provided to accommodate future changes in some communities.

Another question to participants was what they felt helping professionals such as school counselors, counselors/therapists and social workers need to do to be better prepared. Based on the research and situation in the community, it was initially thought that individuals would discuss their own training or education, other shortcomings, or the lack of exposure to biracial clients during their years in the field. The responses overwhelmingly support the belief that across helping professionals, individuals want increased diversity training opportunities such as parent programs, classes, groups and
workshops. Individuals share that hands-on experience is limited for a variety of reasons ranging from a lack of clients in the community to work with, and a lack of training support from sites. Most participants admit to only having general purpose courses in cultural awareness during school without specific training for biracial children.

They also share the need for more resource materials like books, journal articles and videos when specific information are needed. Respondents feel this is important because it provides learning opportunities whenever need is identified through specific referrals. It seems that individuals do not want to waste training time learning about populations that they would work with the community. Although they list some of the more generic types of workshops as helpful refresher trainings, again there is the lack of specific information that they feel they need in order to do their jobs more effectively.

Participants also state that they need more education through self-exposure, immersion in the community, and use of translators. For example, participants share a concern over not being more invested in their biracial clients communities. Several share that they participate in large community-based events, but they feel they need to be more consistently involved in order to gain the trust of families and children. Additionally, participants share that through training programs and other experiences the opportunities to be a part of the community of biracial individuals are limited. They share a wish to interact more to gain knowledge. The use of translators comes up frequently when professionals share their desire to invest in individual translators who have language skills that are specific to the needs of the population. Individuals state that they feel this
demonstrates an earnest respect to understand and provide support to families and children. Without access to quality translators, helping professionals feel that families are not being given the kind of meaningful support they are due.

Lastly, across helping professionals there is equal need for job clarification and clear expectations from administrators, more on-the-job training, networking with colleagues and developing programs in the community. Individuals share they feel pressure to perform specific tasks with biracial clients although at times they are not quite sure what those expectations entail. Unless there are problems, some feel that they are left to figure out for themselves what sorts of services and support that the children and adolescents need without clarification from their superiors. On-the-job training is listed as a significant need because training programs during school do not prepare individuals for work in the real world. Some felt that the learning environment in school is sterile and performing hands-on work in the field is the only way to really learn. Likewise it is felt that networking with experienced professionals provides an excellent mentoring relationship for those with limited or lacking experience since it offers supervision and guidance. Finally, the chance to develop programs in the community is cited as an opportunity to pilot different plans with biracial individuals to learn what types of support might be most beneficial for future clients. Figuring out what services are most effective by “testing” programs through trial and error is one way that individuals feel they can gain a better understanding of what is most helpful to biracial adolescents.
An examination of the results corroborated the literature's stance for several of the same reasons cited by professionals in maintaining a necessary, balanced multicultural perspective (Arredondo, 1999). This is evidenced by the number of participants suggesting to become more involved and take ownership over the services being offered to biracial clients. Diversity training, availability of resource materials, clarified expectations, proactiveness, on-the-job training, networking, and developing programs in the community are all ways that individuals are cited as becoming more multiculturally sensitive (Sue et al., 1992). In fact, the wishes and needs of these helping professionals mesh with the goals and values of the profession to provide multiculturally sensitive services to those in the community (Arredondo, 1999; Axelsson, 1994). Also, findings are consistent with research that supports professional’s capability and willingness to learn about one’s own worldview, as well as that of the biracial client, in order to increase levels of multiculturalism and become better trained (Ivey, Ivey, and Simek-Morgan 1993; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Sarason, 1984; Sue et al., 1992). Time and again, professionals share their desire to gain a better understanding of themselves and the client in order to provide better care. Again, these statements illustrate a mismatch of responses between the helpers regarding a desire for more training and their reported level of comfort with biracial adolescents and children. There does not appear to be a clear enough reason why individuals state their comfort and confidence with biracial clients and then also share feeling unprepared, lacking in training, and wanting more support. The researcher also wonders whether or not individuals are aware that they are making such incongruent statements. Another possibility is that individuals are being honest when
admitting they are as comfortable as they can be given the lack of training and preparation they have.

Results from the present study indicate that helping professionals indeed want increased diversity training opportunities, resources, education and clarification. It is suggested by individuals that helpers become more knowledgeable and gain training regarding multicultural competency to provide quality support. Participants feel with more exposure comes more comfort which leads to more interest in working with diverse groups. From the study it appears that it is not critical to one’s learning as to when this occurs, just as long as it does before working with biracial clients. In fact, some participants adopted a ‘better late than never’ attitude when discussing the timeliness of training. The literature also acknowledges that some of the lack of preparedness is not from individuals who are choosing to be multiculturally insensitive, but from those who do not have the opportunity to harvest multicultural skills through lack of resources like weak training programs (Ponterotto & Casas, 1987). Participants appear realistic while assessing their particular training program as they reflect on its lack of resources and limited interest in the population. Individuals appear to believe it is their personal responsibility, rather than that of their training program or other individuals, in being educated about specific cultures and cultural differences. Repeatedly they ask for more exposure to the community and opportunities to be a part of the lives of their clients. They share candidly their need to overcome fear and apprehension regarding what they do not know enough about, instead of living fearful of the future.
Limitations of the Study

In this study, there are a couple of different directions that could have been taken to enhance the results. The limitations include the differing perspectives of the helping professionals included, sample selection and sample size.

Helping professional perspective.

The sample of helping professionals, whether mental health counselors, school counselors or social workers, provide a mixture of the various types of individuals involved in the lives of biracial adolescents; therefore, this mixture provided variability in how some of the questions were addressed. In addition, caution should be taken when considering results since the different professions require different degrees and training. Although this sample focuses on the same population of biracial children, the perspectives and ideas reflect the different viewpoints of those working with the biracial adolescents and children. Logically, some of the answers may be influenced by the helping professionals differing experiences and backgrounds. The self-reported, and reflective, recollection of responses to the research questions also limit the validity of results.

Sample size.

In this study, social workers account for the largest group of respondents (n=8) with school counselors second (n=7) and counselors/therapists were the fewest (n=5). The relatively small number of counselors should be noted for the degree of impact this has for interpreting results to counselor education programs. Another related caution to
the study is the relatively small sample size of participants from each profession and for the total participating in the study. All of these factors have an impact on interpreting the results for any inferences.

Sample selection.

The sample selection is not random, and participants are selected from a small geographic location instead of from nationally representative areas. Participants are pooled from New Albany, Indiana, which is a southern Indiana community rich in diversity lying on the cusp of Louisville, Kentucky. The community contains a variety of socioeconomic groups, racial diversity and biracial families. The region itself is unique because of the mixture of vineyards, large working farms, industry and factories as well as white collar work at local colleges, universities and hospitals. The population has made dramatic shifts in the last five years and continues to be a haven for new families entering the area. However, given all of the emerging trends and opportunities, this sample is not generalizeable to other communities. The results are interesting and may be comparable to cities with similar economic and geographic features, but the comparability of professionals may be limited.

Future Implications

Findings from this study produce different implications for counselor education programs in the future. Based on the findings from this study, there are several issues that future studies in this area need to address further research with this population.
Implications for Research

First of all, pertinent issues center on the tone and reaction of individuals responding to the questions. There were times during the interviews when different professionals expressed, both verbally and nonverbally, uneasiness or embarrassment. A few individuals’ comments reflected that the nature of questions were difficult or tough to consider, but not so strongly that they wanted to discontinue the interview. Some individuals mentioned their struggle with the topic discussed and shared they already knew this was a personal growth area. Other individuals thanked the researcher at the conclusion of the interview, stating that the process has given them a great deal to think about as well as having inspired them to do some things differently to better serve their biracial students or clients. A couple of the respondents shared a sense of guilt and shame for not having addressed concerns and areas before, via the question topics, with their biracial adolescent population. It appears that the discomfort shared was inspiring and relieving, as they are able to recognize the connection between a lack of information or preparation rather than a lack of personal motivation or interest. This information gathered throughout the process regarding tone and sincerity from participants lends power to the interview feedback. The participants shared a willingness to discuss the topic with raw and straightforward candor regarding their opinions. This impresses the researcher as an implication for future research as it contributes to the desire and recognition that more studies such as this one need to be performed with helping professionals. Regardless of the reactions from participants, all share a desire to explore the issues and discuss how to improve their efforts. Based on this experience it is
believed that other professionals working with this population would be willing to discuss these reactions and feelings, if given the opportunity to participate in such a study.

Secondly, by performing a face-to-face interview, rich data was gained through clarification and elaboration of comments that would have otherwise been missed. Performing the study in this manner allows for a unique personal interaction that could not occur if a generic paper and pencil questionnaire is administered. It is recommended that for future research this same type of interview be performed in order to gather more quality comments.

It is also important that these helping professionals continue to be sampled for future research studies since a comparison of data could be performed over time. The different types of comments and information gathered would be useful to examine and analyze for historical commonalities and differences. It is also important to maintain this sampling of helping professionals since these individuals have such different relationships with biracial adolescents and children and can offer so many different perspectives on the needs and concerns for the group.

There are a couple of alternatives for the types of questions that could be asked of helping professionals. First, it would be helpful to ask the same types of questions to get some baseline data from different geographic areas with a mixture of biracial children and adolescents as the reflected subjects. Then, if the researcher deemed that there was an interesting enough group, questions could be narrowed depending on specific types of biracial adolescents to get more concentrated types of feedback. This of course could be
completed in a variety of settings and then the results from the different substudies could be compared for even more information.

Larger more representative samples would increase the generalizability of the research findings. The use of other methods, such as survey, observation of counseling sessions, outcome evaluation of training programs can also be used for further studies. By completing a comparison in different surrounding cities also serving biracial children additional interesting results could be produced. Also the sample size could be increased to compare more helping professionals to one another and gather more information regarding the different types of responses across individuals. It would interesting to note if there was a difference based on the more dominant types of biracial children and adolescents being served in a particular area as well.

Implications for training in counselor education programs

Throughout the study, the feedback from participants regarding the need for research and training when working with biracial children is most impressive. Individuals share a concern for their lack of preparation, even if they were offered a class in their training program or if they managed to acquire the some skills at a workshop through their job site. Overall participants struggle to recall useful information, other than popular media, that addresses the individual stories of biracial adolescents and families. Implications for training programs include the infusion of multicultural instruction and information about biracial people in the curriculum. Research supports that exposure to more than just one dedicated class in a training program is necessary in
order to gain basic skill competencies (Dinsmore, 1999). A wrap-around approach to teaching about this societal change could be addressed in many different forums.

Since participants shared an unaware reliance on life experiences versus training or education when reflecting on useful wisdom, it appears from this research helpers are not getting what they needed from their coursework. This speaks to the need of counselor education programs, as well as programs for other helping professionals to look at what is being taught and how helpers are being trained. Implications for training would center on this need for multiple courses, if not all courses, to include information on biracial children and adolescents. It implies that there also needs to be more useful information in the courses that are currently dedicated to diverse populations rather than sterile textbook information that individuals are not able to recall or apply. Coursework in programs, across professions, are cited as weak and in need of more current and applicable information to specific populations. Suggestions to address this need could be satisfied through guest speakers or more experiential activities and actual interactions with diverse populations.

An area that requires attention, based on feedback, is the opportunity to increase knowledge in a forum that allows less scrutiny and pressure but instead the capability to describe feelings associated with these experiences (Sherman, 1997). Participants share the need to learn ways to conceptualize their learning as they increase their comfort with practice. Implications for training programs include helping the student by providing a safe environment to learn and express questions. This could be viewed as a way to draw
students to training programs since so many individuals express an interest in working with diverse population in changing communities (Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Kaselica, 1998). This is deemed vitally important so that individuals can practice case conceptualization skills, understand the flow and process of the counseling relationship and use theory appropriately when working with complex client issues (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000; Stoltenberg, McNeil & Delworth 1998).

Other suggestions for improving the quality of knowledge acquired in training programs include teaching about factors that influenced change, increase multicultural understanding overall, integrate multicultural training into core curriculum, include more multicultural studies in professional journals and increase counseling strategies to reflect cultural differences for future work (Essandoh, 1996; Niles, 1993; Pedersen, 1988; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). There continues to be evidence of gaps in training programs when it comes to relating race and culture-specific incidents for skill acquisition (Sue & Sue, 1990) since few counselor education programs offer systematic training in multicultural counseling (Sue 1992). Sue and Zane (1987) reflect that the need to expand classes to include enhancement of counseling tasks, such as conceptualization of problems, intervention strategies, and understanding client objectives. In short, trainees need exposure and opportunity to learn about other resources and experiences to even realize they may be working at a deficit (Conyne, 1987; Meadows, 1991; Ramirez, 1991). This could certainly be another implication for counselor training programs that are interested in making the transition from classroom to counseling setting a successful one.
Each of the steps in skill acquisition are cited as important since so much of the work serves as a building block for future work to increase clarity in clinical judgment (Holloway & Wolleat, 1998). The profession taking the time to invest in helpers as they are learning would serve to demonstrate a willingness to legitimize efforts to work with biracial adolescents and children. Implications for training programs could include more stringent and hands-on supervision from experts in the field. Connections with these helping professionals could enhance the quality of any practicum or internship experience by contributing to a higher quality experience. Skills and techniques that have been useful could be passed on to new trainees and fine tuning could occur to addresses nuisances with different types of biracial children. The need identified in this study for real life situations and experiences with biracial adolescents or children (Ramirez, 1991; Wehrly, 1991) could be satisfied through in vivo learning opportunities, diverse practicum and internship placements.

In the study, respondents openly cite their preference regarding several types of biracial adolescents and children. Several resources in the literature cite this behavior as a reaction to a fear of the unknown (Sherman, 1997) being uninterested or considering the work burdensome (Lee, 1994) or due to the helper’s lack of ego development (Swenson, 1980; Watt, Robinson, & Lupton-Smith, 2002). As far as attitude is concerned, Ponterotto & Casas (1987) cite that if the helping professional is not capable or interested in working with a person, in this case a biracial adolescent, then that they need not work with this population. Therefore, another implication for training programs would be to continue to act as gatekeepers of the profession by practicing the rule of “do
Reactions in the Field

no harm” while safeguarding potential clients from those who are not appropriate to work with adolescents and children. Stringent analysis of individual character and legitimate concerns could be addressed before trainees or graduates are in situations that they are ill-suited for and doing work that they are not invested in. Borders (1989) found that those counselors with higher levels of cultural understanding, which also influences attitude, are less likely to have a negative attitude toward their clients and are more objective when reporting interactions. This is proof that attitudes begin to change as individuals are accepted within their cultural contexts (Adler, 1998; Conyne, 1987). Providing this type of personal growth opportunities, before someone is in the field and discontent with their effort, could be a tremendous asset to the profession by supplying dedicated and informed helpers to communities. It is anticipated that as helpers continue to come to terms with their own feelings regarding providing multicultural counseling, this will continue to be a training and ethical issue for those teaching.

Implications for practice.

As found in the literature and the results of this study, there are still multiple challenges for counseling and working with biracial children and adolescents; primarily the need for exposure to knowledge, skills and attitudes (Arredondo, 1999; Robinson, 1999). Developing quality helping professionals with a more cohesive sense of knowledge, level of skill and positive attitude continues to be the strongest implication for those practicing with biracial children and adolescents. In order to understand how to make this happen, the literature refers to the competencies stated within counseling
standards as a guideline for how to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in order to provide culturally competent counseling (Arrendondo, 1996; Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992). While reviewing resources, ethical standards by the American School Counselors Association (ASCA, 1998) and the American Counseling Association (ACA, 1995) were found that require helping professionals to work to develop relationships that maintain cross-cultural effectiveness and provide services that respect the uniqueness of individual needs and experiences. These standards are helpful guidelines for professionals as they begin to conceptualize their work with biracial adolescents and children. Better adherence to or understanding of how these guidelines can be helpful to individuals would be more along the lines of providing guidance to individuals so they would feel more knowledgeable and qualified. If training programs were to promote and adhere to these guidelines, those practicing in the field would likely feel more grounded and prepared to work with biracial as well as multiracial individuals.

Policy in community and schools settings need to be analyzed continually by administrators for change based on what the community dictates. Each community has its own individual strengths and growths; therefore, policy there would need to change with the progressing times. In this way too, administrators and policy makers could be clearer with staff regarding their expectations and vision for the community that they report to serve. Hiring practices could address the need to diversify staff with individuals who have multiple talents like foreign language skills, deaf/oral skills, biracial and multiethnic backgrounds, and more consistent or advanced educational requirements.
Also, maintaining quality staff could include useful and timely staff development opportunities that are specific to the population being served.

The implications for education and practice that could be explored as more research is performed with helping professionals are endless. Efforts could broaden an understanding of this would be to include national or regional study so as to tap into needs across the United States and gather ideas for future change. More specific suggestions could be generated based on those populations being studied to learn more information that is unique to this research and to changes in academia.

As advocates, helping professionals need to promote awareness and interest in the needs and strengths of the multicultural population. If we accomplish this goal we would be ensuring that the services delivered to this population are done so effectively, competently and respectfully (Kenney, 1999). The literature and in this study has provided evidence to support those factors such as knowledge and skill impact how one thinks and feels about a person and in turn interacts with that individual. Each of these areas, knowledge, skills and attitudes influence the other but also has the power to change and develop. Given the right opportunity and effort they can be cultivated into opportunities for improvement.
References


Phi Delta Kappa, 70 (9), 698-701.


White House Meeting on Mental Health of Children, Ronald F. Le vant, PhD, EdD, ABPP, APA Recording Secretary 3-27-00 DATED APA March 20, 2000.


Appendix A

Informed Consent

Reactions in the field: Interviews with helping professionals who work with biracial children

University of Cincinnati – College of Education

Michele Neace Page, M.S., L.M.H.C., N.C.P.  Doctoral Candidate  812/284-9297

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purpose, procedures, risk and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

The following study will focus on learning more about the mental health care providers perception of self when working with a biracial child in terms of knowledge, skill and attitudes. The purpose of this study is to better identify and serve the needs of helping professionals who work with biracial children.

If you decide to participate in this study, your involvement will take about one and half hour of your time. You will complete an audiotaped interview using a semi-structured questionnaire that focuses on your perception of your work with biracial children. As part of the study you will be asked to provide demographic information about yourself; however, your identity information will not be released anywhere. Confidentiality will be respected and no personal identifiers will be associated with participant response at any point in answering the questionnaire.

Your participation is completely voluntary and there are no foreseen risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable or distress at any point you will be free to refuse or stop without any consequences. All materials gathered during this study including questionnaires, tapes, informed consents and notes will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet for three years; after which point they will be destroyed as ethically required. Your name will not be associated with your responses in any way.

When this study has been completed and analyzed, the researcher will share the results of the investigation with any participant who is interested. A tablet will be provided for individuals to write down name, address and / or phone number in order to be contacted.

If you need to contact anyone for answers to pertinent questions about the research or about your rights as a participant or in the event of a research related injury after the study, please feel free to contact:

Michele N.  Page, MS, LMHC  F.  Robert Wilson, PhD  Mei Tang, PhD
Doctoral Candidate  Doctoral Co-Chair  Doctoral Co-Chair
University of Cincinnati  University of Cincinnati  University of Cincinnati
Phone: 812/284-9297  Phone: 513/556-3345  Phone: 513/556-3716

Please read the following sentence.  If you agree to participate, please sign below.
I understand that any information about me obtained from the research will be kept strictly confidential.

________________________________________  _____________  _______________________
Participant Signature   Date    Investigator Signature
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

In performing this study, it is helpful to understand and know certain types of demographic information about participants. As this could be useful to the researcher in later research, please answer the following questions about yourself. Please be reminded that our conversation will be tape-recorded.

**Occupation:**
Social Worker  Counselor/ Therapist  School Counselor

**Gender:**  Male  Female

**Ethnicity:**
African American  Asian American or Pacific Islander
Caucasian  Latino(a) or Hispanic American
Native American  Biracial: _________________

**Age:**  Under 25  25-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  60 +

**Educational Level:** (please specify in what area & year degree obtained)
Bachelor: _______________________________
Master: _______________________________
Doctorate: _______________________________

Please list your professional credentials? (cite specific source)
License_______________________
Certification ___________________
Other _________________________

**How many years experience do you have in working as a school counselor (social worker, counselor/therapist)?** ________
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

Please describe your customary practice, HERE AT SCHOOL/FACILITY (e.g., individual counseling/therapy, group psychoeducation, group guidance, group counseling/therapy, play therapy, child counseling/therapy, family counseling/therapy work, teaching, specialty work, etc.).

___ individual counseling/therapy       ___ group psychoeducation
___ group guidance      ___ group counseling/therapy
___ play therapy      ___ child counseling/therapy
___ family counseling/therapy work    ___ teaching

Comments:

How many years of experience do you have in working with biracial children? ___

Please describe in what capacity you have worked with biracial children:

___ individual counseling/therapy
___ group psychoeducation
___ group guidance
___ group counseling/therapy
___ play therapy
___ child counseling/therapy
___ family counseling/therapy work
___ teaching

Comments:
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

Based on your experience working with biracial children please answer the following questions.

Knowledge/ Skill

1. A. How many biracial children have you worked with in your career?
   
   B. How many biracial children have you worked with in the past year?
   
   C. When did you start working in the human service field?

2. A. Have you ever consulted with anyone about your work with biracial children?
   
   B. (if "yes") For what reasons do you seek consultation?

3. A. What issues give you most difficulty in working with biracial children?
   
   B. Of the ones you have listed, what is the most problematic?

4. A. When working with a biracial child, how do you prepare?
   
   B. What special preparations, if any, do you make for the first session?

5. A. What do you think are the most important things you do to be successful when working with biracial children? What makes a difference?
   
   B. What have been the hardest lessons learned?
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

6. When working with biracial children, do you rely on:

   a. life experiences- one’s own personal story, family or interactions

      5                      4                           3                         2                    1
      Always---------Often---------------Some--------------Little----------Never

   b. work experiences- one’s life in work, career moves and professional interactions

      5                      4                           3                         2                    1
      Always---------Often---------------Some--------------Little----------Never

   c. training or educational experience- one’s experience in institutions of higher learning, training and skill building outside of work or personal life

      5                      4                           3                         2                    1
      Always---------Often---------------Some--------------Little----------Never

7. In working with biracial children, what areas do you need more training and information on in order to do your job?

8. What is your understanding of your biracial clients’ holidays, religious observances or other celebrations?

9. At this age, do you think biracial children have different needs than monoracial children regarding their passage through puberty?
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

10. A. What have you read about working with biracial children?
   B. (if person has read) What has been the most helpful?

   Have you attended any workshops on working with biracial children? _____
   (If "yes") What workshops have you found helpful?

   Have you attended or acquired general education classes in cultural awareness
   and sensitivity? _____
   (If "yes") What kinds of courses have you had that have helped in working
   with biracial children (if person can't think of one, give examples: family
counseling, multicultural counseling)?

   Attitudes

11. How comfortable are you when working with biracial children?

   1---------------------2---------------------3-------------------4---------------------5
   Very                   No Opinion             Very Comfortable
   Uncomfortable    Uncomfortable         Comfortable

12. How often do you participate in particular cultural events (such as festivals,
dances or musical celebrations) in the community of biracial families?

   5       4        3           2          1
   Always------Often----------Sometimes------Rarely------Never
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

13. How often do you inquire about the racial background of your clients regardless of racial influences (dress, speech, etc.) or appearances?

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Always------Often------------Sometimes------Rarely------Never

14. Earlier in this interview you said that you have worked with ____ biracial children.

   a. Of the sorts of biracial children who come to your school (community center), which do you think you understand the best and have (or would have) the least difficulty working with?

      B/H   B/W   B/A   H/W   H/A   A/W

   b. Of the sorts of biracial children who come to your school (mental health center), which do you think you understand the least well and have (or would have) the most difficulty working with?

      B/H   B/W   B/A   H/W   H/A   A/W

15. How comfortable do you feel when working with parents of biracial children?

16. How does your own racial background affect working with biracial children?
Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

Expectations

17. In the next ten years, what trends do you see in your community regarding the prevalence of biracial children?

18. A. Will the change, in the biracial population, lead to more or less conflict in the school (mental health center)?

   B. (If “yes”) How do you think the school (mental health center) will respond?

19. What do you feel that school counselors (counselors/therapists, social workers) could do to be prepared? (i.e., education, training on the job)

20. In order to work most effectively with biracial children, what concerns or worries would you like to see addressed in your school or agency?

21. Is there anything else about this issue you would like to tell me?
Appendix C

Interview Data

Knowledge/ Skill

**Question: How many biracial children have you worked with in your career?**

1. 200+
2. 8
3. about 500 (12-15 per year for 37 years)
4. 20
5. 75+
6. 260 (250-300)
7. 25-30
8. 200+
9. 40
10. 12-15 (there have been many I have worked with who I haven’t known or I have known and they refuse to identify as such, probably increases the number by about 15)
11. 150
12. 500-600
13. 15
14. 40
15. 20-25
16. 70
17. 12-18
18. 200-250
19. 15-20
20. 10
**Appendix C**

**B: How many biracial children have you worked with in the past year?**

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Appendix C

C. When did you start working in the human service field?

1. 7 yrs
2. 9 yrs
3. 37 years
4. 2 years, 1999
5. 5-6 years
6. 27 years
7. 14 years
8. 20+ years
9. 11 years
10. 20 years (cop) 6 years (counselor)
11. 8 years
12. 28 years
13. 5 years
14. 2 years
15. 5 years
16. 22 years
17. 12 years
18. 7 years
19. 8 years
20. 5 years
Appendix C

6. **A. Have you ever consulted with anyone about your work with biracial children?**

   **B. (if "yes") For what reasons do you seek consultation?**
   1. I wanted to learn from individuals in the schools like the principals, teachers, other counselors about how they handle situations. Regardless of the reason, I want to hear from others with more experience. If I am concerned, I will always go to someone else who is more competent (could not give me specifics when implored to elaborate)

   2. Same reason that I would otherwise. I consult when I need another opinion. I often do with biracial children because it is a situation where I don’t have a lot of expertise. I want more help and advice from colleagues. (couldn’t) recall a situation.

   3. Didn’t feel the need

   4. Other staff mostly just discussing different things to expect, when working with blended races especially those who are different than my own

   5. a. Persons of other cultures so they could help me understand more about why and what reasons things have been done.
      b. Anyone else who has information, colleagues, supervisors. Anyone who might be able to help me gain understanding

   6. a. In situations working with a minority outreach program. Our school liaison is biracial and she has taught me a great deal in consultation.
      b. Colleges in general when there is a particular problem

   7. More personal than professional. Probably in dealing with the difference in discipline and general development of children. There is a pretty big space there that can be “cultural” and has caused problems between families with different viewpoint

   8. Talk to others all the time. Part of this working is knowing when to consult and gain a better understanding.

   9. Just in house, informally. Mostly on discipline issues, personal needs, placing in summer enrichment issues

   10. None
Appendix C

11. Family issues, domestic violence, parental issues, financial issues and racial issues and mothers who are not accepting father’s family and families that turn their back on the children because they are BR

12. Supervisors, colleagues. Cannot remember the reasons but most have been around school policy with custodial and non-custodial parents, fitting in here at school and participating in events that aren’t culturally specific. (Kids who feel left out) 13. Supervisor’s mostly a. ways of presenting materials and new ideas to different groups b. handling conflict c. domestic violence issues

14. I seek consultation with supervisors and other fellow coworkers. Not for a negative reason, but to find out specifically what racial mix they are and to get more information.

15. With supervisors on school-related concerns. Topics were: how to handle children who have questions about ethnicity, usually it was because it was about a negative comment, not about their own curiosity. Derogatory comments start a lot.

16. Foster and adoptive parents, working on placement. I gathered information to help them through theirs process. Especially those who were adopting biracial children.

17. issues of sexual abuse but not specifically. Parenting issues are important and can be very different. I have had difficulty understanding some parenting philosophies because the backgrounds and views are different. For example, grief, discipline, using resources, development

18. One child sticks out because she had a huge attendance problem after repeating the 7th grade. Many issues came with this. Friends, self-esteem, and hopelessness and all this lead back to her attendance problem. IF she didn’t come back to school she didn’t have to deal with it. Another student became upset when her friends were identifying her with their race and she did not. She did not know what color to identify with.

19. Supervisor when working with parents and acknowledging racial issues and differences.

20. Never had to.
Appendix C

7. A. What issues give you most difficulty in working with biracial children?

1. Parents who are angry. It is never the children. Parents of biracial children have a heightened sensitivity for what happens to their children. Ex. Mixed couple and the implied impact on their daughter.

2. a. understanding the perspectives they have grown up with. For example, dealing with prejudice

3. Have not had an issue. The numbers have increased over the years here but there have really not been issues with it. I feel it has been interesting to watch the faculty comment and deal with it rather than our kids. I think socialization is still a problem

4. Probably the parent of biracial children dealing with the differences. Seeing the partner coming from a different race and how they relate to the child being so different.

5. Unsupportive parents. Once had a child who was obviously biracial (black dad and white mom) and was identified by the mother as not being biracial. She refused to acknowledge his background because of animosity with FOB. Personally, I felt that this was damaging but mom was not willing to discuss it. There was a lot of hostility in the family for various reasons.

6. a. wanting to know in advance where they feel they best fit in. Not having to say do you consider yourself African American or White. That feels awkward to me. Even posing the question is uncomfortable b. knowing how to be sure of what kinds of conflicts they are going through to be empathetic and sympathetic.

7. Personally I have a real problem with how some of the families deal with discipline. I know that it is not uncommon to spank in African American homes and I see a clash when I see two different cultures for example, AfAm and Caucasian who don’t see eye to eye on this try to relate. The child suffers. Other developmental milestones, like toilet training are also hard, learning to walk, speech expectations. Professionally has been difficult to watch worse when you have kids of your own and you hear this. Parents tell me from an early age that “if he peed in his pants, I would whip his butt.” Now we know the child has anxiety problems and trouble using the restroom. It is difficult to support that if the mother is white and not of the ethnic background that promotes this other. Often she will go along with the preference of the family, even if she disagrees.
have noticed this too with Asian American and Caucasian couples. They will often meet in the middle of the child.

8. Identity crisis for some on who they are and where they want to be. A lot of kids struggle with harmony in where they are and where they are going.

9. Not knowing how to understand their perspective what it is all about.

10. Not had an issue with a student where it has been a biracial focus. Techniques that I use focus on treating everyone the same. Don’t change the technique for different / special children “not closing the door” Don’t know of specific techniques anyway. With Jr. High Students you have to realize the developmental level and where they are “not realize the right path right away.

11. Racial acceptance a. families send the child away due to biracialty of grandchildren and not enough family connection. For ex. Hispanic versus Caucasian families and their differences and how they feel the child should be raised.

12. Really don’t have any problems when working with BRC. It is hard to go in behind another worker where the relationship was not so good and do some PR work and rebuild the helping relationship. That has been somewhat of a problem to work through but not great problem.

13. Cultural aspects I am not familiar with or comfortable with ex/ child rearing practices and parenting issues. Also relationship issues and self esteem issues. Issues of poverty.

14. None that I can think of.

15. No exactly understanding what it is like to grow up biracial. I don’t understand their social pressures. I’ve never felt like that and it is hard to see children struggle with these issues.

16. Most BRC aren’t placed with identical race parents and they are left to feel like an outsider. Society as a whole still doesn’t recognize them as much. For example, a biracial child whose background is black/white is often labeled black.

17. Getting the parents to attempt to discuss how their family is affected. Not to close them out or depress them but to share with them that they are not alone. To address identity issues and differences in the family as not necessarily a bad thing.
18. Family issues, Kids needing parents, caring what their parents think, wanting their love as they change developmentally. Another issue that has come up time to time at school is when dating “taking a black boy away from us”

19. a. Dealing with racial prejudice
   b. Group Counseling – other group member problems
   c. Educational opportunities when parents aren’t open

20. Understanding cultural differences.

**B. Of the ones you have listed, what is the most problematic?**

1. This one primarily because of sense from parents is that they have had to deal with prejudice – based on their own experiences. However, I welcome any expression from parents, so few are involved.

2. The one I stated. Prejudice is something that I have never really had to deal with as a white male.

3. Socialization with other students

4. Sometimes I feel like it is more difficult when the grandparents are involved (raising the children) because there is very little acceptance by the family.

5. What I stated because I want children to feel they are accepted and loved and valued for who they are. Some biracial children are not given this opportunity and are more at risk for due to society’s view. All children are good but the environment and the circumstances turn the children into the adults they are. We should work harder to celebrate all things good. Ex. This child in particular could not control his parents and his mother did not value his opinion. He was not accepted by this mother in this way. This child already had some self-esteem issues.

6. (See previous question to go with these) a. can work around b. always difficult because there is no “right” way to handle. I mean we have had in-services but…Some parents are living with certain people, have remarried or kids have been adopted. It is so different.

7. Almost equal to me. Both can have a huge consequence to the child. Pushed into behavior and development that they aren’t ready for does cause problems. Cannot always be a good thing for the child to have such high expectations placed on them. They end up feeling they are less of a person because they don’t stand up to it. Caucasian families

Appendix C
have pulled away because, “Granny is right” Elders in the Hispanic families are the same “Momma said. Even though I don’t agree, Momma said”

8. There is no greater problem than a sense of disharmony.

9. Understanding their traditions and customs. I had to do a huge learning about generational poverty. I really didn’t understand it.

10. None

11. A. When they (parents) cut off all ties and are not willing to do anything else or b. they (parents) negotiate work with issue and are willing to work

12. None all a problem if gets in the way of the child’s functioning.

13. Poverty. It adds up to a lot of stress in relationships, which may make them vulnerable or may cause violence.

14. None.

15. It is problematic for me to have children ask me questions about why people say what they do and why they act that way. I can’t give them explanations to such hard and serious issues. It would be nice to relate to these experiences.

16. Because white families don’t have the information of what it means to be black, they can’t prepare the child and understand the experience. It takes willingness, when you adopt a biracial child, to become a family of color.

17. Kids need to address the message of identity they move toward teen years need to be accepted how whey are “acceptable and accepted” not less than. We need to diversify what we consider as acceptable.

18. Definitely dating is the worst

19. Dealing with prejudice is the most hurtful. I feel bad for the children when I see them suffering. I tend to be the rescuer.

20. Not wanting to offend anyone because I don’t want him or her to leave. I want to show respect.
Appendix C

8. A. When working with a biracial child, how do you prepare?
1. I have the philosophy that I try to celebrate differences but try not to focus on a particular child being different than others. Ex. Classroom and individual celebrate differences if similarities are celebrated first.

2. Don’t prepare any differently because try not to see children as color or race. In the past I was even “fussed at” by the principal for not doing enough with an Asian student

3. A. It doesn’t make a difference. I only prepare differently if requested by the parents or the child. B. I ask if there is a problem between a child and teacher

4. Prepare like I would with any other child, they have the same milestones and they have the same needs

5. No differently than I would if I were any other child. I believe all children require love, nurturing, regardless of background and where that takes them. Where they are and not who they are. I want to prepare for working with a child based on their abilities and needs. I want to do what I can do for that child.

6. I try to know the family structure “What is the racial mixture of the family” Is there one parent, are they remarried are they adopted. I need to know the situation first.

7. No differently than I would for any other child. Make sure what I am doing is age appropriate be global if I can’t be specific.

8. I don’t so much. I think it is more important to meet the person then figure out how to prepare. You can’t prepare for a situation in most circumstances in life like these.

9. A. Talk to teachers to help understand b. Understand the issues found successful in areas of past problems c. to watch for problems d. look at permanent record for the demographics and family information

10. Not a conscious effort to make a difference between children. Overall not going to treat them differently. Not from a civil aspect or to be Mr. Fair, just being decent and treating students fairly. Don’t have same expectations of all students ex. Single parent family or children resources, which are limited like, support at home, resources. It may also take longer to get to this particular student.

11. I think I need to know the specifics of the biracial child’s background in order to follow up on his needs. I try to have information from both cultures and be respectful.
Appendix C

12. The same way I would prepare for any client.

13. Keep an open mind and ask questions when I don’t understand. Develop relationship and get to know the person then tailor your approach accordingly.

14. Same as I would do for anyone else. I get in the right mind set and plan.

15. Don’t really do any differently. I leave expectations at the door because it will be the opportunity to open another door. I try to remember that issues are different for every child and we can explore together.

16. I address challenges and resources. I never try to force this.

17. Not directly, parents are the most helpful and can provide empowerment of their own. I look at whether the parents want me to do anything differently. Otherwise I try to be a safe person to talk to above everything else and don’t prepare differently.

18. The same way I do with everyone. I think initially all students are hesitant to talk and need a chance to feel okay about it.

19. I don’t do anything in particular.

20. Prepare the same way I do for any session. Sometimes it depends on the issue. Sometimes it depends on the ethnic background if it’s the issue.

B. What special preparations, if any, do you make for the first session?

1. None

2. Nothing in particular

3. Nothing

4. Sometimes I will ask the mother what her expectations are try to include her initially. I try to not focus on race necessarily but to include the developmental aspects and other needs. I don’t like for that to be the overriding influence.

5. Send a letter, call or phone before the first meeting myself, not have the secretary do it. Have a short conversation to introduce myself, tell them what to expect in the first session (like the paperwork), encourage and try to establish some sort of relationship
Appendix C

6. If I know in advance (family structure) I can understand the social structure. I learn from observations by teachers and that sort of thing. I use all this in prep

7. First session is my first encounter and I usually don’t know what to expect until then.

8. Don’t prepare, I am prepared (as counselor) so I don’t feel pressure. I might look in their file or talk to parents depending on the circumstance.

9. Talk in house try to learn from others and their experiences. Ask – What can you tell me?

10. Don’t/ haven’t been here long enough to know a lot of children. If an assistant principal or counselor points it out. The issue of biraciality may be the referral, otherwise it is not. Coping with school problems is more of an issue. There seems to be a lack of training about referrals to the counseling office from staff sometimes. I know this is something we are working on.

11. Finding out history and background of person and just knowing what you need to be respectful. Gather appropriate information and things to bring out especially in curriculum

12. None I gather paper and prep the same. Read the chart

13. Welcome them by using icebreakers. B: Ask them about their experiences or something they would be comfortable talking about.

14. Same. Maybe if I did anything, it would be to find out what their background is like. I would talk to my supervisor to make sure that I didn’t do anything to offend.

15. Familiarize myself as much as I can. At the school I can get a lot of information from teachers and family.

16. Same.

17. See above

18. I try to establish trust. Prove myself. Word of mouth among students goes a long way. BE EMPATHETIC

20. I don’t do anything in particular
Appendix C

21. Sometimes I do preparation. I make an attempt to equate myself with the cultural group by reading and talking with others.

9. A. What do you think are the most important things you do to be successful when working with biracial children? What makes a difference?

1. A. To be sensitive to any needs that they have b. to listen to their concerns if they are struggling c. being aware of their potential d. teach kids it is okay, kids are normally more accepting at this age.

2. Be sympathetic. Treat them as you would anyone else. These things make a difference and overall we are all people first and deserve to be treated like human beings, like anyone else.

3. I want the child to feel comfortable. I have worked very hard with this, with students over the past few years by talking with students. That has made the biggest difference, their sharing with me. I think our population has become so diverse that over the last few years they have really taught me a lot.

4. A. don’t say, “Oh, you’re biracial” and concentrate on that. Focus on what they need whether it is parenting, development, or other issues. B. Try to evoke the same sort of comfort I do for other parents, develop a relationship

5. A. Treat all children with respect by being nonjudgmental in attitude, no right or wrong just be accepting. B. Stay open-minded what is right for me is not right for others. So I work hard to meet them where they are at present.

6. Not immediately jumping to conclusions that BR is the issue. Treat them like everyone else. The student comes first then the personal issues. Then being aware enough to listen for comments to know whether there is an issue related to being a biracial child.

7. A. being nonjudgmental of whom their parents are is important b. there is no discrepancy between colors its what ever the child is. For example, parents have shared with me a need to for the child to have less curly hair. That would make it okay or not the dark color to their skin. We can discuss this and I am open to talking about it. I think people realize they can’t change these factors but they just want to talk with some one and be heard.
Appendix C

8. Give them guidance and show that I care they aren’t alone. Share same sentiments obvious part of their life is MC and racial I have been there and can relate. If I know the language I make it a point to greet them and their parents in the language. I like to meet people and display respect.

9. Trying to understand where they are coming from (White, Middle class and American and I think that could be a problem. I try to relate to their background and traditions. I try to be sensitive to their needs and not be offensive. A. Be respectful b. be sensitive c. be nonjudgmental or critical- don’t appear to be shocked when they share situations

10. As a counselor one need to have an understanding of problem ex. He/She said. Not just a biracial issue maybe a lot of underlying issues not just rumor here at school causing the problem for the minority or biracial student who is low SES. All of the personal factors have to contribute we just have to figure out how. I don’t want to have a preconceived idea about kids before I meet them.

11. Be respectful, don’t impose your feelings on the client and the family. Respect where they are coming from and be willing to learn about other cultures. Acceptance is critical. I think this will help you from taking sides against parents and this is so necessary.

12. My personality and love for children of all races and the joy I get for working with families. I see the joy in the aces of the children and I feel happy when working with them. I never meet a stranger, I am open to everyone and I have little difficulty finding something to talk about. I have an outgoing personality and I don’t get hung up on it. I just try to be myself.

13. Establish rapport. B. Maintain trust of family. Focus on what they want instead of what I want even if it’s a bad choice.

14. I don’t point out their differences because to me they are like anyone else. A lot of the time, I allow them to lead and discuss issues. I don’t want to step on their feet.

15. I don’t think I am always successful, especially with other ethnicities. Looks and comments say a lot, good or bad. Difficulty isn’t better or worse, it’s just different, because everyone is unique. I treat people with respect. For me, discussion about what has happened can be used for something to build off.

16. It is important to recognize the duality of their experience in a world that may view them one way when they feel connected to both worlds. Previous to being a social worker, I have had personal connections to the black community and my clients know this and it helps.
Appendix C

17. Affirmation. Everyone needs personal affirmation and an emphasis with parents is important about how to affirm children. I try to model this to parents and praise them first so they learn how to do it. Even when the behavior doesn’t warrant it.

18. Listen and try to understand their point of view, I may not agree with it but I can try to understand it. However, I let the person know that I understanding their reasoning then explain why that may not be okay here at school. Try to stay as non-judgmental as possible.

19. a. Involving families but not specifically my biracial families; extended families as well.
   b. Give them the message that they are not the problem, that this is really a systems issue. I give affirmation to the child and tell them they are okay. I reflect a lot using feeling words to help them identify and build a vocabulary of their own. I encourage them to ask for what they want or need.

20. a. Have an empathetic ear.
   b. Have a strategy or intervention suited to the particular need.
   c. Listen to gain understanding.
   d. Be open to what the client needs. I let them lead to where they need to go.

B. What have been the hardest lessons learned?

1. A. never assume b. grown to overcome my sense of shock- not to become personally overwhelmed by all their issues c. treat all the same

2. I am going to contradict what I just said. That even though we want to treat them the same they do have issues that are different and specific to their background.

3. My observations have led me to think that biracial children tend to identify with one group or another; there is not a lot of blending. I see them selecting one or the other. Hardest lesson with Biracial black and biracial white is that racially they are identifying black and culturally they are identifying white.

4. Asking them about partner or often ex-partner when they express anxiety or discomfort talking about it. This can be and has been especially difficult when the child is biracial and the extended family does not support the child and the child’s background. This happens when younger parents are living at home and when the extended family is involved.
Appendix C

5. That often times their parents make the decision for good or ill and that I don’t have the right or ability to change. I want to recognize the parent as the nurturer and the one in control of decisions for the family, but I have parents sometimes who don’t want to be responsible.

6. There is nothing I can do personally to change society’s classification of people and accepting people. That is going to happen regardless. I think it is a gradual process and the process of acceptance can also be slow. I can’t make that issue go away for that child.

7. Cultural differences especially around discipline and developmental expectations. It is hard because often times beliefs go against what I believe but also what I have been taught as far as how to deal with situations and children.

8. For some to be resentful of who they are and project that onto teachers and other children. I don’t let children take it out on me either. I don’t raise my voice and I don’t shy away from telling to them straight. They know I am honest, but they know I am fair.

9. Not everyone is alike or like me. Same values I have and life in general is a shared experience. Morals are different and standards of behavior are different.

10. Students have shared with me that they feel like they are letting a parent down if they choose something or choose one race over the other. This is especially the case during divorce or when parents separate. People don’t wear signs around their necks that say BRC but they wear that inside their hearts.
Cultural affiliations are focused on physical appearances. It is easier now than it was 40-20 years ago to talk about. Is it okay to mention? No I don’t think so all the time. Sometimes people ask and it seems like the child is being picked on or singled out. Unconsciously or consciously I think that effort needs to be put into how the questions are asked, whether they are and how they are.

11. The way people are treated in genera. Growing up one way and not stereotyping people. Learning that racisms exist and understanding why they do that. /Learning about different cultures and learning more about why they do what they do.

12. Sometimes when working with different cultures I will see things done differently and sometimes it will clash with my values. For ex. The “child is bad” is something that makes me really uncomfortable but is part of a different culture. I try to educate and understand cultural things and that there is different interpretation.

13. To not allow my own ideas and beliefs to interfere with my job.
Appendix C

14. The majority of biracial parents are separated. The child grows up away from a father usually. Mom is then left to explain to the child what happened. This always big.

15. That words can tear children down a lot faster than lots of words of encouragement. Especially the damage that one single word can do, like a slur. It’s hard to face them when they feel so helpless. It’s tough and it’s discouraging

16. The nativity that people have that “love solves everything” because sometimes it doesn’t. Parents cannot protect their children from prejudice and discrimination, no matter how much they love them, caring is not enough. Some children who are given that message are shocked by the reality of truth.

17. Can’t project your values onto others. Can talk about problems and times when people are disadvantaged but this is not the focus. One has to be careful to not turn people off. People can be on the edge of personal / social systems. I treat them with care because so many are.

18. Kids are aware of race and sex at an early age. I believe if a person says it does not matter they are just being unrealistic. That is the way it is, we don’t have to like it. Just be upfront with it and move on. “I can’t change my color, background or age, but I can try to help you right now.” This should be the focus instead of “What’s wrong with you and why are you having problems with this?” We need to deal with the issues. All children, including biracial children, go through this. We need to handle this better as helpers.

19. a. Not to make assumptions
   b. Try not to reach too far beyond their comfort and go to where they choose not to continue. You have to be careful not to pressure a child, for example, making progress towards its own goal. I have to be careful to keep the experience positive so if they need help in the future, they will access it.
   c. Helping parents hear the child.

20. That I may not understand another person’s culture and find out later it leads to misunderstanding.
Appendix C

6. When working with biracial children, do you rely on:

   a. Life experiences- one’s own personal story, family or interactions

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1. 5- Probably higher because it all is based on my personal experiences and there have been pro’s and con’s ex. Disagreements between African American friends where people were slighted or discriminated against. This is how I developed my empathy and sensitivity.

2. 4- Often. I think of my father and what he taught me the most. He was in the military and worked with a lot of Black men and in that time that was not an okay thing to do even in the military. I was taught to respect these men and anyone else. It was important to treat all people the same and I carry that on in my own parenting.

3. 3- Some I think there are things you have learned and socializations with family that shape the way one perceives things based on their history.

4. 3- Because until I went to college there were not biracial families where I am from. I am not very familiar with different cultures and I feel like this is a weakness for me in experience.

5. 5- my family culture and values are that all groups and cultures contain good and evil and one doesn’t have the right to judge another. You should take any person for whom they are and make choices based on who they are. Our family also has a lot of diversity. We have two interracial marriages and two biracial children. They are treated the same in our family as the rest. No differences. My family would be the one’s in the picket lines if something was going on and have often been in the past.

6. 4- raised in the Jim Croe Era in South Carolina. Everything was segregated. Raised by African American women who worked for our family. They (women, husbands and my family-parents) spent time together and the kids all played together. Dad was in the FBI and there was backlash and a concerted effort in family to work hard for what was right. I moved to Louisville when I got married and taught in my first integrated classroom in 1965. I cannot imagine how different I would have been as a person if I had not had these experiences.
Appendix C

7. 4- realize that some prejudices carry on and it is hard not have them do so. I know my life has a bearing on who I am. I have two biracial grandchildren; I grew up in an area where mixed couples were okay. My school in the late 50’s and early 60’s was one of the first to integrate. Because of these factors, I never felt there was a huge difference. Spoke to some of my friends and family who were “terrified” of the environment I grew up in. My dad was also racist and he used a lot of namecalling. I tried to be a much opposite of him as I could.

8. 5- I am biracial and we have many different kinds of people in our family. French, African, African American, Native American, Vietnamese. I know many languages and have learned a lot besides that from my family. It is my draw that everyone has his or her own experience and part of what makes you who you and use this as a frame of reference.

9. 4- where I grew up was in the hills of Eastern Ky. Prejudice is very strong there isn’t a lot of sensitivity for outsiders or others. I have had a lot of experiences of prejudice as a young man from that area. My father died when I was 6 years old so I also grew up in a single parent home.

10. 5 – the morals my mom taught me were important. My dad was a really hard worker; he worked all the time to support us. My mom was there to teach us a lot. She believed that it was important to respect others and do the right thing. Not doing it for the wrong reason. My mom stressed the importance of volunteering, of helping those less fortunate and making an effort to be a good person.
In high / grade school sports was a real important teacher for me. I can remember playing ball against teams from different parts of Indiana and Louisville and learning about different cultures that way. I had never been exposed to different cultures before so I had a lot to learn.

11. 2- I have not had much experience personally

12. 5 – began school during the civil rights movement and I grew up with parents who taught me not to judge or look at person’s skin color. My experience has also been affected by the friends I have who are biracial now.

13. 4 – Depending on what we are talking about, may share similar experience as a way to help then feel not alone and a way to make their decision (self-disclosure). I grew up in Guam and have a very different cultural experience. I also have three bi-racial children.
Appendix C

14. 4 – My dad is a teacher and has taught me a lot over the years. I have relatives with negative attitudes and beliefs that I have had to overcome. Also through college and through sports I have met a lot of people with different backgrounds.

15. 4 – Everyone has their own experience in life that influences them. Where I am in my framework is because of my experience or my lack of experience. For example, I have biracial friends, and I have learned through them and their interracial marriages. Their comments and stories have affected me.

16. 4 – I had a sheltered background of privilege. I learned a lot about the world during a political time when meaningful decisions made a difference. We had no diversity in our small town. My parents were prejudice and had no concept of racial equality. I was a follower of Dr. King.

17. 5- Childhood message: Important to have freedom to explore. My dad was a DA and he was supportive of my independence and exploration. I felt like I had it together by the time I left home. I learned that it was okay to change and modify my approach if something was not working in a given situation.

18. 3- Not a lot of opportunity to mix with different people

19. 3 – My family members don’t accept individuals of different races. I try to offer them another point of view because they have major prejudices. I am from a white upper class family and I feel guilty about how my family acts and treats others. I feel I over compensate and am the “rescuer.” I like to help the underdog.

20. 3 – I have had the opportunity to have family members who are biracial.

b. work experiences- one’s life in work, career moves and professional interactions

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1. 5- Subconsciously or consciously I think all the success and failures affect me. They influence me and I benefit from the different experiences and interactions. I think that it has made a lot of difference, especially my internships in counseling as an introduction.

2. 3 – I have been at the same place for a long so I have had very limited interactions.
3. 4- Let’s be realistic, on the job training is how you know. People come here or places like this and they learn it for themselves.

4. 5 – Relate to more of that because that is where I gained my experience with biracial children.

5. 5 – Everytime and everywhere I work I learn something new or have a new experience. When I lived in DC I was exposed to a lot and I was very thankful for that experience. It is fascinating to me and when I have a new experience I “bank it” to use later. (Went on to list cultures involved in during stay in DC)

6. 5- a. my work began when I started going to Edestell Island, SC working with a segregated Gala speaking community. I was able to see the difference first hand. B. I also worked with the Wesley house and there was more of a mixture of children and this was important in teaching me to be more understanding (in addition to understanding poverty better) c. awareness raising also occurred when I worked anger first hand in a Title 1 reading class with 7th and 8th graders with biracial students, who where bussed in and redneck students from the neighborhood.

7. 5- Always worked with biracial children and always worked with one or more AFAm as far as any racial issue I use it and consider it in my work daily.

8. 5- it is part of the reason I am here. I can incorporate that into everything I do.

9. 3- I realize that I was trained from one particular cultural perspective and that influences how I interact with students. A lot of it is similar and now I have gained understanding of students in different areas.

10. 5- Being a police officer has really taught me a lot. There are issues I have to deal with that people don’t want to touch. I know that no one wants me there and I have to be there and I have to enforce the law. Counseling is like that sometimes. Initially the client does not want you there (in their business) but eventually they see that you are going to help them and you are “allowed in”. From an early point I have relied on these experiences.

11. 4- where I have gotten experience working with different groups of people and where I learned the most.

12. 5- My experience in the field over the last 25 years has really taught me a lot and I have grown from the way things have changed.
Appendix C

13. 3 – I don’t rely on the fact that I have worked with a similar individual or group in the past. I share information about what they need, whether it is school enrollment, financial assistance, or whatever. I’ve always done this and have learned to do this different places that I’ve worked and it seems to help.

14. 5 – 70% of the people I have worked with have been biracial. This has taught me to look more positively towards other cultures and backgrounds. This new exposure was helpful to me because my background is Caucasian.

15. 4 - The more I work with biracial children the more I find out what does and does not work. I try to draw conclusions and strategies from these experiences.

16. 5 – My work experience has been the emphasis of all I do.

17. 4 – My work has taught me a wealth of information. My military experience (air force) was probably the best experience.

18. 3- Not a lot of opportunity to mix with different people

19. 3 – Professional experiences are moderately helpful.

20. 3 – I have had opportunities to work and interact with biracial individuals.

c. raining or educational experience- one’s experience in institutions of higher learning, training and skill building outside of work or personal life

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1. 3- There are a lot of things that you learn in the field and a lot you don’t

2. 4- Often. I think internships and other work experiences can’t be emphasized enough for young counselors. You really need the experience on the job. It teaches you so much more than you will ever know.
Appendix C

3. 4 – I find it quite accurate but a little superficial to rely on institutional learning; it can be a little too predictable. (? – assigning cultural groups characteristics based on text)

4. 4- with internships and tings for school, I had to deal with groups that were different. Ex. Quite a few family differences in the class and this was a lot of my learning

5. 4, then 3- When worked at the spouse abuse clinic, often participated in ongoing training especially multicultural issues. Every problem was a learning experience. My experience at school was not that helpful so I guess make this a 3.

6. 3- When I left, I felt I got enough to prepare me. When I was at UK I did some work at Kentucky State University (all black college) and there was one African American co-worker there who helped me by helping me gain acceptance. Had she not been there I don’t know how that would have turned out.

7. 4- because a lot of training I have gone to talks about cultural diversity and ways you can work with different people this has helped me a lot. I have gained different insights and my associate’s degree emphasizes this a lot.

8. Can’t be emphasized enough

9. 4- classes, workshops, pathways to learning. I think staying current is important and helpful to keep skills sharp

10. 3- I feel more comfortable relying on life experience in being able to help others. Been involved in many different issues through law enforcement and I am getting more out of my law enforcement experience, work at FBI academy and that experience sometimes. The counseling techniques and ethical responsibilities were the best from my education.

I think my position in the school makes my job fun and different. I think being a counselor is good because the kids really need someone to talk to who isn’t a teacher, principal or disciplinarian. Yet at the same time, kids like that I am a policeman. I like them to trust me because I want them to know that the police are your friend and not here to punish all the time. We want to protect and keep the police.

11. 3- I don’t think training and education are really preparation for what you will actually be doing. Can talk about it and learn from it but until you have been there and experienced it doesn’t matter.

12. 4- several trainings at Purdue, the state (Indiana) government agencies. These trainings have been helpful and give me knowledge that I didn’t already have.
Appendix C

13. 4 – from what I have learned in school and in training, I have gained a lot of knowledge. I am able to use this to help clients.

14. 4 – especially I college there is increased diversity. Professors are from various backgrounds and more students are biracial.

15. 2.5 – Coursework didn’t put much emphasis on biracial issues. This was a downfall of the program, since this is whom I work mostly with. We need more information.

16. 3 – Hard to think of anything.

17. 4 - Always in training, always something to learn. Education was a foundation

18. 5- I learned a lot in my training programs

19. 2 – My education did not really prepare me. My educational experiences focused on adults. My training to work with kids came mostly from workshops.

20. 2 – Received a little but useful information in school. Biracial information / knowledge is good but people are different with different needs and we need to remember that.

7. In working with biracial children, what areas do you need more training and information on in order to do your job?

1. A. I would want more experience during practicum and internship. I needed prior experiences somewhere in working with biracial children. B. More awareness somehow of the experience of biracial people, perhaps their writings. C. Opportunity to interact with other professionals and learn their story. I want to become more aware. D. I would like more trainings and strategies to use with biracial children, specifically for groups. I would like to develop as step-by-step guide. I need to do more research on this on my own.

2. More experience working with children. One on one time is so rare in the schools. I would like more diversity training also.
Appendix C

3. Probably really could have used more training when I was younger starting out. Would like to know more about how the biracial child feels. So sensitive to not making it an issue that I don’t say anything sometimes and I worry about that. There is still the prevailing attitude / philosophy that there is nothing wrong with biracial identity / background, so don’t mention it. Don’t regret it, however, is it a healthy attitude? I never hear anyone referred to as specifically Muslim.

4. I would like a little more information on historical backgrounds of races to know where they are coming from to understand their daily living, grouping up, experiencing like, etc.

5. I would like to have more multicultural materials more books that deal with different cultures and curriculum available to share with families that is in different languages. I would love to have assessment materials in another language. I understand some cultures have very different child rearing experiences and I would like to know more about those to be able to present alternatives especially in cases of abuse.

6. A. use proper empathy skills and how to identify ex/ be sure if the anger is related to being biracial. B. How to best enlighten them to identity choices. I would like more trainings for students and staff on biracial situations or possible problems.

7. I don’t know

8. Need to be in the shoes of someone else to really understand it. Need to be there and have the bond. Know one side but you have not felt their whatever- pain or joy. Need to see where they come from and the neighborhoods they live in. Training helps but it is not the end all. It is more important to experience their lives. I would have preferred more experiences with kids as a form of training.

9. More info on poverty. I recently learned some information from Ruby Payne’s book and workshop and that has helped me really understand BR clients and their perspectives a great deal. I know a little better what issues they are dealing with and what techniques and strategies have been successful. I have also learned new ways to motivate students. Anything along those lines would be very helpful and very useful.

10. More issues are focused on dealing with continuing problems/ new issues. I would like more training for upcoming issues for biracial students.

11. Learning more about different cultures and learning to be supportive of individual choices. Social structures and how people socially accepted different races. Working through stereotypes.
Appendix C

12. Ongoing training always good. Helps you to remember things and trainings on how children react to updates / social change.

13. A Domestic violence. This is a very big problem. My biracial homes seem prone to violence. B. Preventing teen pregnancy. C. Increasing self-esteem.

14. Visiting the environment to see and be there versus just hearing about it would make it clearer. I need more information on everything.

15. I need as much information about the subject as possible to understand families beliefs and decisions, I need more information about interracial families.

16. A. Interaction with biracial children, whether they’ve been through the adoptive experience or not. B. Symposia from families who could share helpful anecdotal information.

17. Helpful to work on unusual group diversity, like gay and lesbian issues with biracial children. I definitely need more training on that.

18. To continue to understand daily issues that students are facing. They have to deal with them even without asking for it. We need to develop better understanding.

19. More comprehensive issue in cultural diversity. For example, working with Hispanic and African American families. This increased knowledge would increase my comfort level.

20. More information on specific cultures so as dispel myths. We need to become more informed and knowledgeable about biracial issues.

8. A. What is your understanding of your biracial clients’ holidays, religious observances or other celebrations?

1. This community, these students are mostly Christian celebrations, especially death – heaven – afterlife stuff. No Jewish, some energy for Kwanza. Different teachers take it more seriously and support different celebrations Ex/ MLKing program is very powerful in the school. Lots of diversity lessons during February for different cultures not just African American.
Appendix C

2. Not really. I think they are really similar for the most part but I know winter break is when most of the differences come up because Christmas isn’t the same and there are different celebrations for different religions here.

3. Biracial mostly seem to observe Christian holidays. Muslims here are vocal and participate, the Hindu and Indian students really don’t. I don’t really have parents calling me to ask if their child can be excused.

4. I have noticed that for birthdays there is a difference, they don’t go all out. I am not used to that since birthdays are a big, all day occurrence in my family. I do notice they have larger family gatherings but not so much around holidays. Maybe because they celebrate different holidays.

5. Ramadan and Kwanza are two I have participated in. I have learned a lot from friends and co-workers and that has helped me in the work that I do. I ask a lot of questions. I will admit I have somewhat of a personal prejudice re: Kwanzaa, but I think that I don’t fully understand. I feel like it is a created holiday. I don’t really know enough about it to understand or fully appreciate.

6. Biggest concern is figuring out who they are going to spend time with. Some kids are Christian and Muslim in broken homes. I don’t know if any Jewish families that have this problem. Matter of who they are with during the celebration time and whether there is acceptance by other family members of the other family. This affects the child a lot.

7. Not very much. I am familiar with Kwanza but I don’t know a great deal about it. I don’t know people who practice it very much. Most of my experience is with Christian holidays. Can’t think of a client with another religion or difference.

8. Foreign children have a different perspective and religious differences are very critical. A lot of the differences are Americanized. Christmas is Christmas just with a different face be it Kwanza, Hanukkah or Christian.

9. Minimal. MLK b-day and February is busy that is really all I know about

10. Not much understanding at all, MLK really all we focus on here at school.

11. Some knowledge; know least about Hispanic holidays. I have learned through client more about fiestas and celebrations. What I have discovered is that a lot of celebrations are very similar to what I celebrate. Taught me some interesting things.
Appendix C

12. Most children are the same and have a basis of Christian faith somehow. I respect the differences in it, especially during holidays. I haven’t dealt with a lot of differences.

13. Holidays are religiously related. My Hispanic clients tend to be very spiritual people and culturally they take their observance very seriously.

14. Not too clear. Different religious beliefs are okay with me because clients openly discuss.

15. Pretty good. What they celebrate is similar to mine (on the outside anyway). This has not come up much.

16. Most have the same religion, more or less. I understand Kwanza very well. I have 12 years experience and involvement.

17. Moderate. I think regardless of the religion one can be honest, ask questions and be supportive in an affirming way, even if that is not one’s particular belief.

18. Minimal. Some students hate the holidays. It is a reminder that no one is at home or at least together. It is 2 weeks off with nothing to do and no one around. Then when the holiday arrives, it may be a far cry from what it is supposed to be like. Being alone on Christmas for half a day is not uncommon for some of the kids.

19. I do not celebrate holidays. I do not pay attention to them. My information and understanding has come through friends and clients.

20. There are distinct differences in some cultures for certain holidays. I understand that some holidays are not acknowledged and celebrated because they are taboo. I celebrate Kwanza.

9. At this age, do you think biracial children have different needs than monoracial children regarding their passage through puberty?

1. a. Almost all children here suffer from a lack of self-esteem have this in common, not just biracial children. 7th graders have trouble loving themselves, forgiveness of self, making mistakes and overcoming the guilt. However, biracial children seem to have a devastated sense of self-esteem, making meaning of gender differences during puberty is a biggie too because children develop differently b. That brings us to the dating issue and interracial dating. Biracial children have to cope with “jump race dating” more common here and I am growing more accustomed to it because I am seeing it more now.
Appendix C

2. Not really. I know children around them treat them differently—friendships and dating. In the past I have witnessed more problems for kids with development, i.e. being overweight, too tall, etc.

3. Never really thought about it very much. Could be a problem… I see some of the African American students being the “fad or trend setters” for other students. Looks and appearances are very important at this age, what you wear, your jewelry, etc. I guess the biggest issue would be social identity. They feel it is important to lock that in first. Also, culturally they seem pretty lost.

4. Trying to find a place to fit in. Biracial families and children are still trying to fit in. More than other adolescents try to find a place where they are accepted.

5. a. Adolescence is such a hard time with body changes and when you already look so different it can be even more difficult. B. At this age the features of a child are divided and categorized all the time. I don’t think this is fair because this is a whole person, not piece and parts of one. I had a biracial young lady this year struggle with this. She was trying to pull it all together by taking it apart. She was trying to find niche. Clients try to make sense of it and fit in all the time. C. With one particular group there is a sense of belonging and another sense of not belonging. Persons I have worked with are really upset that there is no way to identify a biracial child specifically. Specifically there was this one client who was ½ Hispanic and ½ Caucasian and her children were 1/3 Hispanic 1/3 Caucasian and 1/3 African American and she was very upset that she could not mark multiethnic or multiracial on forms we were using. Rather than choose she declined identity choices on forms altogether. She found this to be devastating to her. “I can’t deny who my children are. I can’t tell them to deny.” The children were confused and upset because they felt strongly that what their mother had taught them about identity and pride was important. They had trouble at school too.

6. Yes, what happens is that everything changes and it is emerging. Especially the sexuality. Some kids develop faster and the ones who used to be friends then shut them out. Changing friendships junior high is so different than elementary school. Values and other things are different too. Young ladies 12-13-14 especially. 9th grade is where change happens more for the boys. Dating is a huge issue because it isn’t just kids. Parents get involved in choosing up sides. Black/White is the big one because white families aren’t accepting like the other groups. In general, I see division of groups but I don’t know if there are particular girls who exclude biracial girls.
Appendix C

7. Yes, I think at that pint some children are forced to make a choice if they are African American and Caucasian. I hope this changes, but several children are forced to choose for ex. By society, colleges, dr's office. Ex. Forms more choose AfrAmericans and some are more adamant about being Caucasian. I know a grown man in therapy who is still confused about this and has never resolved his confusion. He feels like he has no place that he belongs and if he acknowledged or choose Caucasian his friend and family would be very upset. This has followed him his whole life because of what happened to him in childhood. I see kids here today who remind me of this man.

8. A. black children tend to find their sexuality faster than white children. B. Economics and lack funds to have what the other children have. This is a problem. A single mother living in the housing community is not going to have the same ability of a middle class family with two parents. C. Dating is huge. All these things have power in common, sex, money and status. It’s all about power.

9. a. Needs are probably the same. I think it is important to be able to meet those needs differently because eventually the little kid grows up and becomes an adolescent and then a young person and so on. I think the average student is supported and given opportunities that the biracial child is not given. b. There is a rejection of social values and family issues are very different, with grandparents and extended family for one. The family unit has changed so much and so many things are missing. c. Racism is still prevalent in the area there are aggravated circumstances here. Children are still open to racial slurs, derogatory comments. This can be really hard because the biracial child is still trying to figure out who they are and what it is about and then someone comes along and tears them down. And this makes the struggle even harder.

10. Yes, biracial children carry other issues associated with who they are. Sexuality is a big issue, we have had some concerns with children who are exploring gay / lesbian lifestyles and who are biracial. It makes it that much harder to get through. It seems like they are lacking support from home and school.

11. Yes, because harder to them to learn background because they don’t have a “pure – one heritage”. Friendships and dating are affected by these issues and what other people will think of them. A lot of the parents don’t accept this when it comes to dating and friendships.

12. a. Biracial children don’t always fit in to the Black / White groups. People (questioned) kids, parents – still have fundamental stereotypical and racist beliefs about this. b. Being accepted by even their families or grandparents or extended families for who they are.
Appendix C

13. Yes, they are more sensitive to slights that may hurt their self-esteem because they are different. For example, as their body changes, they have a lot of emotional struggle because they are different. When everyone else around you notices you are different, this is seen as a weakness, not as strength. It is helpful to notice this as strength and to refrain if possible. BRC need to be accepted, but peer-pressure is so strong.

14. Yes, I still get stereotyped and ridiculed and I am a grown up. But, probably not as much as in the past. I can recall instances of violence in my school and when my dad taught. Dating is a big problem because parents get too involved. Biracial kids have a lot of problems being in a mixed couple.

15. Yes, I think this is a time to find out who they are. They are trying to stake out an identity. It is a rocky time among peer groups because acceptance is everything, and words hurt. Dating is difficult because they aren’t sure which group to go to and why they feel how they feel and what is okay and just tons of other issues. They feel torn between mom and dad. Even though all kids have this experience, it is not as intense as it is for biracial kids.

16. Yes, BRC have all the same needs plus additional needs because of biracial issues. The biggest issue is their identity because society has a view of race that is quite different than what they experience in their family.

17. There is a missing connection to ones background. They rarely make use of it and are not affirming of their heritage to others because others are not affirming of them. This comes up in friendships and dating and relationships in general all of the time.

18. Yes, looks are everything for students this age. Students will point out the different shade of skin color and they use being too light or too dark as a bad characteristic.

19. Yes, adolescence is so different that being biracial and finding a peer group would be difficult to fit in. These children look different and have different beliefs, which makes adolescence all the more difficult. The big questions deal with identity, like who am I?, where am I? and where do I belong? as they individuate from families and parents of different races.

20. a. Yes, I don’t know if I can put my finger on it. But, I think biracial children have much different needs. They do not feel as well connected to peers and there is rejection because they don’t belong to any group. b. There is also little acceptance by either group when dating.
Appendix C

10. A. What have you read about working with biracial children?

1. Not a whole lot, some articles in class – Contemporary issues

2. Not much, articles cross my desk from administrators but I really don’t have time

3. Haven’t really read

4. Not very much. It seems like most literature and info. Doesn’t have specific information. Most info is pretty generic.

5. Took college classes and have read articles “I have had a lot of selected readings in college that were not so select” (when questioned) they were not very good

6. Haven’t read any particular books

7. Not many things. I have read stories and articles in the newspaper about biracial children.

8. Not much. You can read all the books in the world, but until you have lived it, you don’t know what it is like and you give little insight.

9. Very little

10. Nothing specifically

11. Can’t remember titles and authors. I have read a lot about interracial marriages and dating. Social skills are different and play skills can be different due to child rearing differences.

12. Various articles from the youth shelter

13. Some articles

14. Textbooks through college as well as magazine and journal articles.

15. One to two articles maybe.

16. Articles.
Appendix C

17. Some books in college? Authors cannot remember

18. Honestly not much on BRC specifically


B. (If person has read) What has been the most helpful?

1. Of what I have read, (above) I enjoyed learning about the different experiences of the children.

2. None

3. None

4. none

5. Nothing sticks out as helpful

6. Ruby Payne’s book as a Framework for understanding poverty was helpful

7. Stories in the newspaper have been helpful because they share how they fit in or didn’t and the personal experiences are really interesting. When children start asking questions it is important to know how to answer them and know what will have an impact.

8. Not much

9. Ruby Payne’s work on generational poverty in cultures. I have gained a new understanding of this for biracial people also. The differences in values are so different than what I know about.

10. Nothing

11. Self-esteem materials of biracial child because it is hard to understand how they feel inside about who they are what color their skin is.

12. All helpful but none really specific and those that were focused on crime elements. The information raised my awareness and understanding about biracial families.
Appendix C

13. Those that have been helpful talked about sensitivity, cultural differences, and how beliefs aren’t the same.

14. Nothing specific, just overall background and beliefs. At least it was a framework.

15. Couldn’t tell you. Nothing was helpful.

16. That someone might not do well is school and the culture tells them to not do better, than other members of their group. It is important not to outshine the group but to fit in to cultural biases.

17. Nothing notable

18. Nothing

19. Info about cultural diversity was less effective because it was generic. Some readings talked about family structure and religious cultures. That was helpful.

20. “Changing face of the family” by Derrick Prince. This book was good because it raised awareness of the changing traditional family.

Have you attended any workshops on working with biracial children?

1. No
2. No
3. 2
4. no
5. 4
6. 1
7. 0
8. 0
9. 0
10. 4
11. 0
12. 0
Appendix C

13. Yes
14. 0
15. 0
16. 1
17. 0
18. 2
19. 0
20. 1

(if "yes") What workshops have you found helpful?

1. Nothing
2. Nothing
3. Not really helpful, always had a subplot that racial issues could not be overcome
4. Not specifically
5. a. Interactive two day multicultural training at spouse abuse clinic, which was age specific. It opened my eyes to identify my own culture, discrimination against biracial and we did several role plays. B. Various other trainings provided by the state (Indiana) that also were not specific they focused on SES as opposed to racial/ethnic differences
6. Ruby Payne – Poverty culture. I learned about acceptance of the SES and the different classes acceptance in group. Poor single white women are a large part of this.
7. None
8. 15 or so over the years. Only one stands out. It was delivered by Dr. Ernie Smith in 1975 in Indianapolis and its focus was syntax differences between black and white. The others have been internal in the school system and not that helpful.
9. None
Appendix C

10. If their actions are different it doesn’t necessarily mean they are not listening or they are aggressive.

11. None

12. None


14. None.

15. None.

16. Sponsored by MEPA (Multi-Ethnic Parents Association) regarding foster care adoptions of biracial children

17. Nothing

18. A. just completed a diversity-training workshop designed to help staff members understand and appreciate diversity in others. B. Was basic and wasn’t relevant to the topic.

19. Nothing

20. Intro to biracial issues

Have you attended or acquired general education classes in cultural awareness and sensitivity? _____

1. 2- At-risk children, African American mothers both at national conferences

2. 2 - Diversity workshops offered through school system

3. 2- issues around grief for culturally blended families very useful and techniques class

4. 1 – Cultural diversity

5. 2 - Native American workshops, Appalachian families

6. 0
Appendix C

7. 4 – 2 on cultural diversity, Hispanic family relationships and one on diversity

8. So many courses I have trouble remembering. Intro to Psy was probably the best because I was introduced to the idea of understanding myself in a new way. I felt different after that. Also psychoanalytic theory.

9. 6 – generational poverty Ruby Payne, MLK inservices, diversity sensitivity and the rest were train the trainer events sponsored by the school

10. Through the police department, went through a series of cultural diversity trainings and professional conferences (ICA/ACA)

11. 4 a. cultural diversity b. disabilities c. working with Hispanic cultures d. working with people in poverty

12. 500-600 several. IARCA and PCA workshops, cultural diversity trainings, working with Hispanic families, Native Americans, Appalachia - poverty

13. 3 a. Appalachian b. cultural diversity c. Native American


15. Cultural diversity


17. Lectures lead by parents who shared their experiences and shared their struggles

18. 10-12 some trainings were helpful, all were very basic

   b. Play therapy workshop-exceptionally valuable because it had a wide variety of tools I could use individually and they were not bound by racial barriers. It allows for discussion and a chance to get deeper with the client.

20. 4 - a. Cultural Diversity
    b. Appalachia Culture
    c. Cultural Poverty
    d. Multicultural sensitivity
Appendix C

F. (If "yes") What kinds of courses have you had that have helped in working with biracial children (if person can't think of one, give examples: family counseling, multicultural counseling)?

1. Contemporary issues – putting yourself in the shoes of the poor, children with disabilities in addition to their being biracial

2. Didn’t have course like that at the time. Other courses didn’t really cover the subject either.

3. 2 Sociology classes on race relations were good but a little biased (and I am part African American!) I think the classes were good because they helped raise sensitivity to African American population. I learned more about Hispanic culture and how to recognize issues in the family.

4. 1 cultural diversity class, but it was more anthropology. I had two basic sociology classes but they were not extremely helpful.

5. seminar classes in multicultural issues, music in cultures. Also family systems across cultures- this was a sociology course. The marriage, family and child rearing class was good because it showed me a whole new world and caused me to examine my own. There was a lot of different information in marital relationships.

6. We didn’t have one – I can’t recall any in particular.

7. None

8. 5- why should I be uncomfortable?

9. Tidbits from Ed and counseling, psychology, nothing specific because we didn’t have MC classes when I was in school. More counseling classes than anything else alluded to it.

10. Can’t think of any. We didn’t have courses like that in my program.

11. None my classes were focused on therapeutic / medical needs

12. None

Appendix C

14. Cultural diversity UG Human diversity G

15. Child and family welfare course was somewhat helpful. Other classes were generic, didn’t deal with the issue.

16. None.

17. Urban planning class

18. We didn’t really have one

19. Cultural diversity class.

20. None

Attitudes

11. How comfortable are you when working with biracial children?

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1. 4- I love them for who they are and the training I have acquired has helped me approach them with empathy and listening. The only reason I didn’t give this a 5 was I have not worked with all biracial children and it would be impossible for me to rate, not knowing what their issues might be or what mine might be with them.

2. 4- Feel comfortable talking with most anyone

3. 5 – Not an issue, I feel comfortable with all kinds of people

4. 4- The way we work with children isn’t geared toward what they are, it is more toward who they can become and what they are learning

5. 5 – I treat all children the same, not a race or culture. Different cultures require sensitivity but I try not focus on the differences.
Appendix C

6. 4- I would say that I have learned from experience over the years that there are still instances when it is uncomfortable. “How can I mark 5 to be totally comfortable, if they are uncomfortable”?

7. 5- I don’t feel race is an issue for me.

8. 5-

9. 4- people are people all have the same basic need and that is respect. Respect for one another is the element of caring work and can overcome barriers. You can work through anything if you are open to issues

10. 4- Very comfortable would be my selection if I had more training. If the issue came up because of my expertise I have no problem saying lets get you to talk to someone else. I want to be helpful to the student and without training about a particular issue I cannot say that I am very comfortable. The child deserves to get the support and appropriate help.

11. 5- I think I am really open. It is almost when I had child I do not see the child as biracial, just a child in pain.

12. 5- Don’t have any problem with race of the child I am working with biracial or not. I just like to help if I can.

13. 4 – I feel I can relate especially well with Hispanic cultures because I was raised in a similar culture. Not that I can’t relate well to others.

14. 5 – No more difficult than any other. In fact, they are my easier families to work with.

15. 4 - I feel comfortable and would have selected a 5 if I had more exposure.

16. 5- Don’t look at them as BRC. This could be the top issue for children I have been involved with. This is something we cannot change so we move on to what we can change.

17. 5- I think it is important to celebrate diversity and emphasize the positive. I am very comfortable with different groups. The more different the more I like it.

18. Kids are great. I enjoy getting to know whom they are and not what they are
Appendix C

19. 2 – I have a lack of knowledge and my experiences have not been that extensive. I live in a primarily monoracial world and I am trying to learn and apply new information.

20. 5 – Because of experience with biracial children, people in my family who are different, we are different. I don’t see people and think I might be uncomfortable.

12. How often do you participate in particular cultural events (such as festivals, dances or musical celebrations) in the community of biracial families?

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<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
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1. 4 definitely. I attend almost all of the functions here and the lessening of the culture shock factor when attending festivals has helped me a lot. I love to try new foods, hear new music and experience differences.

2. 2 - Just school events to be honest. I have spent a lot of time at home over the past few years.

3. 3 – We do a lot in the community around black history month and some of the Mexican holidays. We have two Hispanic teachers and they are very active pulling the community in and promoting festivals. I always enjoy helping and being a part of that. Especially the food! We do a breakfast here in the school before the festival.

4. 2 - I try not to cross that boundary because I have to avoid getting more into their lives beyond our professional relationship.

5. 2- Most of my work with biracial children has demanded that I remain sensitive of boundaries issues. It is important not to be the friend and not get involved in that way.

6. 3- I attend events like gospel festivals, cultural heritage weekends with groups from France, South Africa, Arabic countries, Turkish groups. Our school liaison helps connect me to a lot of things going on out there. I work with the local college in their outreach program. We have sponsored African dancing events, Japanese art festivals and formal tea ceremonies. All of these are good, but there are limited opportunities to expand because there is not a lot of money to support the effort.
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7. 3- I have attended festivals like the Jamaican festival and cultural festivals as a sponsor of girl scouts

8. 5- I make it a point to involve myself in all the festivals I can. Jewish, Vietnamese, and African. Knowing helps me know my students.

9. 2 - Through our church offer it offers more diversity and participation with other churches to experience cultural events and differences. Ex. We partner with an African church in the community and this has helped a lot.

10. 4- Attend a lot of musical festivals and heritage festivals. Rarely miss one

11. 3- I go to events where children and families are like fairs and picnics, festivals.

12. 3- open houses, heritage festivals

13. 3 – sometimes more aware of festivals

14. 2 – a few festivals

15. 2 – don’t know of any.

16. 3- Kwanza and related African celebrations.

17. 2 – rarely attend ethnic festivals

18. 3 – depends on when, where and if I am invited.

19. 2 – I don’t participate in this community in an effort not to run into clients outside of work. Obeying boundaries is an ethical bind and I realize it has its shortcomings.

20. 5 – Everything I attend is multicultural. My husband is the minister of a multicultural/biracial church.
Appendix C

13. How often do you inquire about the racial background of your clients regardless of racial influences (dress, speech, etc.) or appearances?

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1. 3 – Always take them for who they are and find out in the moment what they will need. If that was their concern, (the need to talk about their racial identity) I would address it. Otherwise I would not. I did have some kids threaten suicide one year so I checked their record and discussed it with them then because I was trying to understand why they were so unhappy. I am more comfortable to ask them how they feel, what their fears or concerns are. This helps me to raise my own awareness about what I think and feel. If they have really unusual backgrounds I ask them to share their experience so that I can know better how to support them.

2. 1 – generally. I don’t ask because I don’t want to be perceived as showing prejudice.

3. I make it a point to find out somewhere. Usually I am told by the principal or someone in the office who enrolls them. I make it a point to ask parents in a respectful way thought, like- “Do you have any limitations on their cafeteria requests? Are there certain foods, culturally, that your family does not eat?” I have found this to be effective after working with a biracial child (Middle Eastern and Caucasian).

4. 2– I am not the first person making contact and it is already established by the time that I see them. I leave it up to the assessment person to clarify. I don’t ask otherwise.

5. 2– Normally I don’t do the intake assessment the assessment person in our program does. If I notice I will inquire normally it is already answered. I also thinks it depends on the relationship with the person. If I feel there is comfort, personally and professionally I might ask. I wouldn’t want to ask the question to be too forward or too offensive. I think it is more important to know who they are and not what they are.

6. 3– I think of it. In my mind I wouldn’t inquire. I always do during intake by not making eye contact while I am at the computer filling out the school forms and just as, “and what race would you like?” Otherwise there is no point and no opportunity.

7. Sometimes, because I am not always sure of what a person’s race is. If I have even the slightest doubt I ask sometimes I am met with disbelief but that is okay. I would rather that than assume. Some people want to be mixed, not one or the other.
Appendix C

8. I do all profiles on new students so I get them in my head before I meet them to have something to talk with them about. I may not always recall the name but I try to be personable.

9. 3- generally unless something pointed out and I have to deal with racial background, I don’t discuss it.

10.1- From the problems dealt with not an issue dealing with infractions and he said she said problems aren’t really those that center on BRC issues. It could be a part of it but it is not coming up a lot.

11. 5 – Check and read for and be sensitive to. Try to be aware and know what has happened in their life.

12. 3 Different instances if it was something I didn’t understand I would ask them to get better insight to do a better job.

13. 4 – I utilize any opportunity to ask questions. Clients enjoy talking about their culture.

14. 3 – If they have a different accent and it is apparent, I will ask. I will ask about where she has lived or something like that.

15. 3.5 – It is an important piece to getting to know someone. Any type of knowledge acquired about one’

16. 2 – only if it something they want to talk about

17. 2 don’t see a reason

18. 1 – I don’t inquire unless it has to do with the issue at hand.

19. 5 – During intake process, there is an opportunity to inquire. It is uncomfortable and I find myself apologizing in advance.

20. 5 – It is one of the 1st questions on my assessment. I am not assuming anything. You are not what other people think.
14. Earlier in this interview you said that you have worked with ____ biracial children.

   a. Of the sorts of biracial children who come to your school (mental health center), which do you think you understand the best and have (or would have) the least difficulty working with?

   B/H    B/W    B/A    H/W    H/A    A/W

1. 60-75 children #1 was B/W because so common but I am okay with all

2. 8 children #1 was B/W because so common

3. 12-15 per year #1 B/W because there are so many and I have more familiarity, but I think that is on its way to changing

4. 20- B/W with a close second no H/W. I pick the ones with white because I am white and I think I understand that one and black because that is the one I have the most contact with then Hispanic

5. 75- this is difficult because there is really none. I guess H/W. I have the most knowledge and have worked professionally with several children like this. I also have a lot of friends and family that are these

6. 250-300 – B/W most have been this at school

7. 25-30 B/W because it is more common and there is a bigger population but Hispanic is quickly catching up.

8. 200+ none. I can work with all

9. 40 – B/W because I have worked with them the most have the most familiarity/understanding

10. BW more prevalent probably all have been, one or two have been B/H

11. B/W #1 and H/W #2. I am comfortable with any but I have most experiences with these two groups.

12. 500-600 BW because I am most familiar with this group and I have worked with them through out my life.
Appendix C

13. 15 – H/W and H/A similar to my own background.

14. 40 – BW and HW. Majority of who I’ve worked with.

15. B/W and A/W. The vast majority or my clients and I have friends and more personal experience.

16. 70- B/W Have knowledge of and experience with

17. B/W most experience

18. B/W largest population

19. 15-20, B/W. This is the group of biracial children I have had the most experience with.

20. 10 – B/W. Because I am black and around whites. And because it is most of my experience.

b. Of the sorts of biracial children who come to your school (mental health center), which do you think you understand the least well and have (or would have) the most difficulty working with?

B/H B/W B/A H/W H/A A/W

1. H/W and H/A because I have least experience with Hispanic people

2. H/A because it so different and there are language barriers.

3. B/A because there are such extreme differences. I think they more strongly adhere to culture and discipline and I have seen these two cultures clash because of it. * I think for both of these groups we will see a change since the population’s trends have been affected by growing families via the military. I am seeing more children who are different now entering the middle school whose parents were in the military and married women or men from different countries where they were stationed.

4. H/A Don’t really understand Asian American culture very well as much as I should. I have also not had a lot of contact.

5. B/A and H/A is second. I feel very uncomfortable with Asian because I have a lack of information and exposure about the Asian or Asian American culture.
Appendix C

6. B/H I would if I had more information and I know there are more issues in our area with these groups.

7. H/A. Because it is 2 cultures which are so opposite. Could be hard and the language and customs referred to may be in H or As terms and I don’t have a great understanding of these. Also there is a language difference. I also feel it makes a difference when you look at whether or not they were American born Hispanics or Asians.

8. None, I can work with all. I haven’t much experience working with H/A

9. H/A such differences

10. H/A would be hard because I know very little about this group.

11. A/W I am not familiar with the Asian culture

12. BA, AH, AW all would be the same because I don’t understand a lot about Asian cultures. I also do not know other languages like Chinese, Japanese or Spanish.

13. B/W, B/A It’s furthest away from my own background and familiarity.

14. BA. To my knowledge never worked with anyone like this.

15. B/H and B/A. Never worked with any of these. No professional or personal exposure.

16. H/A know nothing about either group

17. H/A not much experience

18. None – In my position, I try to understand each individual in that moment. It is not necessary for me to understand their whole background or personal history.

19. H/A and B/A. I have not had very much experience at all with people of Asian descent.

20. H/A – Not around these cultures much.
Appendix C

15. How comfortable do you feel when working with parents of biracial children?

1. Moderately comfortable. I do have a level of anxiety around parents. I think I sense their anxious tone and they sense mine. I think that through the body language it is conveyed. Some of these parents have had such negative experiences. I have found many parents are careful listeners and catch inappropriate statements really quickly. Sometimes they can be too sensitive and place a wall around themselves, trying to be careful and cautious.

2. Comfortable but a little less comfortable than I am with children. I worry or am concerned in the back of my mind about whether or not they are questioning me, my knowledge, expertise or experience working with children.

3. Comfortable, but I don’t get that much opportunity to interact with parents. Rarity for them to come in, especially together since so many people work and since there is so many single head of households. It is becoming less and less frequent to have the same race parents.

4. I feel fairly comfortable; if they are comfortable with children being biracial it makes me feel more comfortable speaking with them about it. Even if you are not talking about race there is tension there. I think it is uncomfortable no matter who you are the first few times you see the family or do something that is different. They have to get to know you.

5. Fairly comfortable. Children are children and there are some parents who are easier to work with. I have to remember that the parents are the ones who affect change. The more challenging it is the more I like it. Hard to say if it is difficult to work with biracial children’s parents specifically because I try to put myself in their shoes as a parent and understand that any parent could be difficult to work with when there is a concern with a child.

6. See previous answer. Somewhat uncomfortable because if you had trouble it is a different kind of meeting with a child or parent. I don’t want to be the person who is jumping on their case about an interracial marriage or relationship.

7. I’m fine. The only I have experienced discomfort is when one Hispanic does to speak English and he may be misinterpret what I am doing. My presence can be perceived as a threat. I am uncomfortable because I don’t know how to ease concerns about why I am there and it is hard then to work with the child.
Appendix C

8. I have no problem with them because I am comfortable in just about any situation. Life has prepared me for it and I talk the talk and walk the walk.

9. Comfortable. One student I had a little problem with was a biracial child whose mother was from another country and she didn’t speak English very well. Dad was in the military and we when he came back home we worked out the problem because he could communicate with her. I am impressed by how much less of an oddity that situation is now a days.

10. Comfortable, because I am not shy in saying what needs to be said and what needs to be done. I know where my expertise ends and begins. Don’t feel these parents are too different. I can relate as a parent myself.

11. I am very comfortable. I think I sensitive to both parents and the strong need is to be comfortable with the child and to support him. I don’t have personal issues with the choices they have made. I can’t change that and don’t want to.

12. A lot more comfortable today than I was 10-15 years ago. Back when I first started not that common. 2-3 per classroom and today it is very common. More accepted today by society also.

13. I am comfortable because I talk to them like I would any parent. When I ask them questions about their culture, they appreciate the interest.

14. Very comfortable with single parent families. I don’t have many families with two parents. Usually, it is just the mom and child – no father. The mothers have been very open for the most part. Some mothers don’t want to discuss the fathers at all.

15. Fairly comfortable. How we carry that over to different parents is very individual. For some people, it’s hard because of the concerns with their children.

16. There are people who are interested and need as much information as I can give them. They want information to improve their life with their child and are open to learning.

17. Very comfortable and I accept diversity and this allows us to get into more issues.

18. The most important thing is develop trust. Sometimes that requires going that extra mile. The most difficult issue is for me to understand language. If a student or a parent does not speak English, then I will get a translator. This builds trust.
Reactions in the Field

Appendix C

19. Sometimes comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable. I become the rescuer because I don’t know what it is like to have a biracial child. I don’t know those struggles. For the large part, parents are separated, have never lived together and have never considered themselves a family. Parents degrade one another for their behavior or flaws. Sometimes they make racial slurs or comments in front of the child. I have to educate them on what is appropriate and not appropriate. But, then I feel bad for not being a parent or a parent of a biracial child.

20. Very comfortable. Most of my family is biracial. I am not intimidated.

16. How does your own racial background affect working with biracial children?

1. My young experiences are limited but I think my racial background has worked for and against me at times. I had little diversity in high school. I often feel that I have to prove that I love these kids no matter what the race. I wish who I am and where I come from was not such a hindrance to relationship and potential relationships. I am so monoracial!! I wish in a way I weren’t working so hard! I find I love learning about their backgrounds to compensate for mine and we spend an equal amount of time learning from each other.

2. Having the knowledge that my father placed in me, my German heritage, my mothers parenting, and my French background. (they met during the war) Somewhere along the way my families figured out how to blend the two nationalities and get along and work it out. Both sides of my family were very important and we visited them a lot. I think by being okay with these I have been better prepared to work with people.

3. Interesting to build the bond. Children have to get to know you to trust you. Once kids learn about me and find out that I am very different they are pretty open. I open up a lot to help them open up a lot.

4. I think it makes me more comfortable if one o the races is Caucasian and or more uncomfortable if I am working with a race that I do not know very much about. Even if not working with a race not knowledgeable about at all like Asian American. I think clients know when you are okay or not. I think they judge us too.

5. Sometimes being white can be a detriment. In DC I was viewed as the “white girl” not so much sometimes and other times I was able to win them over. Prejudices exist in every group and culture. I just tried to educate them about me and not let it affect our relationship so much as it was affecting change.
Appendix C

6. “I am very comfortable with people of color.” “It is my sense that we are all people of color, you know?” I sense that people see me as an ally and a person who will be their advocate, especially my kids. They know when people will give them the benefit of the doubt and not judge them.

7. I don’t think it does. I don’t know how to answer. Although Native American is not too removed in our family, I have had never had contact with the culture. My grandfather did. We have/had relatives on reservations in Oklahoma. I can’t think of a time when race has been an issue or problem for me.

8. I don’t talk down to them. I start where they are and gradually introduce expectations. I present myself as the helping guy to show others.

9. Something I had to work through that was different than what I was accustomed to. I had always thought our backgrounds were equal but separate and I have learned other people don’t agree. I have really had to work on that. Not everyone wants the support even from me, another biracial person. I can see face-to-face some of their problems with cultural views but there is still a buffer they keep around them.

10. By no means do I feel I am better. I tell kids I was raised in a family where we struggled financially and I know what that is like. I appreciate my background because it has helped me be the person I am today. I wouldn’t change it. I benefit from the struggle and because it was tough at home I know what you can make out of your life. Race is not a factor. Poverty and non-support are more something we have in common. Plus the fact that kids know I am a policeman. They feel good about talking to me because I have changed their perception of the law enforcement they are used to.

11. Being monoracial has not been easy. It has made me more inquisitive because I don’t know a lot. I know I could put people ill at ease. Perhaps my weight or the jewelry I wear. I am uneasy because of my lack of involvement, about how they are gonna feel about me.

12. I don’t think it has. I think my age works for me. Childhood has a great effect on the way I work. Families may not initially open up to me but after awhile they realize I am there to help and they come around. I think the fact that I am older helps too. I am sort of “grandmotherly”.

13. It has helped me understand more easily more cultural differences. Also, I understand the difficulties they have had to face because of my background. Because of this, they have opened up to me more.
Appendix C

14. To me it doesn’t. I haven’t had anyone come out and tell me that I haven’t “got it” or understood. I think if someone did confront me, I would ask for more information or clarification.

15. I would hope they would perceive me as someone accepting, sometimes I wonder if my weight is an issue.

16. Increased understanding, and the possibility for me to reach different families and make a difference. I am an old lady but I have few important things to teach the young ones and I don’t mind sharing if they are sincere.

17. Guarded at times because I am an old white guy. I hope that my personality helps them overcome problems. I think it does.

18. I am sure it affects relationships and I changed relationships with students and parents and not even realized it. I am sure there are cultural differences that I do not know or understand the meaning or value of. I am not sure who it affects the relationship fully. It would be interesting to get the students and the parent’s point of view.

19. I feel guilty because I am representative of the white male culture. I am perceived as a do-gooder and that concerns me. Sometimes I try harder but I make it worse. I come across as a rescuer because I feel guilty for things that aren’t my fault. When I am genuine and can be myself, not acting out of guilt, embarrassment or privilege, it is better. I want to help children see what is available to them and that they do have a worth, a value and talent.

20. I think people see me as open-minded and easy to connect to. I have very few preconceived ideas about people.

Expectations

17. In the next ten years, what trends do you see in your community regarding the prevalence of biracial children?

1. Acceptance will be a trend. Interracial dating and marriages are increasing and there are so many variations of skin color now that it is hard to tell who is and who isn’t. Based on these wonderful kids I have hear at school, I think there will be a decrease in racial crimes, increase in acceptance, and increase in academic areas especially graduation rates. We have a low number of racial incidents in our school, mostly what we see are racial group conversations like gossip or slurs, not physically violence really.
I also think test scores will change to reflect abilities of biracial and African American students. What I mean by this is that the blended kids aren’t really standardized for our tests and I think that the test scores will reflect them as well as the low socioeconomic and the white children who aren’t affluent and performing really high.

2. The biracial population will increase in the community. People are already moving in this direction. This community is viewed as a positive environment – this is a blue ribbon school. I think this is a good time socially here and the community climate is right for it.

3. A. more Caucasian Fathers and different race mothers b. more since race boys dating biracial girls c. more integration of Hispanic families both biracial and in the community (because of the migrant workers)

4. A. I feel that BR population will grow b. I think it will become more widely accepted because people won’t have a choice because it is happening regardless. C. I think as these biracial children grow up they will provide a better understanding for everyone because their experiences are different. Kids become adults with powerful things to say.

5. More diversity coming in a slower rte. But I see it expanding. We all have pieces and parts of races that will expand who were are. Yet I come back to the same things, people are people, and attitudes are changing in small ways. It will need to change more but lets face it- sex happens. (Questioned- biracial children will continue)

6. Increase in the number in the population with more mixed people and population there will be more acceptance.

7. A. I think that there will soon be an unidentifiable race of children. For example C / H and AfAm/ C particle will increase. There will no longer be a need to choose. It will be so common that it will be accepted. People aren’t surprised like they used to be when a mixed child comes in the classroom. B. More C fathers and more AfAm mothers and vice versa. Sure that has to do with male C population in general show to accept differences in programs or out in society

8. Culture is lagging behind the changing times. I think we still have racial distinctions here in the housing community with black court and white court. That is so antiquated. I think the school is growing and we are learning to mingle more and teachers are doing this more, but not enough.

9. More and more children will come about – the population will increase. The makeup the family until will continue to change with less and less two parent families.
10. Problems of children who are substance addicted is increasing. SO many kids are using now to cope with problems. Even little kids are addicted. I am especially aware of the junior high students who are using Oxycontin. The housing issue continues to concern me for BRC because a lot of the families are illegal. The kids grow up in a more violent society and are around more violence. They spend more time in schools and this is the majority of where they can get a positive message and I see schools taking more responsibility to do this.

11. They will be a majority. There will be more ethnic children and ethnic issues are not a big deal in the community anymore and it will be a population surplus not a minority issue. Caucasian as a pure race is on its way out and a lot more people will be biracial.

12. Different in the next 10 years we have so many different kinds of kinds of clients and I am observing more differences in the community and in the schools. As a society we accept it a lot more than we did 15 or 20 years ago.

13. A. Increase in interracial marriage and relationships b. Growing biracial population. C. Overall population increase.

14. The numbers will be growing and increasing every year for the biracial population. I think it is more common everywhere in our country. It was different when I moved here because it was so accepted in northern areas of the state and there were more biracial couples.

15. A. Increase in population. B. More opportunity for training and education.

16. A lot more BRC in the community with white mothers without fathers and this will continue to increase in the community. B. Biraciality will not be so much an issue as poverty or other SES factors

17. A. among low SES groups will continue to significantly increase b. White or light young women will continue to date Hispanic and African Americans

18. I would predict there will be more BW biracial families and children in our schools. I would also expectant there will be a larger population of WH and BH children.

19. a. More biracial children than ever in the community over the next 4 years. I Think the Hispanic population is growing extremely fast. b. Foreign language to be offered in the elementary schools.
Appendix C

20. Increase in biracial children and biracial relationships.

18. A. Will the change, in the biracial population, lead to more or less conflict in the school (mental health center)?

1. Less. The more accustomed you are the more of a non-issue it becomes and I am hopeful for this.

2. Some moderate problems here or there. Ex. Kids always have comments, maybe some parents with opinions that won’t be favorable.

3. I think the days of mine (of conflict and racial unrest) are gone. The media and the education system does a better job of teaching us. I think folks with hang-ups and really ugly attitudes are dying out and the real hatred has diminished because so many families are now affected by this. See more of an acculturation process.

4. Not sure if there will be more or less conflict. I don’t think it will lead to more conflict. Conflict already exists regardless of race. I feel conflict occurs when other things go wrong; some people have biases from one race to another. Something seems to precede it and the biracial issue may be secondary.

5. Less conflict. This is a team atmosphere and the staff is respectful and fairly familiar with other cultures. Some are more conflicted because they have old-fashioned beliefs and sometimes appear hypocritical in their beliefs and their practices but maybe that is how they are “working it out”. I remain optimistic.

6. It is possible if we don’t have enough education and diversity-training ex. Students have little knowledge of Hispanic students and this population is increasing in our school and I wonder how that will be.

7. Much less conflict about next social issues being married or not being married is More a source of conflict. Younger and older couples are simply making different choices.

8. More should happen since there is a “browning of America” that is inevitable. The population has shifted so much that I hope that racism will be gone soon.
Appendix C

9. Based on past experience at this school, there will be more awareness and people here will be proactive. I hope there is less conflict than what has occurred in the past. We have a real issue with urban vs. rural when new kids (biracial) transfer here. For instance the kids whose parents work on the farms and vineyards versus the kids growing up in the city.

10. Yes, it will continue to be a problem more and more common because the attitude of nonacceptance (from other students) spills over into the schools.

11. I don’t think there will be more. Less because stereotyping will become less and less because there is such a different mixture of people nowadays. Not as important as it has been in the past.

12. Peoples opinions have changed a lot. Yes we will be very different in the next 10 years. And the new 3rd race (biracial) will lead the way.

13. Neither. I don’t think there will be conflict based on a biracial population. Other factors like poverty could be more conflictual because of the accompanying stressors. In our community the biracial population in the majority, not the minority. We are right beside towns that are the exact opposite.

14. Less because the numbers of biracial people are increasing and they are no longer a minority. We will probably see more equal numbers across the board.

15. Possibility is there for it. Ideally it would great if it didn’t make a difference. I hope that we can realize the issues and relate better in the future.

16. Yes more conflict, because society does not support coping for a lot of groups and there is still quite a bit of labeling going on.

17. The more we see the more it comes out. Even from the bad there is good. I think there will always be conflict.

18. Yes, anytime there are differences and misunderstanding that leads to conflict. I don’t believe that this necessarily a bad thing. Hopefully it will also lead to positive understanding of others different.

19. I don’t think it will lead to more conflict. I think it will lead to a greater gap in services. We are not doing much now to rectify the situation.

20. Won’t affect it at all. There is little or no conflict now.
Appendix C

B. (If “yes”) How do you think the school (mental health center) will respond?

1. I will respond with more guidance lessons to teach them so they will know more and be more experienced and respond socially, academically and emotionally. I think my school will push for more involvement from counselors and support staff like myself.

2. Depends on the severity of the situation. I would think the school will be more active in continuing efforts to diversify and spread knowledge.

3. Proactively

4. I think we are very open to BR families/children. I think we will respond well because we are so accepting. I don’t see that there is a difference in how we (agency) treat people.

5. Through education, information, we can resolve situations with mediation if necessary. I would like to see more setting of boundaries and rules enforced on how to respect all people regardless of background.

6. Diversity training to faculty. I hope that we can continue to enlighten students and their awareness once faculty is trained.

7. Proactive, adaptive. I don’t think it will be a problem

8. Adaptable in time. Mind set will change and history will reflect that. Cultural awareness will eventually change those that “have” and those that “have not”

9. Do everything we can to work through it. Whatever can be shared with others needs to be. With a younger staff and viewpoints that are more open I think that this will be possible. I think we are seeing all types of family makeups now and I like that.

10. Counselors will address issues b. can talk to the principals, entire teaching staff c. it will become more of a school focus.

11. It will be dealt with on a positive level we can handle change differently without violence. I think it is important to deal with it head on. Don’t avoid the issues.

12. Attend training sessions. Work with families. The more experience you have the more you will gain or learn.
Appendix C

13. A. Continue to educate ourselves so as to minimize conflict. B. Learned how to best deal with the changes.

14. I think it would be a good thing. It would add to our agency to say and mean we serve all populations of people from all backgrounds.

15. It would be great if we could have a seminar, agency-wide, to get everyone on the same page. I think it’s important to do something to raise awareness.

16. Cluelessness. Whether or not they recognize it is one thing, it is more a matter of whether or not they will spend money on training.

17. Depends on what the event is for the outcome. I am afraid the agency wouldn’t do a good job handling it.

18. Programs could be developed to customize our school’s needs

19. I am concerned that it will be a response that is “on paper”. It may be in the form of recruitment of different individuals but it won’t happen on the front line, just management.

20. There will be more interpreter and nontraditional services. It won’t be geared to biracial only but to many different racial groups.

19. What do you feel that school counselors (counselors/therapists, social workers) could do to be prepared? (i.e., education, training on the job)

1. a. need more parent programs, b. more training-workshops for parents c. diversity trainings and Train the Trainer opportunities d. read more and pick up more books on the subject, also more articles and journals about the subject. Identify more historical resources.

2. Take part in more training- continuing education classes and seminars.
Appendix C

3. a. first I want to know what the administration wanted from us. I would like to see us involved in more social science trainings and raise our community awareness. We have teachers here who won’t go in certain neighborhoods! b. We need clarity about what we are expected to do. Where does the job of school counselor end or begin? We can’t be everything to everyone, we aren’t paid enough and some of it is simply not our job. I think we shouldn’t leave it up to the administrators to define our jobs, we should have some say, but we should also have some support.

4. Some type of training is needed of the different races. I would like to know who they are when working with them, what their experiences are that would help us to relate to them. Ex. What we think has always done not odd to them but it is to us. It is the way their race or family has always done it.

5. A. educate themselves b. read magazines books and watch videos c. talk to people d. attend workshops e. associate with all kinds of different people – educate through exposure. All of these are a way to say be open and learn more.

6. I do believe multicultural classes and training not just biracial training would be good because we all need to learn more about diversity. Religious differences can be very critical. Different diets and requests during the holidays.

7. More training, more knowledge of different cultures and cultural backgrounds of families we work with. The hardest thing would be to not going to it and be impartial not just racial but trying to understand the viewpoint. I think training and education are critical because there is a need to understand self and ideas.

8. Be a part of the world, open your mind. Go into the communities and really find out by going back to the basics where the help is needed.

9. Make themselves aware as possible of different racial, SES, and cultural backgrounds. Don’t assume everyone has the same values, standards as we do.

10. Get more training with specific issue sand what concerns that will address more for more children. Ex. / Ruby Payne - poverty

11. Get as much training as you can about cultural differences and social stereotyping. It should not just be about personal preferences.

12. Translators!! We do a good job working with biracial but the Hispanic community has a lot of needs we are not addressing. I think we need to work on communicating more effectively and talking to families.
Appendix C

13. Educate yourself so you know what you’re dealing with then respond accordingly. It is more than reading books and going to trainings. It may require getting out into the community and asking questions.

14. a. We have a lot of on the job training but we need more. b. Weekly reminders in staff meetings. c. Ongoing education for specific populations. d. Training that is not generic.

15. A. More training and education. B. Get involved in the community and become more aware of what’s out there. C. Support groups: find out what is working and what is not.

16. Workshops that deal with the situations on a personal basis and opportunities for people to come in and talk with other parents.

17. Recognition of diversity and celebrating these differences. We need to empower and communicate with others to spread a message of helpfulness.

18. Develop programs that address a. where is the school now? B. What do the students think it will be like in 2-5 years c. what will the analysts of the school say the school will be like in 2-5 years? D. What do you as students think of the school e. what do we need to know or understand now or then?

19. It would have been helpful in school to have had greater exposure to the lives of and an understanding of how different cultures exist. I would like to see greater expectations of social workers and school counselors.

20. a. Read some books.
   b. Gather information
   c. Don’t be afraid to ask questions if they are experiencing difficulty.

20. In order to work most effectively with biracial children, what concerns or worries would you like to see addressed in your school or agency?

1. Continue to offer a diverse amount of literature, talk time and engaging them in time with active video and keep the discussion “alive” For example, when conducting divorce groups look at the different combination in terms of future groups with diversity. Makeup of the family is so important and we can learn a lot about what directions to take based on this.
Appendix C

2. Hope that administrators see the need for training (value) and continue to promote awareness throughout the student body.

3. A. between the 7-8-9 grade students we need a better understanding of developmental changes especially the biracial children and what their developmental needs are b. also I think we need to learn what their actual abilities are in order to place them appropriately in classes and make the experience worthwhile based on their genuine ability not some standardized tests, not standardized for them at all. We need to open up classes to all students like French, Geometry; honors English not just one group (Caucasian upper class)

4. My concerns would be gaining accurate knowledge of races we work with since our curriculum, brochures and information here is so generic towards race. One thing they may not be appropriate to give to a family.

5. A. with forms – be more respectful for biracial children not just biracial but all mixes more opportunity to reflect who people are. B. More materials need to be available. C. Continue to employ staff members of different backgrounds and different language capabilities.

6. Training, education, MC awareness raising, curriculum integrating across curriculums.

7. Language, translators big need. I think religion is growing in importance but that could be really hard to separate.

8. Replacement for the dying out counselors, those retiring. Who will pick up the change? Are they qualified? Need more diversity represented in the schools and increase positive racial interactions in the community. More outreach to tap students and staff potential.

9. All of the team needs to become more aware and continue to increase the awareness of those we serve. The groups have changed so much. Form an elite school (initially) to an inner city school (now). The message / missions doesn’t change the method has and BRC are one of our biggest components.

10. Future / non-training issues I wouldn’t be prepared for or be ill prepared for. I think touching the basics and being comfortable with self are important but counselors have to be comfortable with whom they are and where they come from in order to expand. More training is a must!! Bring someone in form outside to help alleviate issues; someone who is not in the environment.
Appendix C

11. Translators! Multiethnic people need people who they can communicate with while learning English. This is a hard language and we need to support people in learning it. Having someone who is knowledgeable to teach others not necessarily one of our staff, maybe someone from the outside about specific cultures.

12. Translators! We do a good job working with certain biracials, like black and white, but not our Hispanics. We need to learn to communicate effectively with all people.


15. A. Training, really good training. B. Some educational material to bring to the forefront issues and strategies of how to work with biracial kids.

16. Integration of groups, spreading awareness- need to do more of that. Small discussion / community focus groups, racial equality and racial harmony, maybe involvement in the faith community.

17. Strengthen the child and prepare of the world and what is going on. B. Build self-concept of the child to help them understand the hazards and the pitfalls of what they are going through.

18. Just the old’ treat others as you want to be treated. Do the right thing.

19. We are a considerably large agency with financial resources yet we have no energy to recruit trainers, staff and the community. We don’t do this because it isn’t a part of our strategic plan and therefore, not a priority.

20. Continue to educate people about culture and ethnic groups, not just about biracial because it is trendy. Be prepared to arm yourself with information and knowledge.

21. Is there anything else about this issue you would like to tell me?

1. Nothing except that I have shared it is so difficult being “white” in this building. Some people want to test me and because I am female and I am white to see what I can handle. That’s okay because I am sure that it is sticky and I am especially careful about what I say and what I do. I just try to be sincere and honest and watch my body language. I am cautious however, because I am still uncertain.
Appendix C

2. Racial diversity is still very small among the staff and I feel that it would help significantly to increase the number of diverse staff.

17. If you love kids and you want the best for them you won’t care the origin. Too many parents are “play parenting” and this has increased in the past few years. Problems we are now experiencing have to do with the cultural evolution. Resources to be self-sufficient and empowered are not open to all groups.