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THE MULTIRACIAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE WITH COLLEGE COUNSELOR SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

This narrative study presents the lived and told stories of multiracial college students with specific consideration for how they perceive the support they receive from college counselors and why they are sometimes hesitant to go to college counselors. The intention is to assist LPCs working in the college setting to become multiracially orientated. Critical Race Theory is used as a lens to understand racial microaggressions and make meaning of the inequalities that can stand as barriers to multiracial student success and social, emotional, and academic support. Individual interviews with five students affirm the presence of patterns and barriers within the multiracial student experience and a lack of adequate support by college counselors, especially regarding racial identity development. This study has direct implications for college counselors in hopes they can be a stronger and more supportive figure for multiracial students and improve their practice to be more multiculturally oriented.

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, college enrollment rates for individuals who identify with two or more races are at 42% (NCES, 2016). With close to half of college students now identifying as multiracial, college counselors must continue to think deeply about the unique aspects of multiracial college students, their needs, and how to meet these needs. As Diangelo (2018) put it, "multiracial people, because they challenge racial constructs and boundaries, face unique challenges in a society in which racial categories have profound meaning" (p. xvi). Root's (1992) work, *Racially Mixed People in America*, started to challenge the idea of only using models based on a person's salient identity. However, many popular identity development models taught in multicultural counseling courses (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's, 1998; Ferdman and Gallego, 2001; Cross, 1971) continue to ingrain a monoracial view of race. To help with this, the ACA endorsed *Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population* (2015) with practical advice in working with multiracial clients. One of ACA's recommendations was to "Notice that monoracial identity development models do not account for individuals living within multiple racial, ethnic, or cultural identities" (ACA, 2015, p.16). Although these salient identity models are helpful frameworks for college counselors to comprehend; they could unintentionally perpetuate monoracism, a term defined as "systemic social oppression that targets individuals who do not fit into monoracial categories, groups, or phenomena" (Johnston-Guerrero, Tran, Combs, 2020, p. 18). Therefore, during a time when colleges are shifting toward becoming increasingly multiracial (Harris, 2018; Howard, 2018; NCES, 2016), counselors must become mindful of monoracial microaggressions, which create harm and further complicate an already complex experience of identity development. Therefore, the following study presents the lived and

told stories of multiracial college students with specific consideration for how they perceive the support they receive from college counselors or why they are hesitant to go to college counselors for support. This study intends to assist LPCs working in the college setting to be more multiracially orientated.

A major tenet of the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics is "nonmaleficence, or avoiding actions that cause harm" (ACA, 2014, p. 3), indicating this to play a significant role in counseling work. College counselors must utilize nonmaleficence and develop in the area of multicultural counseling when working with multiracial students. This can be done by acknowledging that these individuals have their own unique experiences and identity development journeys, unlike other minority races. The American College Counseling Association, a professional home for many college counselors and student affairs professionals with an identity as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), promotes student development as one of its main purposes (ACCA, 2009). Due to this role, LPCs must recognize that multiracial students face barriers in identifying positive identity development. These students may need assistance fostering student development and navigating racial identity because of their unique identification as multiracial. The following narrative case studies are a small but essential step for LPCs to take.

The Expanding Role Professional Counselors

Although many LPCs serve as traditional mental health therapists in college counseling centers, a growing number of professionals with a counselor identity work outside the traditional counseling setting as student affair professionals in settings such as student advising, career counseling, and even residence life. Additionally, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP) has a specialty area in College Counseling and Student Affairs that prepares both college counselors as well as student affairs professionals to "promote the academic, career, personal, and social development of individuals in higher education settings" (CACREP, 2015, p. 28). Although LPCs who have graduated from a counseling program, they might have different roles at the campus they serve. LPCs, according to the American College Counseling Association mission statement (2009), "whose professional identity is counseling and whose purpose is fostering students' development," will be involved in the student development role with multiracial individuals. Because of this, LPCs, whether working in a traditional mental health campus center or in student service roles, must better understand how multiracial college students experience their own identity development and how college counselors can impact this process for multiracial students.

Counseling Multiracial Students

The reader should take the time to look into the full Competencies for Counseling the Multiracial Population, which was endorsed and adopted by the ACA Governing Council in 2015. These competencies offer practical tips when working with multiracial. The narrative presented in this study will help add to the body of literature and offer a perspective of how college counselors can do better. Many lessons presented from this study's narratives align with McDonald, Chang, Dispenza, & O'Hara's (2019) practice implications. Some of McDonald, Chang, Dispenza, & O'Hara's (2019) implications are to recognize the unique experiences of multiracial clients, use cultural humility in broaching, have a sense of wonder in all salient identities, and be mindful to avoid microaggressions. McDonald, Chang, Dispenza, & O'Hara (2019) also suggest that "counselors need to be cognizant of creating a safe space to process possibly conflicting conceptualizations about race, identity, and discrimination rather than pathologizing it or seeing it

as resistance" (p. 82). College counselors must also be aware that college is a time in which students explore existential questions such as "who am I." Taylor & Nanney (2011) pointed out, college can be confusing as the majority of multiracial individual peer groups and networks are monoracial thus not having the relationship between social and personal identity to help aid in this identity formation process. To help with this, Rayna & Martin (2019) recommend that university counseling centers create what they call a "third space" and provide an opportunity for peers to receive support and affirmation.

It is also essential that college counselors, whose focus is supporting mental health, recognize the importance of identity. For example, Smart's (2010) case study working with a "biracial female college student with an eating disorder" (p. 182), found that this client was in the process of sorting out her feelings regarding her biracial heritage in the context of treating an eating disorder. To resolve this issue, Smart (2010) recommended broaching, a term defined as the process of exploring cultural dimensions of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process (Day-Vines et al., 2007). Broaching has been found to, "...increase counselor credibility, enhance client satisfaction, deepen client disclosure, reduce premature termination rates, and increase clients' willingness to return for sessions" (Jones & Welfare, 2017; Sue & Sundberg, 1996). One out of eighteen of Moss & Davis's (2008) specific strategies when working with multicritical clients is to ask questions to assess for a current level of racial identity awareness. Smart (2010) also identified asking questions to assess the current level of racial identity awareness as an important part of the counseling process. Harris (2013) while also giving practical questions to ask single parent multiracial families (SPMF), suggested questions the mental health counselors could ask with an example being, "do I feel the same about all SPMFs regardless of the racial combination?" (p. 390). While hearing this recommendation, it is important to take to heart advice from the multicultural competencies that not all clients who seek our services are coming to work through identity development (Jackson, 2018), while also recognizing exploring identity is important.

METHOD

Before the current narrative study, the second researcher conducted a pilot quantitative study that consisted of a survey taken by both monoracial and multiracial students. The survey intended to understand the following factors: (a) the monoracial and multiracial college experience, (b) how they perceived diversity and inclusivity on their campus, (3) identify differences in academic achievement between monoracial and multiracial students, and (4) to identify where discrimination is most present on college campuses. Statistical analysis completed using SPSS showed an ever-present reality of discrimination experienced by multiracial students, strong contrast between monoracial and multiracial college experiences, and a lack of support for multiracial students on college campuses. The pilot survey results informed this study's narrative interview questions.

Coming from the field of social work, a narrative case study approach was adopted for this study. Brandell and Varkas (2001) describe the narrative case study as "... an instrument that is used for the in-depth study of various social and clinical problems, to understand stages or phases in processes, and to investigate a phenomenon within its environmental context" (p.293). This method and methodology share the quality of both narrative inquiry and a case study approach. Because the purpose of this study was to understand better how multiracial college students experience college counselors, a narrative mode of analysis based on Polkinghonre (1995)

narrative cognition to approach putting meaning to the data. Polkinghore (1995) narrative analysis approach empowers the researchers to retell whole coherent stories that can stand on their own because value, lessons, and wisdom form individual stories. Therefore, the goal is not to look for themes which is commonly the approach of analysis throughout the counseling literature when utilizing narrative inquiry. Etherington and Bridges (2011) provide a useful example of a multiple case study approach grounded in Narrative Inquiry, which uses research reality as an approach for analysis at its core. These following stories will improve the practice of LPCs in the mental health field working at colleges because "hearing storied depictions about a person's movement through a life episode touches us in such a way as to evoke emotions such as sympathy, anger or sadness" (p.14)

Researchers

It is important to discuss who the researchers are and the author because "in the move toward narrative inquiry, the turn is characterized as a movement away from a position of objectivity... toward a research perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007,p. 9). Therefore, I recognize that the relationship with participants and all of our identities, both privileged and minoritized, influence how we learn and influence the relationship we have with one another. The research team was made up of a graduate student who identifies as an Asian and Black multiracial woman and a White male Assistant Professor with experience in narrative inquiry and qualitative research. Because of my own lived experience with a multiracial identity, I led the interviews to level the power differences between the two researchers and the participants.

Data Collection and Trustworthiness

Because of my identity being multiracial and growing up in an environment with many multiracial people, I reached out to individuals I knew identified as multiracial undergraduate college students. The five interviews were recorded using the online platform Zoom. Recordings were transcribed and coded with the help of an assistant professor and faculty advisor. At the end of each interview, the researchers discussed the important messages communicated within the stories gathered as narrative inquiry.

Recruitment

I began recruiting students through the process of purposive sampling. Participants needed to meet two eligibility criteria to participate in the study: (a) self-identified with two or more minority races included in the U.S. federally designated categories including monoethnic categories (e.g. Hispanic) and, (b) are currently enrolled at an undergraduate institution full time.

Participants

In total, there were five interviews completed that lasted forty-five minutes in length. The sample population consisted of all undergraduate class years (one first-year student, two second-year students, one third-year student, and one fourth-year student). Two of the students transferred to universities early on in their college careers. Three identified as Hispanic and Black, one identified as Asian, Black, and White, and one identified as Asian and Black. All participants were full-time students attending predominantly White institutions (PWI) in either the West Coast or Midwest.

Researcher Lens

The theoretical lens used in this study is Critical Race Theory (CRT), with specific attention to student development. Student development is understood through critical and post-structural perspectives that "critique, challenge, and seek to dismantle inequitable power structures" within our education system (Abes, et al., 2019, p21). Concerning the identity development of students, a critical look at how structural and systemic factors influence these individuals' identity formation is taken. Therefore, student development CRT plays a major role in challenging how society impacts learning and development for students depending on their identities.

Utilization of this critical lens can be particularly impactful for multiracial students who are undergoing their racial identity development. Oppression and privilege influence what messages multiracial college students receive and how they impact their sense of racial identity. Johnston-Guerrero (2020) "shed light on the complicated relationship between students' understandings of oppression and their multiracial identities, particularly because of the diversity within being multiracial, which is based on intersections of multiple racial identities (Harris, 2016, 2017) that connect to groups with asymmetrical histories and power relations" (Blum, 2002). Oppressive systems' power on identity formation can go overlooked due to societal oppression and internalized marginalization. This critical lens brings into question the societal factors that have such an influence on racial identity development. By getting a true understanding of what multiracial college students endure during their identity development, questions concerning how these individuals experience the oppression that dramatically molds their racial identity can begin.

RESULTS

Nicole's Story

Nicole identified as Hispanic and Black and attended a university in the Midwest before transferring her second year to a university on the West Coast. Nicole shared a story in which she felt supported by a college counselor that she developed a relationship. When she was a part of the school's soccer team, Nicole reported that she and the team experienced conflict with their soccer coach, creating divisions among the team members. As a means of resolution, a college counselor was brought in to help manage the situation and ease the team's concerns. Nicole felt supported by this college counselor and expressed relief that the counselor was there to help her and the team during this challenging time. Additionally, Nicole reported that this college counselor could pick up on her discomfort of being the only person of color on the team. She stated that the college counselor was,

“very helpful and they could tell I was different from everybody else because I was the only black person or person of color in general on the team, so they were very helpful....it was kind of hard for me to relate to everybody else so they were there to listen.”

It was this interaction that allowed Nicole to come to feel that this college counselor could be trusted. When Nicole voiced her concerns about her teammates continued use of the "N word," she was met with dismissal from her teammates and coach. Their invalidation of the severity of the racism within the soccer team led Nicole to reach out to the college counselor for support.

Although the college counselor was there to listen to Nicole, the counselor's main suggestion was to "talk to the team and my coach and like tell them you know going forward I don't want to hear any of that type of stuff." At this moment, Nicole felt as though she were left on an island to fend for herself and address the racism concern. She stated that "I feel like they tried to put it all on the coach and like, oh, your coach can kind of handle that situation but my coach kind of wasn't the best person to handle this so it kind of just fell under the radar, bigger stuff happened with the team and I feel like that kind of was put on the back burner." In this way, Nicole received surface-level support from the college counselor without the college counselor taking the time to intervene in the situation.

Researcher Reflection

Nicole was shown that she could trust the college counselor because when the team had issues, the college counselor was brought in to help. However, when Nicole felt uncomfortable by her teammates' use of the N-word, the college counselor placed the responsibility of intervention upon Nicole's coach. Nicole received hands-on support from the college counselor when the team experienced a non-race issue, yet the college counselor chose not to advocate for her when the race issue was brought up. Hands-on interventions are essential when race concerns appear, or else these issues will never be truly addressed. This story reflects that college counselors need to be mindful of power dynamics, and therefore be intentional in stepping in when race concerns occur, even if that means calling in the necessary support (i.e. the president or the dean) to do so. Students of color feel further isolated and ignored when this support is not provided, and instead, they are encouraged to resolve the issue of the race all on their own.

Maxine's Story

Maxine was a third-year student attending a university on the West Coast. Maxine was the only participant who identified with three racial categories, explaining, "I identify as Black, White, and Chinese even though I was mostly raised by my Asian side. Like I don't know like any of my Black side of the family, because my dad won't let me like know them." Maxine's story was also unique because she was the only participant I had who was involved in fraternity and sorority life on her campus and in a predominately White sorority. Maxine shared that she purposely chose to join Greek life because she wanted to find friends and a support system during her first year of college. Unfortunately, she has had some negative experiences with her sorority's leaders, who were all White. Maxine felt that they discriminated against her and tried to make the covert microaggression of her personality fitting a racial and gender role stereotype. Despite being in a predominately White sorority and sharing some stories of feeling as if she were on the margins of the group, she also spoke about the racial identity growth this experience has given her. She expressed this by saying, "In a lot of ways sororities have helped me find who I am through this journey of being a person of color in this sorority learning about myself. Plus, my sorority is pretty diverse, well there's some diversity not a lot, but the most out of all of them on campus."

Maxine also spoke about struggling to find help on campus for her friend who is experiencing depression. She offered a suggestion of how to make students more aware of the counseling services available on campus and the benefits of using these resources, stating that counselors in health centers should,

“...interact with students that you know are comfortable talking about what’s happening or just have, you know how they have

ambassadors on Instagram, and I know that sounds weird, but I would have students talk about the student health center because it is hard to find stuff on my own, but if I know, if Tiffany was talking about student health somewhere on campus and things to do it would help me out.”

Last, when asked how a college counselor might build trust and rapport with a student to open up a conversation around ethnicity and race, Maxine suggested that the counselor should first share something personal about themselves before asking about race. She went further to explain that,

“...if you can build that relationship with people of color, and show you understand you know what’s happening or give a little part of yourself, so they don’t feel like they are crazy and that someone else understands what they are going through.”

Researcher Reflection

Maxine's adversities dealing with covert discrimination and microaggressions are not uncommon for students of color. Maxine referred to herself multiple times throughout the interview as a person of color rather than multiracial or a specific race, which brings up racial identity development. This could have something to do with the fact that she mentioned only being exposed to her Asian side of the family and purposely being shielded from her Black side until high school. However, Maxine is proud of being a person of color, confident in her ability to stand up for herself, and comfortable in her own skin, making the White peers around her uncomfortable. She perceives the positive and negative experiences of being in a sorority as assisting her in finding who she is in terms of being a person of color. The research team found it important to note that Maxine made the conscious decision to join Greek life to make friends and build a support system but may not have noticed her natural inclination to drift towards the most diverse sorority on campus.

Maxine's comments show a recurring theme of the multiracial student needing to feel that the counselor should already be culturally competent. It also brings up the aspect of vulnerability and how speaking about race and ethnicity can be sensitive topics for multiracial students, so being vulnerable and sharing something can build rapport with the student. Next, Maxine brought up an interesting point of not being aware or reminded that there are free counseling services available on campus, suggesting using social media sites or students with large platforms on campus as modes to promote the counseling center.

Jessica’s Story

Jessica was a fourth-year student at a university located on the West Coast. Jessica identified as Hispanic and Black and was very proud and vocal about her Black identity, despite how she is most commonly racially perceived. She explained this as,

“I don’t think being multiracial is a bad thing, I don’t think I get discriminated against for it, I do think that they try to use it as like a distancing mechanism from my blackness, so I think that they

highlight it and they think it's a good idea but I don't think that I've necessarily been discriminated against for it. I think people think that I'm black, but I also think they can tell that I'm mixed like just phenotypically. I don't think people have gotten it wrong it's just there's always a question, it's like you're black and what else, so that's kind of off putting because it's just like why I can't just be Black because Black has different phenotypes to it."

She explained a situation with an academic advisor she had where a microaggression was very present. She saw this advisor to get some feedback on her resume, and the advisor told her to list some of her leadership experience. She chose to include the leadership roles she held in student organizations such as Black Student Association (BSA). The advisor told her, "...maybe this is a little bit too black, maybe I should have a diverse section of what you're involved in even if those aren't leadership roles." This advisor told Jessica her leadership roles could potentially be off-putting to future application reviewers. Jessica's response to that experience was, "Oh, they think that being confident in your blackness is threatening and I'm okay with that, like I understand that some people will feel that way and I'm okay with that."

Jessica also voiced her struggles when trying to join or take up leadership roles in predominantly minority organizations (e.g. BSA, Hispanic Student Association). She suggested that these organizations need to do a better job at making multiracial students feel comfortable about openly identifying with more than just their salient race. Jessica also suggested they empower multiracial students to take leadership positions in these organizations instead of discouraging them. She shared an event thrown by BSA to celebrate Black culture. She appreciated that they invited all other multicultural student organizations and allowed them to set up their booths at the event.

Jessica shared an experience where she felt the counselors on campus completely let down their students of color. The university held a large event for the 2016 presidential election, and there were many discriminatory and derogatory statements made by White students, with no penalization from the university. Ultimately the students of color felt alone and were experiencing distress. Jessica also acknowledges that she would be more willing to see a counselor who may physically look more like her. However, she would also be willing if she knew they would "...acknowledge your existence, acknowledge the social implications that you face while at the university, or just in society in general." Jessica had made a profound statement about believing college counseling centers only focus on what aspects outside of the direct experience of what being on a college campus may be like for a multiracial student, pointing out, "... it's never the university's fault that you feel the way that you feel." Last, Jessica pointed out that her university has been noted as one of the most diverse in the nation, but that does not mean the minority students on campus feel supported.

Researcher Reflection

Jessica recognizes that people immediately identify her salient identity (Black) but assumes she has to be mixed with something else. This makes her feel uncomfortable and that her Black identity is not a sufficient enough answer for people. Jessica's experience with her advisor confirmed her idea that people want to separate her from her Black identity or take away some of

her pride in her racial identity. The story she shared about the university and especially the counseling center not stepping up when minority students were being targeted with hate comments during the election year was disappointing. Jessica saw this as an opportunity for the counseling center to step up and be an active voice, offering these minority students counseling services; instead, the counseling center was utterly silent on the matter. For Jessica, the lack of acknowledgment from a counselor on a minority student's experience on a college campus is the driving factor for why she would never get counseling.

Jessica brought up an interesting point that the multicultural organizations on campuses typically cater specifically to only one identity at a time. There needs to be more organizations, spaces, and events that students feel comfortable identifying with their multiple races. Multiracial students also need to feel empowered in their identity; the examples Jessica gave were empowering multiracial students to take leadership positions even if it is in a monoracial group. Jessica shared the experience where BSA had an event where they gave a platform to other multicultural organizations on campus. Jessica took this as BSA students acknowledging the ability to identify with multiple races, so more programming similar to this event would be beneficial.

Nancy's Story

Nancy was a second-year student attending a university in the Midwest. Nancy was the only participant to identify herself in terms of race, ethnicity, and geographical location, stating, "So I basically identify as Hispanic and African American, my mom is from Madrid, Spain and my dad is African American from Philadelphia." She takes offense to people assuming the wrong races, expressing that, "They normally think I'm just African American, but sometimes they think I'm African American and mixed with Caucasian when that's not the case at all." Having all of her races acknowledged was very important for Nancy, sharing that, "...it kind of like offends me almost that just cause I might look African American doesn't mean that's all I'm mixed with. I'm definitely 50/50."

She also suggested that counselors use descriptors such as where someone is from in order to initiate a conversation about race, her example being:

"If I brought up Spain or Philadelphia and they somehow have a connection to that country or state, that's when they would bring up the racial ethnicity because that's when I would feel 100% comfortable since they have a personal connection with it vs. them kind of just flat out asking me like, "oh you identify with this and this," so it establishes that they have like some personal experience with that and that's when I'll feel more comfortable opening up about it."

When asked what she would do to increase minority use of counseling services on campus, she responded,

"I think they need to advertise it more that if you are having, especially to specific cultures, if you are having these specific issues, it is not just a program for psychological issues or anything like that. This is a program that can also help with issues of racism

and stuff like that. They don't actually think that they can go to a counselor and talk about experiencing things that have to deal with race and they are actually going to be able to understand them."

Researcher Reflection

Nancy's choice to identify herself in terms of race, ethnicity and geographical location can demonstrate how important it is for her that others acknowledge all her identities. She also used her parents to describe her identity in terms of ancestry, suggesting her need to constantly prove or provide evidence to others that she is legitimately mixed with these races. She suggested mentioning geography as a smooth and comfortable transition into a discussion around race and ethnicity. This points to the fact that a counselor directly asking a student about race can be off-putting. Therefore, different ways to build rapport and diverse techniques for broaching are needed. Nancy also brings up how college counseling centers could benefit from the promotion, specifically to diverse populations. Not only that, but their advertisements need to include the fact that they can assist students with matters of race and social justice because most students do not know that.

Jared's Story

The last participant was Jared, who was a first-year student attending a university in the Midwest. Jared immediately brought up that it was vital for him to be seen as both Black and Korean but would not expect that to be one of the first questions a college counselor or student affairs professional might ask him, stating:

"I mean I'm proud of what I am, I don't mind putting it out there. I just wouldn't be expecting that kind of question"

Jared's advice for college counselors with regard to discussing race was:

"Build my trust. I don't know the best way to do that, but I realize that I don't really know you guys, but I felt comfortable talking about race with you. I kind of feel like we built some trust during this and that is why I'm comfortable talking about it."

Researcher Reflection

Jared was the only student interviewed who did not have an instance to share where he experienced racism or monoracism. It would be pertinent to mention that he also did not have any stories to share in which race came up in a discussion in class or conversations with his friends. However, he did mention that he gets tired of talking about race because his mother initiates conversations around race, ethnicity, and social justice too often. His advice for college counselors affirms that building good rapport before broaching makes the student feel more comfortable engaging in discussions on race. His experience also shows that every student is different in their racial identity development, and race is not considered a relevant or essential topic for all multiracial students.

DISCUSSION

The stories presented in this study share how College Counselors must recognize that all students are at a different place in their journey and are often forced to adhere to one categorization of their race instead of having the multiplicity of their racial identity acknowledged and honored. Critical race theorists assert that race is a socially constructed concept that White people in power have reified to maintain the social order that preserves White privilege in systems such as higher education (Harris, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Omi & Winant, 1986). Throughout the interviews with the five students, consistent themes of discrimination within the multiracial student experience appeared. The concealed existence of colorblindness allows for people in positions of student support to disregard students' racial identities by solely viewing them as their most salient race and its social, economic, and cultural stereotypes associated with that racial identity.

Nicole's story showed us that counselors need to be mindful of power dynamics and be more intentional in stepping in when race concerns occur. Students of color can feel further isolated and ignored when this support is not provided, and instead, they are encouraged to resolve the issue of the race all on their own. Jessica discussed feeling ostracized from one of the minority student groups they tried to join in hopes of finding a group to belong to on campus. Unfortunately, there was a sense of marginalization in mostly monoracial minority student groups because of the multiracial students wanting to join had two or more racial identities. It was common for the multiracial students interviewed to share stories about going through a trial and error in finding where they fit in. This suggests that despite the presence of minority and cultural organizations on campus, it does not necessarily mean those groups promote attitudes of awareness and inclusivity.

Multiracial students feel most supported in spaces that acknowledge the ability of a person to identify with multiple races. The students indicated feeling supported and comfortable talking about their multiracial identity when communicating with minority college counselors. Several students indicated they lack minority counselors on campus and would not go to their current counselors for assistance. This is directly related to the lack of certain minority individuals in these positions, as well as the overarching idea that White counselors will not be able to understand and adequately assist them. Students could also be unconsciously avoiding college counselors because of past experiences.

College counselors should learn the identity development models for the biracial, multiracial, and (multiple heritage) populations. Race should not be viewed as an issue that is exclusive to individuals of color. College counselors, therefore, need to be mindful to discuss race with their students and aid in addressing race issues in an active manner that does not place the sole responsibility upon the student to figure out the racial identity. College counselors should consider starting multiracial group counseling. Group counseling is a worthwhile investment on campuses since these sessions can allow a space for multiracial students to find a common experience among other individuals, which can help reduce feelings of alienation.

Implications & Suggestions

The results of this study have direct implications for college counselors and can aid in the development of multiculturally competent programs. This study can potentially improve the quality of services and resources provided for the growing number of multiracial students. Practitioners in higher education should be encouraged to understand this growing student population and eventually bring an end to the covert racism of colorblindness and racial microaggressions. Asking about salient identities and disclosing the intention behind asking students about race matters is vital for the student's comfortability. Students can feel defensive

about their racial identity when these intentions are not clear, which then impedes the ability of college counselors to get to know the students on a deeper level. Counselors should practice broaching without making the client uncomfortable. Counselors mentioning their awareness around race, ethnicity, and culture is a possible way to build rapport and invite open dialogue about diversity with students comfortable in their racial identity. A statement such as, "I believe our past shapes our present self, so I would like to discuss anything of cultural significance to you," is an excellent way to open dialogue.

Having a student self-identify is also helpful for multicultural practice. It can be done by asking, "I recognize from my own experience that assuming one's identity can be offensive, so out of respect, I would like to know how you identify yourself to others." Counselors should use culturally sensitive active listening with multiracial clients of any age because they believe that no one understands what they are experiencing, including family members, as the student's parents are most likely monoracial individuals. Achieving mutual understanding, promoting trust, and conveying empathy should be some of the main goals for college counselors. Seek consultation and supervision to ensure that personal biases do not negatively affect the client-counselor relationship or the counseling outcomes. College counselors should acknowledge that although a comprehensive understanding of all issues and concerns faced by multiracial individuals may not be possible, it remains essential to know where to access affirmative information and resources for this population.

By holding diversity awareness and inclusivity events, multiracial students can acknowledge all their identities while feeling the support from their peers. College counselors should attend these events to broaden their multicultural experiences and show the students they are a person that can support them. College counselors need to actively create a safe space for students of color to seek help. By being visible throughout the campus and participating in multicultural university events, students can begin to recognize college counselors as allies. Counselors must recognize that multiracial identity and expression vary from one individual to the next and that this natural variation should not be interpreted negatively. It is pertinent to become familiar with general themes and salient concerns of multiracial people and communities (e.g., uniqueness, acceptance and belonging, physical appearance, identity, sexuality, self-esteem, visibly). Last, multiracial identity development and experiences with racism need to be addressed throughout a student's higher education journey since identity development is not stagnant.

Limitations & Further Research

The participant pool was small, with only five interviews being completed, and four of them identifying as female. A more diverse sample may have given more variability in the participant experiences and opened up the opportunity to generalize findings to a larger population. However, the information presented in this research is still suggestive of the unique student experiences for multiracial students and the needs that multiracial students may have compared to monoracial students. Multiracial students would benefit from research addressing gender differences, analyzing and formulating university events that embrace multiple racial identities. The possibility of group counseling is specifically centered around racialized trauma experienced in the higher education system.

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