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The Creation of a Multicultural Foundational Course: From Research to Practice

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The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) requires that graduate programs in communication sciences and disorders (CSD), “must be specifically designed to prepare students for entry into professional practice and provide curriculum (academic and clinical education) that reflects current knowledge, skills, technology, scopes of practice, and the diversity of society” (ASHA, n.d., para. 1). In order to adequately prepare clinicians to work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) clients, ASHA requires that multicultural content be a part of graduate programs. The two major approaches for incorporating multicultural content into CSD programs are known as the infusion and foundational course approaches (ASHA, n.d.). The infusion approach involves embedding content about CLD populations into one or more courses across the curriculum. In 2002 and 2008 researchers found that most programs utilized the infusion approach (Stewart & Gonzalez, 2002; Stockman et al., 2008). However, there are no recent data to determine if this presently the case. The foundational course approach involves the creation and implementation of one or more courses dedicated solely to multicultural content. ASHA maintains that the best method for preparing future clinicians to practice in a diverse society involves a combination of both the infusion and foundational course approaches (ASHA, n.d.; Stockman et al., 2008). In addition, there have been documented efforts outside of graduate coursework to increase cultural competency in CSD students including elective courses (Preis, 2008), workshops (Quach & Tsai, 2017) and multicultural/bilingual emphasis (ASHA, 2021).

Literature Review

While the mandate for multicultural content is set, the methods for its creation and implementation are left up to individual CSD programs and instructors, resulting in a large range of preparatory practices. While there is a variety of literature published on the cultural competence of speech-language pathology clinicians in the field (Crowley et al., 2015; Farrugia-Bernard, 2018; Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; Kritikos, 2003; Li'el et al., 2019), from the scholarship of teaching and learning perspective there is a paucity of research. In 2001, Cheng et al. presented four critical elements needed for educating speech-language pathologists for a multicultural world: culturally competent faculty, a diverse student body, multicultural academic curriculum, and multicultural clinical education. Two seminal articles have been published to guide multicultural coursework (Horton-Ikard et al., 2009; Stockman et al., 2008). Stockman et al. (2008) surveyed speech-language pathology programs across the country to gain information about multicultural instructional practices. They found that while the infusion approach was most commonly utilized, students felt more prepared to deal with diversity issues when they had a dedicated, foundational multicultural course. However, Halvorson-Bourgeois et al. (2013) found that a syllabi review may not be enough to determine the efficacy of infusion of CLD content into programs and that faculty interviews and student evaluations may be necessary. In 2009, Horton-Ikard et al. presented a framework for a foundational course in CSD meant to increase the cultural competency of students. More recently, Franca and Harten (2016) described pedagogical pluralistic activities used in their foundational multicultural CSD courses, Randolph and Bradshaw (2018) discussed combining the counseling and multicultural CSD program requirements and Mahendra (2019) wrote about the importance of and practical strategies for incorporating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues into CSD multicultural courses. In addition, literature exists on approaches to providing diverse academic and clinical experiences in the field of CSD (Hammond et al., 2009; Mahendra et al. 2005; Stockman et al., 2004).

Information about multicultural teaching and learning has been disseminated at professional conferences. Cotton et al. (2016), Farrugia-Bernard et al. (2018), and Johnson et al. (2016) all facilitated panel discussions of faculty who have developed a multicultural course in CSD with suggestions for course outlines and related materials. All presentations deemed content on determining difference versus disorder, bilingualism, self-reflection of cultural competence, and cultural immersion experiences as essential components to any multicultural course. Cotton and Pluskota (2016) presented a course autopsy where they critically evaluated their multicultural course design and delivery and found that who teaches the multicultural course can have a profound effect on students' reception of content. In addition, ASHA (n.d.) offers resources to CSD faculty in the form of a guide to cultural competence in the curriculum, resources to infuse multicultural content into coursework, and sample foundational multicultural course syllabi.

Related disciplines have similar requirements and recommendations for multicultural preparation. For example, physical and occupational therapy programs have been given the directive to integrate cultural competency and related content into existing courses instead of creating new, stand-alone courses (American Physical Therapy Association, 2014; Nochajski & Matteliano, 2008). Teacher education preparation programs encourage adding a course or content that focuses on multiculturalism to the curriculum (Mustian et al., 2017). No matter the discipline or approach, Ramsey (2015) posited that multicultural teaching should be based on four essential elements of instructor knowledge and skills. Instructors need to know themselves, the students, what to teach, and how to teach.

Syllabi Review

ASHA (2003) provides a resource for CSD multicultural instructors where 13 syllabi were reviewed to provide an overview of foundational multicultural courses in the field. In order to update and add to this information, the researcher reviewed 18 new syllabi from programs across the country, gathered from an Internet search using the key words "multicultural CSD syllabi" as well as from colleagues in ASHA's Special Interest Group 14, cultural and linguistic diversity to benchmark current common foundational multicultural course practices. All of the 18 additional syllabi reviewed had content devoted to differences versus disorders and bilingualism. Self-reflection was present in some form in 16 out of 18 syllabi. Self-reflection most commonly took place in the form of a journal, cultural competence assessment, or cultural autobiography. A cultural immersion project, where the student interacted with a person from a different culture, was included in 12 out of 18 syllabi. An interview with a person from a different culture was also a popular assignment occurring in 6 out of 18 syllabi, as well as a CLD case study that was present in 4 out of 18 syllabi. About half (8 out of 18) courses broke classes down by talking about specific cultural groups while the other 10 out of 18 courses talked about speech and language topics broadly as they related to all cultural groups.

Purpose

With the paucity of CSD scholarship of teaching and learning diversity literature available, CSD instructors may struggle with best way to create and implement a foundational multicultural course. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe in detail a multicultural course created

from best practices gathered from research literature, conference presentations, and syllabi sources in the field of CSD and share student reflections of the created course.

Multicultural Course Framework

Course Structure. The course described in this paper is a required two-credit graduate level course focused on multicultural cultural issues in the field of CSD. The instructors where this course is taught have a great deal of academic freedom and are therefore responsible for the creation of every aspect of course content and implementation.

Typical enrollment in this course is 45 students across two sections. The students that enroll in the course are mostly from the speech-language pathology Master's degree program; however, graduate students from related disciplines such as teacher education and occupational therapy have also taken the course as an elective. The course does not assume any prerequisite multicultural knowledge. Student cohorts take this course at various points in their program. This course is only offered in the summer semester, face-to-face, for 7.5 weeks with each meeting lasting two hours.

Each week a lecture is delivered that ties speech-language pathology content to diverse communities through case studies (Mahendra, 2019; Stockman et al., 2008). See Table 1 for how content topics and communities were presented. Following the lecture and case study work, guided large and small group discussions focusing on the threaded discussions from students take place. In addition, videos known as community spotlights are shared each week where community member representatives that self-identify as belonging to the featured cultural group share personal experiences and perspectives from the prompt "What I want CSD students to know about my culture." These videos were solicited from cultural organization members in the campus and community such as the Native American Student organization, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender resource center, and the Black student union. The instructor of the course does not identify as a person of color and as such, these spotlights allow students to hear voices from a multitude of cultural groups (Cotton & Pluskota, 2016).

Table 1

Course Content

Topic	Community Spotlight
Cultural Competency Continuum	(Dis)Ability
Assessment	African American/ Black
Speech	LGBTQA+
English Language Learners	Indigenous/ Latinx
Language	Asian American
Swallowing	Arab American

Assignments.

Journal. Each week, the student journals, in writing or in video, about their experiences and perspectives on the class content and activities (Cotton et al., 2016; Farrugia-Bernard et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2016). Journal entries are reflective in nature but should also be grounded in sources. There are prompts for weeks zero (due the first day of class), three, and six of the course. Week

zero's prompts: What are your expectations for this course? What topics do you think will be covered? Why do you feel this is a required course in our program? What is your level of cultural competence going into the course? Week three's prompts: What is the most valuable thing you have learned so far? What do you like and dislike about this course so far? Week six's prompts: Describe your cultural competency as a result of taking this course. Will you continue to learn about cultural competence? If so, how? What would you change in this course to make it more beneficial in terms of content or delivery? Weeks one, two, four, five, and seven were open reflections. Journal entries are graded. See Appendix A for journal rubric.

Threaded discussion. Each week, the student does a search and reports on a current issue in the spotlight community (Franca and Harten, 2016). The student posts a link and reference citation to the source as well as a paragraph summary in the learning management system, Canvas. This is a credit/no credit task. The instructor uses the postings as conversation points in class.

Cultural autobiography. The student examines and reflects on their culture. The student takes this information and creates a presentation about their culture (Cotton et al., 2016; Farrugia-Bernard et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2016). Included in the presentation are three artifacts representative of their culture. This presentation can take any form—video, poem, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc. Cultural autobiographies are shared in full in small groups and one artifact and description is shared with the whole class. The instructor shares their cultural autobiography with the class on the first meeting to serve as a format example as well as to self-reflect in the same ways the students are being asked to do (Ramsey, 2015). See Appendix B for the cultural autobiography rubric.

New communication. Each student has a conversation with a person from a cultural group outside of the class that holds an opposing perspective or who they have not interacted with before (Franca & Harten, 2016). For example, engaging with a new person via social media from the comments section. After the communication, the student creates a reflective video detailing the experience, including what conversation strategies they used and what new knowledge they gained.

Media review. Each student watches a television show or movie of their choosing and reflects on the way culture is represented (ASHA, n.d.). Afterwards, the student writes a short paper that identifies cultural bias (gender, racial, SES, disability, etc.), discusses the impact of the bias on the characters or society in general, and modifies the script to demonstrate equity for the characters.

Case study. The case study consists of a culturally and/or linguistically diverse case study (Cotton et al., 2016; Farrugia-Bernard et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2016). The students demonstrate the multicultural knowledge and skills gained throughout the course by creating an appropriate assessment and treatment plan. This is a small group assignment. See Appendix C for case study example.

Student Reflections

Data Collection. Data was collected from the students for the purpose of gaining insight about their perspectives on course design and content. Data collection began after receiving Institutional Review Board approval in April 2017. All students enrolled in the researcher's Multicultural Issues in Intervention for Communication Disorders course during the 2017 term were eligible to

participate in the study. The sample group was composed of 36 student participants; 34 students were CSD majors, one student was from the special education program, and one student was from the teacher education program. All of the participants were female and one student self-identified as a person of color. Three students self-identified as being bilingual, one student self-identified as being polyglot. This sample was not purposefully homogenous by race and gender; however, it does accurately reflect the current demographics and lack of diversity in the field.

A colleague not on the research team presented the informed consent; the principal investigator was not present. The colleague that presented the informed consents held them until after final course grades were submitted. In this way, the principal investigator did not know which students agreed to participate in the study until after grades had been turned in and the term had ended.

Data gathering involved three self-reflective, prompted journal entries at week zero, three, and six of the course. The present study focused on data captured in week six as the prompts were dedicated to teaching and course design components:

- Describe your cultural competency as a result of taking this course.
- Will you continue to learn about cultural competence? If so, how?
- What would you change in this course to make it more beneficial in terms of content or delivery?

The prompts for weeks zero and three were more heavily centered on reflections of personal experiences with class content and discussions and as a result were excluded from the present study.

Data Analysis. Journal entries from the 36 student participants were analyzed. Data analysis began during the data collection process while grading the journal entries in order to begin to identify commonalities among the student participants' experiences. A graduate assistant studying CSD and who had taken the course the year prior also read and graded the journal entries. Broad themes, or common experiences of the participants that impart the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), were identified separately by both the primary researcher and the graduate assistant in order to increase reliability. When themes were agreed upon, the researcher and graduate assistant commenced line-by-line focused coding to cluster frequently used terms and common experiences into specific themes.

Results

Every student participant (n= 36) passed the course with a grade of B+ or better. Overall, the majority of students (n= 23) reported in their final journal that they were very satisfied with the content of the class. They felt the content allowed them to improve their cultural competence. Criticisms of the course focused mainly on discussion delivery.

Theme: Improving Cultural Competency.

"I only have scratched the surface." Every student participant (n= 36) felt that they increased their cultural competency as a result of taking the course and made comments such as, "I think I have made strides in my cultural growth." However, the vast majority of student participants (n= 23) also recognized that this was only the beginning of their journey towards cultural competence. One student commented, "I definitely think that my cultural competency has improved throughout

this course but I don't think there is a point at which one is 'done' expanding their cultural competence; I think it can always be improved and expanded." Another stated, "This class showed me that while I know a lot, there is always more to learn, and especially more in the realm of speech language pathology than affects me and my clients." Students reflected on this journey with comments such as:

As much as I wanted to believe that I was "well-rounded" or culturally competent, in hindsight, I was pretty far from it. Not to say that I am completely competent after six weeks of taking this course, but I definitely have become more aware of cultural issues, some of which I was blind to before.

And

It is humorous to look back at my first journal and think that I thought I had any cultural competency at the beginning. However, I still would not consider myself culturally competent now. There are so many other cultures and aspects of culture that I know little, or nothing, about.

As one student poignantly stated, "I feel like I only have scratched the surface as far as learning everything I need to know to be completely competent with other cultures."

Theme: Changes.

"Very heated about their opinions." The student participants offered valuable critiques to improve the course that mainly focused on the difficulty of engaging in large group discussion and depth of conversations. The vast majority of students (n= 21) felt that there needed to be better facilitation of large group discussions perhaps with an establishment of conversation norms:

I would probably change the discussions. I don't know how to do this effectively but I know students did not speak up because their thoughts differed than the majority of people in the course. They did not speak up because they did not want to seem ignorant.

One student commented that in large group discussions people were not really engaged in the discussion because they were so focused on their own point of view, "So often in class, I think that people do not really listen what other people are saying, but just hear with the intention of saying their own viewpoint." She went on to say, "I think that is one negative to this profession, the majority love to talk, but never want to listen what others have to say." Some students (n= 9) added the suggestion of more small group discussions to offset the large group discussion, "I also would have enjoyed engaging in more small group discussion because I believe people tend to be more open and honest when they are not addressing the whole group." One student explained, "I thought most students were open and we were able to discuss things but I felt that at times the class was hard to share in large group because people would get very heated about their opinions."

"Dive deeper." Many students (n= 15) were concerned that there was not enough time in the course to cover the complex community issues adequately. One student commented, "I wish we had more time to cover more current event topics as they relate to culture, and also to dive deeper into specific customs of different cultures." One student commented, "I think that the minority groups

did not receive an equal amount of class discussion time.” Another student went into more detail, stating:

I guess my least favorite thing about this class was the LGBT discussion. The discussion was drastically shorter than that of any other community. There were some great discussion points about the trans community and voice therapy and we mentioned health care discrimination, and then it was over. This isn't the fault of the design of the class, but maybe if there were more material and a bigger class, it would be more of a discussion. But, I think it's wonderful the LGBT community was discussed at all. This was the first class that I took that included it in the curriculum, and I want to thank you for that.

Limitations

This study is limited in that the data were from a small number of participants, all from a single offering of this course. A larger participant pool from various course offerings would be needed in order to provide a more nuanced perspective of the effectiveness of the course. Qualitative data is collected to provide a deep understanding of one phenomenon so generalizability may be limited. It should also be noted that despite all best practice teaching strategies in CSD programs, implicit personal bias and beliefs may impact teaching and learning.

Conclusion

As reflected in the literature review there is a scarcity of research on the ways that multicultural content is created and implemented in the field of CSD. Student feedback from this study shows that foundational courses can improve cultural competency but careful consideration of discussion format and time dedicated to communities should take place. More research that includes student voices needs to be conducted to make best practice teaching and learning recommendations.

CSD programs need to begin to view foundational multicultural courses as not just a requirement but an essential component in preparing future clinicians to better serve our increasingly diverse communities and addressing the racism in our field. While foundational courses are not meant to achieve cultural competency for all students, they do present the opportunity to plant the seed for lifelong learning and critical self-reflection.

Disclosures

The author is employed as an Associate Professor at Eastern Michigan University. No relevant nonfinancial relationships exist.

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Appendix A

Journal Rubric

	Excellent 5 points	Proficient 3.5 points	Average 2.5 points	Poor 1 point
Reflections: Ability to integrate learning into real-world experiences and analyze issues with a critical attitude	Ability to proficiently demonstrate reflection and deep thinking of acquired knowledge and concepts, and integrate them into different issues from wide range of perspectives (e.g. different contexts, cultures, disciplines etc.); creative solutions and critical thinking skills demonstrated in the writing	Showing satisfactory ability to relate acquired knowledge to previous experiences; demonstrating attempt to analyze the issues from a number of different perspectives	Includes description of events, and a little further consideration behind the events using a relatively descriptive style of language; no evidence of using multiple perspectives in analyzing the issues	Only includes mere descriptions of theoretical knowledge; no reflection is demonstrated beyond the descriptions
Presentation: Articulation and organization of ideas and perspectives	Writing is well-focused; arguments or perspectives are precisely defined and explained; coherent flow in developing an insightful idea demonstrated	Arguments or perspectives are clearly stated; organized flow in writing but not deep enough to be very insightful	Arguments or perspectives are vaguely mentioned; the writing lacked an organized flow and the ideas were hard to follow	Do not show any original thinking or perspectives; chaotic in organization and presentation of ideas
Completeness: Incorporation of the journal entries into a whole, demonstration of the learning process	Concrete development between journal entries into a whole; demonstrating clear steps in the developmental learning process	Journal entries can be generally developed; still able to observe how the student develops during the learning process	Weak development between journal entries; development gained from the learning process is hardly observed	No development between journal entries; The entries are mere descriptions of events rather than showing a sequence of learning steps
Evidence: Use of textual evidence and practical context	Uses specific and convincing connections from the texts, activities, or observations to support claims in your own writing making insightful and applicable connections between texts.	Uses relevant examples from the texts, activities, or observations to support claims in your own writing, making applicable connections between texts.	Uses incomplete or vaguely developed examples to support only partially supported claims with no connection made between the texts, activities, or observations.	No examples from the texts, activities, or observations are used and claims made in your own writing are unsupported and irrelevant to the topic.
References:	NCTE/IRA (2006) Reflective Writing Rubric	Chan C.(2009) Assessment: Reflective Journal, Assessment Resources@HKU, University of Hong Kong		

Appendix B

Cultural Autobiography Rubric

-Each student will reflect on and examine her culture.

-The student will create a presentation of her culture. Included in the presentation should be three artifacts. This presentation can take any form—video, poem, powerpoint, prezi, etc.

-The student will present two of the factors to the entire class.

Developed by Information Technology Evaluation Services, NC Department of Public Instruction

	1	2	3	4	Total
Organization	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.	Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around.	Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.	
Subject Knowledge	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.	Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions.	Student is at ease with expected answers to all questions, but fails to elaborate.	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration.	
Graphics	Student uses superfluous graphics or no graphics	Student occasionally uses graphics that rarely support text and presentation.	Student's graphics relate to text and presentation.	Student's graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation.	
Mechanics	Student's presentation has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	
Eye Contact	Student reads all of report with no eye contact.	Student occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report.	Student maintains eye contact most of the time but frequently returns to notes.	Student maintains eye contact with audience, seldom returning to notes.	
Elocution	Student mumbles, incorrectly pronounces terms, and speaks too quietly for students in the back of class to hear.	Student's voice is low. Student incorrectly pronounces terms. Audience members have difficulty hearing presentation.	Student's voice is clear. Student pronounces most words correctly. Most audience members can hear presentation.	Student uses a clear voice and correct, precise pronunciation of terms so that all audience members can hear presentation.	

Appendix C

Case Study Example

Brandon

Brandon is a 6 year old African-American boy in the first grade at a school that you service. He was referred for a speech evaluation with concerns over articulation by his classroom teacher. You complete a classroom observation and note that Brandon is often reprimanded by his teacher for talking out of turn and for being out of his seat. However, it appears that both his teacher and his peers can understand Brandon easily. Brandon code switches between African American Vernacular English and Mainstream American English.

- What background information do you collect? Be specific...Who would you ask questions to? What forms would you use? What questions would you ask?
- What formal and informal assessments would you administer and why?
- How would you reduce the bias that is present in the standardized tests you will use with Brandon?
- While speech is the main concern you know it is best practice to also assess language. How would you go about doing this?
- You determine that speech and language services are not warranted. What are your roles and responsibilities to Brandon?
- Name one culturally appropriate assessment material you would use and an activity you would use it for.
- What are suggestions you could give to Brandon's teachers so that he is more successful in the classroom?
- Create a list of five resources to inform your practice working with clients from the African American community.