A Culturally Responsive Intervention for Addressing Problematic Behaviors in Counseling Students

Kristopher M. Goodrich and Richard Q. Shin

Counseling faculty serve as gatekeepers to protect the public from trainees who demonstrate significant deficiencies in professional functioning. Two issues that have not been thoroughly examined are how different cultural values may intersect with the assessment of appropriate professional competencies and whether the multicultural environment of programs is considered when assessing potentially problematic students. The authors suggest a group systems intervention and provide implications and recommendations for counselor educators.

Keywords: impairment, culture, gatekeeping, counselor education, group systems theory

A primary responsibility of counselor education program faculty is to facilitate the development of counseling competencies among trainees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002) because they serve as gatekeepers responsible for protecting the public from trainees who demonstrate significant deficiencies in professional functioning (Foster & McAdams, 2009; Homrich, 2009). Although scholarship focused on trainee problematic behavior is growing across disciplines (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009; Wilkerson, 2006), one consideration receiving little attention is how cultural values and norms may intersect with the assessment of professional competencies. In particular, counselor educators need to consider the degree to which cultural factors of a student from a culturally marginalized group affects the intervention process. Furthermore, they are to ensure that any observed deficiency or problematic behaviors are not expressions of different cultural beliefs. Although we recognize that not all students are suitable for the profession and that counselor educators have a duty and obligation to screen these individuals out of the field for the protection of the public, the literature has not explored how systemic factors may be affecting faculty assessment of trainees.

The lack of attention regarding how cultural issues may affect the process of identifying and addressing problematic counselor trainees is particularly concerning considering that available literature indicates increased racial/ethnic diversity of trainees (Johnson, Bradley, Knight, & Bradshaw, 2007) juxtaposed with the continual underrepresentation of racially/ethnically diverse counseling faculty (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2002; Hill, 2009). Because of these disparate demographic trends, it may be safe to assume that White counseling faculty members are predominantly making decisions regarding the assessment of...
potentially problematic students of color. Furthermore, trainees of other culturally marginalized groups (e.g., individuals with a disability; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students) may also encounter faculty of privileged statuses (e.g., able-bodied, heterosexual) serving as gatekeepers. Although it is also possible for faculty members from culturally marginalized groups to be insensitive to the needs of culturally diverse students, in this article, we focus on cross-cultural interactions because they are the most common and potentially most challenging within the field as counseling programs have been influenced by the systems of power and privilege found in the broader U.S. society (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Hays & Chang, 2003). Although the current article is more focused on cross-racial assessments of potentially problematic students, we are fully aware of the wide range of potentially challenging cross-cultural situations that include differences in class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and other important social identity categories. The purpose of this article is twofold. First, we provide a brief overview of the literature concerning problematic behavior, cross-cultural faculty–student relationships, and group systems theory. Second, we outline recommendations for incorporating cultural issues when addressing potentially problematic students. A case example is included to illustrate these recommendations.

### Problematic Trainees and Cross-Cultural Relationships in Counselor Education

There is confusion regarding how the term *problematic trainee* has been described and defined across various mental health fields (Oliver, Bernstein, Anderson, Blashfield, & Roberts, 2004; Wilkerson, 2006). In counseling programs, descriptors have included *distressed, deficient, inadequate, incompetent, impaired, problematic, and unsatisfactory* (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009; Oliver et al., 2004; Wilkerson, 2006), although there is movement away from descriptors such as *impaired and incompetent* because of potential ethical and legal issues and their overlap with diagnostic and legal language associated with disability status (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009). Use of this terminology could suggest that the identified trainee has some type of disability and that intervening with the trainee could reflect discrimination by the program or institution, opening the faculty and their institution to legal risk (Elman & Forrest, 2007; Homrich, 2009; Kress & Protivnak, 2009; Vacha-Haase, Davenport, & Kerewsky, 2004). Instead, the term *problematic* is now widely recognized as an appropriate term (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009).

Scholars have provided remediation models for addressing problematic behavior in counselor trainees (e.g., Foster & McAdams, 2009; Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, & Maxwell, 2002; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999) and explored faculty perceptions about the gatekeeping process (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002). Furthermore, several court cases involve counseling programs that have dismissed a trainee from their program (e.g., *Harris v. Blake and the Board of Trustees of the University of Northern Colorado*, 1986; *Jennifer Keeton v. Mary Jane Anderson-Wiley et al.*, 2010; *Julea Ward v. Roy Wilbanks et al.*, 2010). It is of note, however, that there has been no attention within the literature about how the assessment of problematic students may be influenced by the different cultural values and social locations between dominant culture faculty and students from diverse cultural groups.
Furthermore, there has been no focus on how cross-racial faculty–student relationships are also affected by issues of White privilege, especially during critical situations such as dismissing students because of potential impairment. This is disconcerting because researchers have documented how larger societal systems such as White privilege can be manifested through racial microaggressions in cross-racial counseling contexts (Constantine, 2007). Sue et al. (2007) discussed how persons of color are slighted every day in conscious and unconscious ways, including verbal, behavioral, and environmental circumstances that communicate hostility, slight, or insult to a person of color from another person in the dominant culture. Sue et al. argued that microaggression affects the therapeutic alliance with clients of color. The microaggression phenomenon has been supported by others in the field and has been further expanded to include sexual orientation, among others (e.g., Nadal et al., 2011; Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011). Additionally, within the multicultural supervision literature, instances of cultural mistrust have been noted between supervisors and supervisees during cross-racial supervision experiences (Cook & Helms, 1988; Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004; VanderKolk, 1974).

Clearly, counselor educators are not immune to the forces of privilege and oppression in society (Hays & Chang, 2003), just as professional counselors are not immune in their clinical practices (e.g., Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011; Sue et al., 2007). In cross-cultural student dismissal situations, power differentials between the counseling faculty and trainees due to cultural makeup compound those already in place with the faculty–student relationship. As in the case of cross-racial counseling (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000) and supervisory relationships (Hays & Chang, 2003), there is the danger of White faculty imposing European American values and expectations on students of color (Choudhuri, 2009; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Hays & Chang, 2003; Nilsson & Duan, 2007) or ignoring the cultural differences because of a lack of awareness (Hanna et al., 2000). The question, however, remains: What safeguards (i.e., standards) do counselor education programs use to ensure that trainee behaviors are viewed through a culturally appropriate lens and not automatically identified as problematic or deficient simply because they are different?

Another related and perhaps more complicated issue is whether the “deficient” behaviors that are being observed in a predominantly White/dominant culture counseling program are actually reactions to an unwelcoming or hostile environment. If a student presents as “angry” or “not open to feedback,” what might be some possible reasons for this issue? Could this be a student’s reaction to an instructor’s unconscious biases and concomitant racial microaggressions? Does this student feel voiceless in his or her program because of prior and/or continual interactions with members of the faculty or his or her peers? Might this be a student who is tentative to trust others based on years of interaction in a society that has marginalized and demeaned him or her? Or perhaps this might just be an instructor’s perception of this student based on his or her own unconscious bias? Counseling faculty are called to critically examine whether they are effectively creating welcoming
and supportive environments for students of color, as well as other students from historically marginalized and devalued groups. Currently, there seems to be a significant gap in the literature and perhaps in actual practice to determine whether faculties are engaging in frequent and comprehensive cultural self-assessments of themselves and their programs.

A Group Systems Approach

Counseling faculty members can consider their programs as groups dealing with several systemic factors associated with problematic behavior, and they can reflect on related issues through steps associated with group systems levels. Many of the concepts raised earlier in the article reflect the different group systems levels from group systems theory (Connors & Caple, 2005): the intrapersonal (i.e., the specific faculty member or student’s internal experience), the interpersonal (i.e., student–student or faculty–student interaction), and the group as a whole (i.e., the entire counseling program or larger university). These levels have been applied to a group supervision model (Rubel & Okech, 2006) and are useful within a multicultural supervision context (Okech & Rubel, 2007). We argue that a fourth level, found both anecdotally (Ward, 2007) and empirically (Luke & Kiweewa, 2010) in the literature, is actively at work in cross-racial situations: the supragroup (i.e., dominant societal and cultural values, systemic and institutionalized racism). Through the identification of the different group systems levels that might be at work at any point in time, we believe that faculty would have a greater understanding of the different forces that might affect student behavior or faculty perceptions of such.

Intrapersonal Level

The first step we recommend when a problematic student situation is identified is for the faculty to reflect on the intrapersonal experience of the student (e.g., What may be occurring for the student in that moment? What might this student be responding to?) and for the faculty to reflect on their own intrapersonal experience (e.g., What might be occurring for me right now? What biases or prejudices might be affecting my experience of this student?). Faculty may also seek information regarding the student’s social location and cultural background, as well as review source materials about cross-cultural assessment. We recommend the book *Diagnosis in a Multicultural Context: A Casebook for Mental Health Professionals* (Paniagua, 2001) for a comprehensive review of cross-cultural diagnostic issues, practitioner guidelines for culturally sensitive care, and case examples demonstrating how culture may or may not affect the clinical assessment process with students.

Interpersonal Level

Once faculty understand the student’s and their own intrapersonal experience and have reviewed relevant information about the student’s cultural background, social location, and cross-cultural assessment factors, we recommend that they have a conversation with the identified student (i.e., interpersonal level). Intrapersonal processes by themselves might still lead to stereotyping, biases, or prejudices on the part of the faculty reviewing this
situation. Therefore, it is important to solicit the student’s own perspective of the identified problematic behavior, because elements might be operating for the student that the faculty had not considered or the faculty might be incorrect in understanding the student’s unique situation.

**Group-as-a-Whole Level**

Once a student has been allowed the opportunity to explain his or her experiences (as described earlier), specific questions regarding the student’s experiences in the program should be considered. The faculty should be aware of how successful or unsuccessful the program has been in terms of the recruitment, retention, and graduation of diverse student groups. This answer might serve as a baseline to provide faculty with data about how well their program is responding to the needs and expectations of students from culturally marginalized groups. Factors that affect student retention and success include personal, social, environmental, and interactional supports and barriers that students find related to their academic experience (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2006). The students’ choice to attend a particular program can be based on the comfort or safety they feel with that particular program. Additionally, the choice of whether to persist in a given program may also be based on students’ perceptions and experiences within the program (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism; welcoming climate; access to faculty and resources; respect; diverse student body; social support). Those counseling programs that find a low number of students from diverse cultural groups enrolling and/or successfully graduating from their departments might begin to question the systemic issues present in their program that might be leading to those outcomes.

**Supragroup Level**

The evaluation of potentially problematic students from culturally marginalized groups has larger social justice implications. Dismissing students based on a lack of understanding of non-Western cultural norms and values or because of diverse students’ reactions to unwelcoming or unsafe department environments simply perpetuates the institutional oppression of certain marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Although all decisions regarding the potential dismissal of a student because of problematic behavior should be approached with care, the additional complexities that are inherent in cross-cultural situations demand further attention. Continuing to ignore this critical process is clearly inconsistent with the growing emphasis on social justice issues in the counseling field. Increasing the diversity of students and faculty in counselor education has also been identified as a key responsibility of programs committed to social justice (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2002; Goodrich, Shin, & Smith, 2011; Shin, 2008; Shin, Smith, Goodrich, & LaRosa, 2011). The lack of a critical mass of students from culturally marginalized groups may reinforce the oppression, stigma, isolation, and misunderstanding of specific marginalized racial and cultural groups. Specific attention should be paid to the demographic makeup of the program, including who is dismissed, held back, or moved forward within the program. Decisions
such as these might be reflective of unconscious bias held by the faculty in making programmatic decisions, which influences the culture of both the program and the larger field of counselor education.

**Case Study**

In this section, we present a composite case as a way to demonstrate how a counseling program might use this process to respond to a situation when a student of color is identified as problematic. Please note that this case is only one example, but there might be different ways students from culturally marginalized groups can be identified as problematic or numerous other contextual situations that may influence faculty–student interactions.

A department meeting is called to discuss the disposition of an African American male student in a counseling program. The student’s adjunct practicum instructor has informed the department that she would like to pull him out of his site and prevent him from returning to the class. The instructor describes the student as overly negative, hostile, rigid, and refusing to accept feedback. She indicates that she has been unable to adequately assess the student’s counseling competencies because he does not actively participate in group supervision. When the student is asked to discuss his work with clients, the instructor reports that the student is minimally forthcoming. The instructor informs the department that the “straw that broke the camel’s back” was when the student “exploded” at a peer during the previous class meeting. Apparently, the student of concern had just completed a case presentation and received some feedback about his client from a classmate. The instructor reports that upon receiving the feedback, the student “blew up” and yelled, “I’m sick of this racist shit!”

When asked about the group dynamics of the class, the instructor states that she has no idea why the African American student would feel the need to be closed off or reserved. When asked if the classmate’s feedback was racially insensitive, the instructor adamantly states that no one in the course, including herself, has acted in a racist manner toward the student. In fact, the instructor could not even recall the topic of race ever being discussed in the course. Therefore, she believes that the student’s outburst was completely inappropriate and clearly demonstrates that he does not have the emotional maturity to be working with clients. Additionally, she states that his “threatening outburst” has created an unsafe environment in the classroom and believes that it would be best for everyone if he were not allowed to return.

In addition to the information provided by the instructor, the department has also received an anonymous letter from a student in the practicum course. The letter begins with the student expressing a desire to provide her perspective on what may have led up to the situation in class. She also expressed shame for not having the courage to speak up and try to put a stop to the many problematic issues that she had observed throughout the semester. First, she wrote that she is not at all surprised that the issue “finally came to a head” in the course. From day one, she reports that her classmates made no attempts to include the African American male student in casual conversations or during class discussions. She wrote that the instructor must have been aware of this classroom divide but made no attempt to address it.
The student also wrote that the instructor, as well as her peers, often ignored the topic of race whenever it was introduced. When race was addressed, it was often discussed briefly and in problematic ways. She acknowledged that the entire classroom milieu must have felt awfully hostile for her classmate of color. In terms of the case presentation, the student indicated that her classmate was presenting his counseling work with an African American adolescent. She indicated that the feedback that triggered his angry outburst was indeed racially offensive so she “totally understands why he was so pissed.” How should the department faculty respond?

**Intrapersonal Level Response**

Within this case example, faculty members should first seek to understand their own thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the student concern, as well as what might have been operating for the identified student at that time. The following questions should be asked: What thoughts, feelings, and reactions do I have as I listen to this story? What thoughts and reactions have I had to this student in the past, and what might be operating for me? Does this student remind me of someone else from my past experiences or someone in my present life? If not, what have my other experiences been like with this student, and how do I come to understand them as a person?

We encourage faculty in these situations to engage in the process of active racial/cultural awareness (Collins & Pieterse, 2007), which is defined as gaining “the capacity to consistently engage with others in an exploration of the automatic assumptions that guide one’s everyday thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (p. 16) associated with nondominant groups. Counseling faculty who implement such strategies for themselves provide excellent role modeling for students to understand that the journey of becoming a multiculturally competent counseling professional is a lifelong endeavor.

**Interpersonal Level Response**

The faculty in this scenario should engage in honest, thorough, thoughtful, and difficult dialogues about the ways in which race and racism may have affected all the steps that led to the student being identified as problematic. Within this case scenario, this student identifies as an African American man. Faculty would be wise to consider how the history of marginalization, silencing, and oppression of African American persons and the stereotype of the “angry African American male” might be affecting the student and/or how he is viewed in this scenario. One important consideration would be the adjunct instructor’s level of multicultural competence (e.g., How confident are the faculty that the instructor engages in frequent, critical interrogations of her White privilege and internalized prejudices toward African American men?). Questions that might remain from the case could include the instructor’s definitions of “exploded” and “blowing up” and whether the other students present in the room describe the outburst similarly or differently.

The next step that we recommend that faculty take is to speak to the student in question. It may be helpful in situations such as these for the faculty to be strategic and have a faculty member who has a good relationship with the
identified student (such as his academic adviser or a trusted mentor in the program) speak to him directly, as opposed to as a larger group. There are, however, some situations in which the full faculty may need to speak with the student as a group, such as if this is a concern across multiple courses and contexts or if dismissal from the program is in question. When the faculty speak to the identified student, extant research recommends that they be very clear and direct about the concern at hand (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009). In this discussion, we believe that it would be helpful for the faculty to present these patterns of behavior to the identified student in a supportive manner to help the student raise his interpersonal awareness. This should be an open dialogue, allowing the student to respond to the faculty concerns about his problematic behavior and his lived experience. This can also be seen as an opportunity for the student, faculty member, or program to grow in their personal or professional experience.

Together, the identified student and faculty can brainstorm more constructive ways to respond to racially charged situations. The faculty can provide the student with guidance about how he might seek additional support within or outside of the counseling program (e.g., connection to an African American student group on campus or other groups of graduate students of color). Conversely, the faculty can seek guidance from the student about the ways in which the counseling program can be altered to make it more welcoming to diverse students. Again, we believe that it is critical for faculty to understand the circumstances that led to the student’s reactions from the student’s own perspective and for faculty to support students when they might feel ostracized. It seems that in this case scenario the student’s relationship (or lack thereof) with other students, as well as the adjunct faculty member’s relationship with the identified student, is likely influencing this situation. This is important to know more fully to understand this case. We see this conversation as a learning opportunity for all parties, which, in turn, has the potential to positively affect both the student and the counseling program (and all its members) as a whole.

Another point of consideration within this particular case is the experience and interactions with the adjunct faculty member. It is important that this process should in turn be used with the adjunct faculty member whose experience may also be misunderstood by the counseling faculty and who may not have the opportunity to fully voice her perceptions and experiences in the counseling program. As it has been documented, there are multiple levels of power and privilege in higher education (Goodrich et al., 2011; Shin, 2008; Shin et al., 2011); consequently, adjunct faculty may also feel that they are voiceless within the academy, and their interactions across stakeholders in the program may be a result of this process as well. Providing a supportive space for the adjunct to share her perspectives on the situation and trying to understand her experience might prove to be beneficial for the overall climate of this particular counseling program.

**Group-as-a-Whole Response**

There seems to be a group process issue in relation to race in this case. An anonymous student has written a letter expressing concern about the
handling (or lack of handling) of issues related to race/culture within classroom discussions, as well as issues of subgrouping and isolation of the student in question. The connection the identified student had with his client, an African American adolescent, might have further exacerbated the situation. No mention is made about the actual feedback received or how it might have been delivered to the student. This combined with previous experiences the student has had in the program should be considered when faculty consider how they might best respond.

Additionally, there seem to be many group process issues occurring within the practicum classroom. It seems that the issues of race/culture and subgrouping of students have not been addressed within the classroom context. The counseling faculty could begin by addressing the adjunct faculty member and working with her to better address issues of cultural diversity and group dynamics within her classroom (an individual intervention with the needs of the group as a whole kept in mind). Through this type of intervention, faculty members could provide mentorship and support of her teaching, thereby supporting the students within the classroom. In addition, faculty must consult to see if she is an appropriate instructor for this type of course, or if her skills might better serve her in a different type of course, or if she should teach in the program.

The counseling faculty might also consider intervening with other students in the classroom. Issues of subgrouping, especially within counseling courses, can be expected; they are typical to any group situation. The way in which students have subgrouped in this scenario should be addressed because it is both racially insensitive and inappropriate. Student awareness of bias should be addressed by the faculty so that these students can understand how to address race and other cultural issues in their own future practices. In these experiences, faculty should model reflective practice, engage in open dialogues, provide awareness-raising exercises, and facilitate safe spaces for difficult conversations.

**Supragroup Level Response**

Finally, the faculty should consider the full context of their program and how larger systemic factors might be influencing the interactions within and across their counseling program. Faculty could consider how to use this particular situation as data about how adequately race or culture is addressed (or not addressed) across their graduate program. From this situation, faculty might wish to more intentionally address these issues across courses, as well as in other interactions with students (e.g., new student orientation, student group meetings [such as the program’s Chi Sigma Iota chapter], and within program documents). This might provide some modeling for students and other program personnel to discuss cultural issues and lead to a program culture that is a more open learning environment for students.

Faculty should address the following factors, which have been found to significantly influence the retention of students of color in higher education settings: (a) Is there a critical mass of students and faculty of color in the program (Davis, 2002)? (b) How well integrated is the student into academic and social networks (Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008; Museus, 2008)? (c) Does the student have access to a support group within or outside the
department that includes other students of color (Grier-Reed et al., 2008)? (d) Does the department have a formal mentoring program that helps to integrate students of color as soon as they enter the program (Rogers & Molina, 2006)? (e) Does the department offer relevant diversity courses, and are there concerted efforts toward multicultural curriculum transformation (Davis, 2002)? and (f) How might White privilege be influencing the dynamics within the counseling program (Hays & Chang, 2003)? Implementing strategies to address retention issues have the additional benefit of improving recruitment efforts (Rogers & Molina, 2006) because these programs can provide clear evidence to prospective students and faculty from diverse backgrounds that they are truly committed to creating inclusive environments as opposed to simply “talking the talk.” Furthermore, programs that conduct regular, critical self-assessments that include the examination of faculty–student interactions through a multicultural lens may be in a better position to make culturally appropriate decisions regarding potentially problematic students from culturally marginalized groups. We believe that these recommendations are useful not only for an academic program but also in clinical settings.

Integrating tools, such as the developmental counseling therapy (DCT) five-step assessment tool, into evaluations of students is one possible avenue for programs to address the cultural biases and assumptions that are currently present with the traditional Eurocentric approach to assessment (Zalaquett, Fuerth, Stein, Ivey, & Ivey, 2008). DCT is recommended because it is based in multiculturalism (e.g., knowledge, awareness, and skills), focuses on client (or student) context, explores the unique aspects of culture, understands oppression to be a central construct, and focuses on a person’s distress as opposed to pathologizing him or her with a disease or disorder (Ivey & Ivey, 2001).

A formal assessment of the program’s effectiveness in creating a multicultural welcoming environment for students from culturally marginalized groups may also be a useful approach. Currently, there is an established assessment tool intended for this purpose. The Multicultural Environment Inventory–Revised (MEI-R; Toporek, Liu, & Pope-Davis, 2003) assesses an individual’s perceptions of how effectively programs address multicultural issues in various areas. For instance, one of the factors the MEI-R measures is the degree to which respondents feel safe, comfortable, and valued within their programs. This type of formal assessment should be an important component of regular, critical program evaluations that determine how well a department is doing with respect to creating and/or sustaining culturally competent learning environments. Furthermore, we recommend that programs consider the inclusion of students of color (and members of other historically marginalized groups) to serve as representatives on departmental climate and policy committees. These students might be able to highlight program strengths and areas of improvement to better serve the needs of all students.

**Conclusion**

Responding to a student who shows signs of problematic behavior is a difficult issue for any graduate program to undergo (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Homrich, 2009). Equally concerning is the impact that the label of
problematic can have on a student’s personal and professional life. We have proposed the use of group systems theory as a potentially effective framework for resolving these complex, multilayered situations. We also call for additional multicultural training and education of faculty and supervisors in order for their competence to meet or exceed the level required of students.

Counseling programs should consider who has been labeled as problematic and explore the differing contextual issues that may have affected or influenced those decisions. Future research could explore who and how counseling programs have dismissed students, as well as intervention strategies that have been found to be effective in these situations. This could include a quantitative study of counseling programs and internship sites to see how many persons have been dismissed or asked to take a leave of absence because of problematic behavior. Such a study could also assess how often these situations occur, what interventions are used when the issue arises, if there are any demographic differences between those who are identified as problematic and those who are not, as well as who is accepted into their programs after their leave of absence. Additionally, one might also consider a qualitative study of persons who have been dismissed or asked to take a leave from counseling programs and then later successfully completed a counseling degree or internship placement. This might help counselors to understand what interventions or strategies may be most successful in these situations given that, although much has been written about problematic trainees/supervisees, little is known about efficiency of interventions with these persons (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). This issue warrants further research.

Continual multicultural assessment of departmental and placement environments would also be imperative to understand the types of contexts in which students of marginalized groups are being trained. Before dismissal decisions are made, we argue that programs must consider the various systems levels that are affecting the situation, including whether the issue resides with the identified student or whether there is a larger systems issue affecting the experience of the student, faculty, or counseling program. This way, programs can ensure that they are acting in a multiculturally competent, responsive, and socially just way with students from culturally marginalized groups.

References


Harris v. Blake and the Board of Trustees of the University of Northern Colorado, 798 F.2d 419 (10th Cir. 1986).


