Training Consulting Psychologists to Be Sensitive to Multicultural Issues in Organizational Consultation

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As diversity continues to increase significantly in the workforce, training organizational consultants to be competent to effectively address issues related directly to race, ethnicity, and gender becomes essential. However, these societal changes present a challenge to many training programs, faculty, and practitioners. Given the limitations in the literature and the absence of specific guidelines for ensuring competence in addressing multicultural issues in work environments, the primary purpose of this article is to present and discuss specific strategies for addressing these challenges.

The current literature on consultation acknowledges the continually increasing representation of diversity within the workforce as a critical trend affecting the role of consultants in the workplace (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992; Horowitz & O'Brien, 1989; Johnson & Packer, 1987; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Offermann & Gowing, 1990; Solomon, 1989). Competencies in assisting existing environments in accommodating new norms, roles, expectations, values, behaviors, and dynamics involved in the socialization and maintenance processes of multicultural workgroups are strongly recommended (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992). The ability to assist staff in the development of cross-cultural communication skills that are both respectful and effective in maintaining productivity is purported to be critical (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986). It would appear that this awareness of the organizational issues related to race, ethnicity, and gender would translate immediately into programmatic and curriculum development related directly to the development of culturally sensitive organizational consultants. However, this is not the case.

The primary objective of training in consultation currently is to facilitate the development of scientist-practitioners who are able to function as service providers, trainers, program designers, program evaluators, administrators, consultants, and researchers in business and organizational settings to meet the unique challenge of a more diverse workforce (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992). There seems to be an underlying assumption that the ability to engage in effective consultation requires only a basic understanding of traditional mainstream coursework in existing colleges of business and psychology departments (i.e., adult development, career development, organizational behavior, group behavior, ethics, relationship building, communication, problem solving, counseling interventions, research, and consultation) and brief interactions with other departments such as anthropology and sociology. Training, in general, continues to omit curricula directly addressing the understanding of the influence of increased representation of diversity related to race, ethnicity, and gender in work environments that traditionally have been dominated by members of one particular racial or ethnic group or gender. Trainees intending to serve as organizational consultants after graduation are expected to

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meet the aforementioned unique challenges with little if any exposure to coursework specifically addressing multicultural and cross-cultural issues in organizational counseling psychology.

Although some professionals have been sensitized to unique issues related to race, ethnicity, and gender in individual counseling because of an American Psychological Association–required multicultural or cross-cultural course, such course content does not begin to address the complexity involved in preparing trainees to (a) assist workers in their adjustment to the presence of those whom they had not valued or considered equal in the past; (b) assist workers in their adjustment to a work environment in which they may not be considered valuable or equal by peers; and (c) assist administrators, executives, and managers in the examination of management styles, decision-making procedures, communication skills, and organizational policy that might be discriminatory to certain members of the more diverse workforce (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992).

What further magnifies this deficit in the education and training of organizational consultants is that a large majority of the faculty who train future consultants do not actually engage in consultative activity, nor do they identify themselves as experts in this area (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992). Consequently, trainees' role models are not "real" consultants but academicians, who typically require a much different set of skills for professional success.

Some educators recognize the limitations in the current training of consultants. Gerstein and Shullman (1992) proposed a training model offering trainees specialization in business and organizational settings within the counseling psychology program. Trainees would be prepared to serve as scientist-practitioners by completing a sequence of psychology (e.g., a seminar in counseling psychology in a business and organizational setting), business (e.g., management, human resources, organizational

development), and other courses (e.g., occupational sociology, field research methods) within a 3-year period, followed by a 1-year full-time internship. Although this is a well-conceptualized program that offers considerable improvement on the typical one-course consultation track by including a two-semester supervised practicum (e.g., personnel, employee assistance programs, wellness), it does not include coursework addressing the unique issues related to race, ethnicity, and gender within an organization.

Carder and Bender (1989) developed a comprehensive 40-week postdoctoral program in which counseling psychology core skills are perceived to be only a foundation for more advanced work for organizational consultants who choose organizational counseling psychology as a specialty. This emphasis at least begins to acknowledge the complexity that an increasingly diverse workforce requires: additive training, additive experience, and additive exposure to various perspectives of multiple practicing organizational consultants. The acquisition of general counseling skills is perceived to be only the beginning of understanding organizational behaviors. Although multicultural issues are not indicated directly, the exposure to individual and group supervision by multiple supervisors, who themselves have made the career transition from traditional counseling psychology to full-time organizational work and who have been trained as supervisors of consultation practice, will at least increase the probability of exposure to and involvement in the discussion of the challenges and stages of resolution of barriers to equity and work satisfaction relative to increasing diversity. However, even this program, which currently is one of the most effective and comprehensive training opportunities, does not highlight the need for knowledge and skill related directly to race, ethnicity, and gender.

In summary, many professionals have graduated from doctoral programs believ-

ing that they are prepared to serve as consultants to organizations addressing issues related directly to race, ethnicity, and gender without an appropriate knowledge base, without practica, and without exposure to those professionals currently engaging in service delivery as organizational consultants. Some experienced professionals may be practicing without the knowledge base or experience in understanding the influence of race, ethnicity, and gender within the work environment. Many organizations are hiring organizational consultants to address these critical issues related to diversity, believing that they are adequately prepared to do so. Given these "holes" in the training and education, few professionals are adequately prepared to address race- and gender-related problems in the work environment.

What activities—whether a part of a programmatic specialty curriculum within a counseling psychology department, a postdoctoral training program in organizational counseling psychology, as described earlier, or integrated into the intervention methods of practicing consultants—would enhance consultation competencies in organizational contact, entry, diagnosis, and intervention when related to issues of cultural diversity? This question could be responded to by current practitioners' attention to the same body of literature addressing the training recommendations for the development of the culturally sensitive counselor, however, with an emphasis on organizational behaviors. For example, as recommended by D. W. Sue et al. (1982), Pederson (1990), D. W. Sue (1991), and Ponterotto and Casas (1987), the culturally sensitive professional must have the opportunity to consider how values and various cultural backgrounds interact with the power-dominant host society's cultural patterns. Those authors strongly recommended that the knowledge of individuals' culture and status, as well as actual experiences with culturally different clients, are essential components to any

training designed to increase competence in multicultural counseling skills. In vivo exposure and behavioral interaction with culturally different individuals, in addition to the traditional cognitive approach to professional development (e.g., lectures, discussion, reading), are thought to be mandatory components of competency enhancement (Lefley, 1985; W. Sue, Akutou, & Higashi, 1985). Consultants, as all practitioners addressing the issue of diversity, must be familiar with issues related specifically to socioeconomic status (Ho, 1987; Pavkov, Lewis, & Lyons, 1989), women, men, racial and ethnic identity (Helms, 1986; Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Downing, 1987; D. W. Sue, 1978), and the dynamics of power.

Core Training and Practice in Diversity for Organizational Consultants

Literature specifically addressing diversity issues in organizational consultation is limited. In major articles by Gerstein and Shullman (1992) and Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1986), who comprehensively addressed critical issues in organizational consultation, only one brief paragraph in each article discussed culture. Although recommendations were provided for those interested in the relationship between culture and organizational behavior, specific guidelines for practice were omitted. The training and practice of the culturally sensitive organizational consultant should include competencies in attending to diversity issues in four critical aspects of organizations: organizational infrastructure, job satisfaction, relationships among staff, and job performance and productivity.

Organizational Infrastructure

Clarifying the organizational norms, roles, expectations, values, behaviors, and dynamics involved in the socialization and maintenance processes of workgroups would

be critical (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986). However, in doing so, organizational consultants must assume that all organizational structures and practices, past and present, directly influence diverse workgroups; that what is written in staff handbooks describing practices and expectations is not always adhered to in reality; and that insensitivity to diversity can be expressed both overtly and covertly. To enter into a relationship with an organization without some historical context, over a 10- to 15-year period, on questions such as the following will provide a framework for understanding all the data that would be forthcoming:

1. What is and has been the majority—minority representation by racial or ethnic group and gender within the entire organization and across all levels of the organizational hierarchy and departments?

2. What is and has been the majority—minority entry-level salary assignment by gender across all levels of the organizational hierarchy and departments?

3. What is and has been the rate of majority–minority salary increase, promotion, and tenure by gender across all levels of the organizational hierarchy and departments?

4. Which organizational practices do and have facilitated and impeded workgroup cohesiveness?

5. What is and has been the degree and in what manner have staff orientations, brochures, advertisements, and so on portrayed an organizational commitment to diversity and intolerance for violations of this norm?

6. How does and has the organization addressed staff grievances and interpersonal conflicts, what percentage of these grievances are related specifically to race or ethnicity and gender across levels of the organizational hierarchy and departments, and what are the typical patterns of outcome from such grievances?

The answers to these questions would assist in discovering any patterns of tokenism, violations of affirmative-action guidelines, and discrimination that Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1986) strongly recommended in addressing diversity issues within organizations. The answers to such questions also may provide guidelines for organizational change and show the need for the implementation of new structures.

Staff Job Satisfaction

Regardless of organizational norms, understanding staff members' experience of the work environment is essential to the organizational consultant's task of providing feedback and in the development of recommendations for change. Assessing interpersonal relationships and work-related attitudes and behaviors within and across racial or ethnic groups, among and between men and women, and across all levels of the organizational hierarchy are critical. The collation of staff evaluations concerning all aspects of their experiences as workers within the organization (e.g., evaluating occupational stress, personal and interpersonal strain, coping resources; Osipow & Spokane, 1981; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) is an important piece in developing an understanding of exactly what the problems are.

Although direct interviews with randomly sampled majority and minority staff can be a powerful strategy in gathering this information, paper-and-pencil surveys addressing job satisfaction or occupational stress will provide an opportunity for the development of organizational norms as a baseline for improvement that will assist in identifying points of necessary intervention across all levels of the organization. Information from such surveys also will assist in examining the within-groups diversity that always exists but is often overlooked. Results can help consultants distinguish between real and perceived problems related to race or ethnicity and gender. For example, points of contention that exist only between

a few individuals across diverse groups can quickly and inaccurately be assessed as an intergroup problem. Although there is some potential for a localized conflict to become more pervasive throughout the organization, consultants must be able to assist organizations to identify and address effectively interpersonal and intergroup points of contention. Consultants must be competent in discerning between staff experiences that, at any given time, directly affect only the sense of well-being of a few from those that are more systemic and widespread group issues. Consultants cannot assume that all that might have been identified by the organization or by individual staff member as an issue of diversity is an issue of diversity. By contrast, consultants cannot assume that all that have been identified as an ordinary organizational issue is not masking deeper, long-standing organizational problems or racism and sexism. This is another rationale for conducting a detailed investigation of the organizational infrastructure from a historical viewpoint.

Analyzing the Relation Between Organizational Policies and Practices Related to Diversity, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, and Work Productivity

Work productivity usually is the primary objective of organizations. Administrators' commitment to positive staff morale can mask an economic-based, underlying interest in job performance and work productivity. If this is the case, in the best of worlds, workers who most efficiently produce the highest quality product or outcome within their departments would be the most highly rewarded.

In such settings, identifying criteria for evaluating job performance and work productivity also is highly important to workers or organizational members because this is the means of obtaining tenure, salary increases, and promotions. This may be par-

ticularly true for racial or ethnic minorities and women, whose salaries typically are lower and who are found in lower status positions more often than White men. Does this mean that White men's job performance exceeds that of these other populations? If so, why and what can be done to address this discrepancy? If not, why is there a disproportionate representation of a certain group in power positions earning higher salaries? As a consultant addressing issues of diversity, I think it imperative that relationships among these organizational variables be examined.

Consequently, it would seem that the most important competency in the area of examining the relationships between the previously mentioned issues and job performance might be the most challenging one: the identification of consistent patterns of concrete, organizational criteria for staff performance evaluation and promotion across racial or ethnic groups and gender. What contributes to the difficulty in this process is that some organizations maintain vague, subjective criteria for work performance evaluation. Such practices pose a problem for those who are committed to studying the links among racial and ethnic status, job satisfaction, job performance, and job evaluation.

In cases in which the evaluation is concrete and lends itself to empirical representation for data analysis, the task of statistically examining relationships among these variables is simple. However, in the other cases in which criteria are vague and subjective, organizational consultation might include working with members on developing concrete, measurable criteria for job evaluation that reflect well-defined expectations for competency across all levels of the hierarchy, department, or both. Organizational consultants must be competent in translating the results of interviews and results from the review of organizational functioning into an empirical state that measures optimal job performance for all staff mem-

bers and some strategy for ensuring consistent evaluation and outcome for all.

Of course, understanding and using statistical analyses that present an overall picture relating staff experiences with staff work productivity and performance evaluation also is a necessity in this process. For example, multiple analyses of variance can assist in identifying significant racial or ethnic group differences by gender across the organizational hierarchy, departments, or both. Although multiple regression analyses effectively can tease out issues related to within-groups diversity, Pearson product–moment correlations can identify relationships between specific behaviors or attitudes and job performance or work productivity. All would assist in attending to the relationships among critical factors that have been highlighted in the literature addressing race or ethnicity and gender (i.e., management styles, decision-making styles, communication skills, the formation and maintenance of supervisor–subordinate and peer–peer relationships; Gerstein & Shullman, 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986). Statistically pulling together all pieces of the investigation would be invaluable to the organization in understanding the current status and the impact of such on the staff dynamics as well as in the setting of future goals.

Currently, some organizational consultants may engage in limited forms of the aforementioned professional activities without. training or experiences specifically addressing this content or the necessary ongoing checks on personal "cultural insensitivities" and diversity-related blind spots.

Factors Encouraging Professionals to Practice With Limited Competency

Several factors may encourage professionals to engage in multicultural organizational consultation with limited competency.

First, training limitations alone, which exist in most academic programs, may lead graduates to believe that they have all that they need to function as organizational consultants regardless of the issue to be addressed.

Second, the demand for diversity-related consultation has increased with increasing racial or ethnic representation within the workforce, corrections, and educational or training institutions. Although the relationship between the consultant and social unit is voluntary, many organizations are experiencing internal and external pressures from federal, state, and local governing agencies and surrounding communities, as well as internal pressures from employees, students, and inmates to seek assistance in managing related issues. "Organizational urgency" also can lead to the request for quick, one-shot fixes to address issues that require greater depth in assessment and intervention. For example, one organization may have to request several different unrelated contacts over a period of time that may or may not lead to a resolution to a long-standing problem. All would tend to heighten the demand for multicultural consultants. Given that few programs adequately address issues specifically related to multicultural organizational consultation, few professionals are comprehensively prepared to effectively attend to the demand level. Consequently, others must do so.

Third, consultative professional activity addressing diversity is intrinsically rewarding, particularly to those committed to being a part of social change on a larger scale than that involved in individual or small-group counseling sessions.

Fourth, consultative professional activity in general provides extrinsic rewards in that it is lucrative and productive. Many professionals are attracted to the opportunity to supplement income and develop a broader professional network that often stretches beyond the worlds of psychology and higher education. The increased demand

for multicultural consultation presents the opportunity not only for increased income but also the identification of another professional specialty or expertise. Such a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic reinforcers may tempt, particularly novice consultants, a positive response to organizational requests for a dependent, ongoing, long-term, consultant–consultee relationship.

All four of the aforementioned areas could contribute to a tendency to practice with inadequate training and experience. How might consultants avoid such pitfalls, remain ethical, and continue to provide the much-needed and demanded organizational consultation services addressing issues of diversity?

Practice Without Multicultural Training In Organizational Consultation

One recommendation that would assist organizational consultants in avoiding the pitfalls just discussed is the adoption of a researcher-practitioner mindset (Gerstein & Shullman, 1992), which has been adhered to and advocated by many counseling psychologists in general. This approach to service delivery would require a solid knowledge base of the literature, an analytical approach to service delivery, and a commitment to the discipline of consultation beyond that of one consultative experience. Consultants would work so that those beyond the realms of one setting would benefit from the process and outcome of one consultative relationship. How this approach might be reflected in the practice of organizational consultation addressing issues of diversity is described next.

First, an initial survey of organizational members' diversity-related attitudes are critical. This standard activity would allow the consultant time to identify personnel issues that might be challenged by the attitudes and values represented in the survey

results, to access and consult the literature and other professionals with previous successful experiences with this organizational type, and to develop an organizational portrait that would serve as a stimulus for discussing problem definition, expectations for the outcome of the consultation relationship, and the identification of organizational goals beyond consultation.

The outcome of this organizational intake procedure also will assist in identifying the relationships among specific organizational issues (e.g., productivity, staff relations, absenteeism, hiring and promotion, etc.), effective and ineffective consultation methods; lengths of intervention, and patterns of diversity-related attitudes and values within the setting. For example, as in the multicultural counseling psychology literature, findings might lead to the identification of varying stages of a diversity-related "organizational identity" requiring unique methods of entry and intervention.

Sample Intake Survey

An example of an intake survey packet in a work environment might include instruments that assess workers' (a) value orientation of worldviews, addressing the degree to which individuals adopt an internal or external locus of control and responsibility (Orientation of Worldview Inventory; Ibrahim, 1985; Jones, 1972); (b) interpersonal style (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Scales–Behavior; Schutz, 1966); (c) the tendency to experience culture shock (Culture Shock Inventory; Reddin, 1977); and job satisfaction (Occupational Stress Inventory; Osipow & Spokane, 1981; Weiss et al., 1967).

A letter describing the purpose of each of the instruments would be sent to the organizational contact for distribution to and completion by all staff. Each assessment packet also would include a consent form that indicates the names of both the consultant and organizational contact and a

demographic sheet that requests information on gender, racial status, ethnic group, age, years employed with organization, current position, years employed in the current position, department, salary, and years of education. Staff would be encouraged to complete the packet regardless of whether they chose to have their information tabulated as part of research for journal publication and to return sealed packets with no identifying data directly to the consultant at the time identified as data collection day. This would ensure staff confidentiality and anonymity.

All such information would contribute significantly to understanding the presenting issues beyond which the organizational contact would be able to articulate and assist in the development of more focused interventions. Paper-and-pencil results also would provide the consultant with the opportunity to become more informed about the operational definitions that are key to understanding between- and within-groups differences in the setting. Data collation would provide descriptive information about the overall organizational culture as well as across levels of the hierarchy and different departments. Differences attributable to racial or ethnic status and gender easily could be identified for discussion with the organizational contact early in the relationship.

Multiple regression analyses with job satisfaction as the dependent variable also would assist in understanding organizational cultural norms. In general, such a process would provide baseline data that the consultant and the organization might use to periodically assess any subsequent cultural shifts that may occur.

However, unlike the researcher-practitioner approach in counseling, in the case of organizational consultation, both practitioners and client organizations would be willing and committed participants involved in the process. The intake procedure within this model reflects a collaboration between the consultant and the organization. Instead of the organization assuming that the consult-

ant will come in to "fix" or provide the answers to existing problems, the request for survey completion by the consultant sets the tone for the relationship. Both the organization and the consultant assume and share responsibility for the process and outcome of problem identification and intervention until termination.

Issues of Consent for Participation in Research and Confidentiality

It is important to note that collaborations reflected in this researcher-practitioner model require attention to issues of consent for participation in research by the organizations and individuals and the assurance of organizational anonymity and individual confidentiality. All related forms then would become essential components of the consultation contract. Such consent would allow the outcome of the contact to benefit the organization and the consultant as well as provide a much-needed contribution to the literature on multicultural organizational consultation.

Second, although not always feasible because of time constraints and varying expectations of the client organization, I strongly recommend that consultants facilitate the development of a longer term, ongoing organizational commitment to diversity that extends beyond termination. For example, the development of a stable structure having the sole purpose of addressing diversity might be one option for intervention. Members of such a structure, consisting of a balanced representation of race or ethnicity and gender across all levels of the organization, would be (a) included in the interpretation of the intake assessment results; (b) informed of publications addressing the current literature on diversity within the particular setting; informed of other consultants with a multicultural consultation specialty; (c) trained in conflict mediation specifically related to issues of diversity; (d) assisted in identifying long-term organizational objectives and alternative ways of at-

tending to each; and (e) responsible for monitoring the setting's climate and seeking future consultative service. Attending to diversity now becomes an integrated part of the overall functioning of the organization.

Conclusions

The aforementioned recommendations assist in monitoring adherence to the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association for the provision of consultation services. According to these guidelines, consultants must be (a) aware of the impact of personal knowledge and skill limitations on practice; (b) able to develop an effective working alliance with clients in problem definition and in the identification of goals and intervention options; (c) able to assess the availability of necessary internal resources for addressing present and future issues; (d) committed to and competent in assisting clients in self-direction and self-maintenance; and (e) willing to refuse a private fee or other remuneration for consultation with individuals who are entitled to these services through the member's employing institution or agency. In summary, the researcher-practitioner model of consultation would assist practitioners in resisting the temptation to practice unethically.

There many potential ways of addressing the knowledge, experience, and skill deficits with which some organizational consultants may bring to their work addressing issues of diversity. Given the limitations in current training programs, it is critical that different strategies be developed to optimize existing competencies. This is only one response to this relevant issue with which society will be confronted as the 21st century approaches.

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