

The Summer Research Experience

My name is Elisa Rapadas and I graduate in May 2019. My project was entitled *Culture Is Practice: Comparing Cultural Competency in Counselors from Guam and the San Francisco Bay Area*. I worked with Dr. Mark Barajas, assistant psychology professor. To measure cultural competency, we used three validated instruments: Sheu and Lent's (2007) Multicultural Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale, which directly measured self-efficacy enacting culturally competent behaviors. A sample item from this measure is "[I] remain flexible and accepting in resolving cross-cultural strains or impasses" (Sheu & Lent, 2007, 33)." Then, we used the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992), which measures how much a person relates to their own cultural identity, thus indirectly measuring cultural competency. Previous research (Bender, Negi, and Fowler, 2007) shows that interrogating one's own cultural identity increases cultural competency and ability to interact with diverse individuals. An example item from the MEIM is "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to me." Next, we used the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) (Neville et. al. 2000) constructed the CoBRAS to measure the extent to which an individual denies White privilege, institutional discrimination, and the pervasiveness of that systemic discrimination in society. A sample item from this instrument is "Racism may have been an important problem in the past, it is not an important problem today." In order to measure cultural competency, we compiled all the measures into an online questionnaire distributed to our personal contacts in the Bay Area and in Guam through email. We had 20 participants from the Bay Area and 21 participants from Guam.

We predicted that Guam counselors would have higher MSCE scores than SF counselors, due to Guam's diverse cultural background, which increased the likelihood. We predicted that the MCSE would be positively correlated with the MEIM and negatively correlated with the CoBRAS. In other words, being in touch with one's culture would be related to culturally competent practice in therapy and reduce the likelihood of having Colorblind Racial Attitudes. Next, we hypothesized that Guam counselors would have higher MEIM scores than SF counselors and that the MEIM scores would be positively correlated with the MCSE and negatively correlated with the CoBRAS. We predicted that Guam counselors would have lower CoBRAS scores than SF counselors. Again, because Guam is so culturally diverse, "colorblindness" would be less prevalent in Guam than in San

Francisco. We predicted that CoBRAS would be negatively correlated with the MCSE and MEIM. Research reflects this idea as well. High colorblind racial attitudes in therapists was tied to having significantly lower levels of empathy (Burkard & Knox, 2004), which, in our research, would be reflected in lower scores on a direct cultural competency measure such as the MCSE.

Surprisingly, we found that counselors from Guam had much *higher* CoBRAS scores than counselors from the Bay Area, which was the opposite of our hypothesis. We attributed this partly to the fact that CoBRAS was not validated in majority-minority communities such as Guam. We hope to expand our cross-cultural research into pacific island communities, or in the mainland, running similar comparisons in cultural competency between different groups, such as urban and rural populations in the states.

