

Contemplative Clinical Supervision: Secularized Lectio Divina to Cultivate Multicultural Awareness

JULIE QUIGLEY
Xavier University

CHRISTIE NELSON
Bradley University

Abstract

Research has shown that when educators present information creatively, it strongly influences the connection to the material. Contemplative practices offer a creative method to incorporate multicultural training into clinical supervision through transformative learning experiences. This study explores the impact of a contemplative learning tool, Lectio Divina, on students' level of multicultural competence in a clinical supervision course (n = 21). A mixed method design was implemented to capture pre and posttest scores using the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) by measuring students' multicultural competence. Qualitative data captured counseling students' experiences during each step of the Lectio Divina intervention to catalog students' insights and to gather a deeper perspective of the contemplative technique. Quantitative analysis revealed an increase in counseling students' multicultural awareness. Themes that emerged from the qualitative data were challenging assumptions and biases, judgement and lack of empathy, challenging and suspending judgement, and the power of empathy. Together, findings demonstrate the value of transformative learning applied to clinical supervision, delivered through the contemplative practice of Lectio Divina to foster counselor introspection and increase multicultural awareness.

Keywords: contemplative practices, multicultural awareness, clinical supervision, Lectio Divina

Transformative Learning in Counselor Education

The theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997; 2000) describes the process of a deeply constructive and meaningful way of learning that goes beyond basic knowledge acquisition and holds the process of self-reflection as a key determinant in assessing the validity of one's way of making meaning. Transformative learning involves an iterative process of investigating and revising assumptions and expectations about the world (frames of reference) in response to challenging experiences that disrupt these assumptions and lead to a richer, more complex understanding of the world (Mezirow, 2000). This ability to identify one's own frame of reference and understand how to make meaning is, in essence, a transformative experience (Swanson & Caskey, 2022). Transformative learning is likely to occur when frames of reference are challenged because it is when these frames are threatened that individuals tend to experience unpleasant emotions which then serve as a catalyst in identifying and reconsidering unproductive assumptions about the world (Nogueiras et al., 2019).

In counselor education, transformative learning has been used in various ways. For example, Strear et al. (2019) used transformative learning to promote student collaboration and increase knowledge of accreditation standards. Transformative learning has been implemented in clinical supervision as an instructional tool to educate supervisees about normative development (Watkins et al., 2018).

Transformative learning has also been used to conceptualize and understand the evolution of counseling students' meaning making and how they experience emotions in challenging training environments (Nogueiras et al., 2019).

Within the framework of transformative learning theory is contemplative andragogy. Contemplative practice is an important component of transformative learning as it fosters critical reflection, increases self-awareness, and allows other viewpoints to develop about self and others (Beer et al., 2015). There has been a call in higher education to shift the paradigm from more traditional modes of instruction in which teachers impart knowledge that is passively received by students to more collaborative and transformative instructional methods (Strear et al., 2019). This is especially true for students within counselor education and supervision programs. Watkins and colleagues argue (2018) that developing an identity as a counselor is itself a transformative learning process. By establishing transformative learning environments and implementing creative methods in which counseling students and instructors can actively engage in a dynamic interchange, more profound learning can occur (Strear et al., 2019). With this in mind, the researchers in this study were interested in applying *Lectio Divina* within clinical supervision to investigate the impact it might have on counseling students' level of multicultural competence and to gather greater insights into their experiences during the instructional process.

Contemplative Andragogy

Contemplative practice denotes activities in which one engages with the aim of calming the mind and body, concentrating deeply, cultivating awareness of the present moment, and maintaining a mindful presence (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society [CMind], 2017). Contemplative andragogy is emerging as an alternative to traditional instruction in counselor education and supervision (Dougherty, 2015). The core values and qualities associated with contemplative practices are compassion, acceptance, skillful listening, honest self-reflection, integrity amid complex situations, open communication, sustainability, and commitment (CMind, 2017). While providing interventions that foster creativity and the learning of course content, contemplative andragogy offers educators a wide range of methods that encourage the development of attention, emotional balance, empathic connection, and altruistic behavior (Zajonc, 2013). Contemplative practices can be structured in nature and still offer flexibility and improvisation throughout the process.

Importantly, contemplative practices in the learning space engage students in a process of self-inquiry, employing creativity and introspection to develop an awareness of the learning process itself (Barbezat & Bush, 2013). By utilizing contemplative practices, transformative learning takes place as one reevaluates expectations about a situation and uses self-reflection and questioning to challenge current assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). While the use of contemplative andragogical strategies in counselor education and supervision is becoming more accepted, empirical evidence to support its effectiveness is still in its infancy. Thus far, the research shows the use of contemplative approaches has helped counseling students to reduce stress (Gutierrez et al., 2016), cultivate therapeutic presence (Campbell & Christopher, 2012) and build empathy (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015). In addition, contemplative practice has predicted counseling self-efficacy (Greason & Cashwell, 2009) and improved students' relational well-being (Dorais et al., 2022). These findings hold promise for wider application of contemplative instructional methods within counselor education and supervision.

Transformative and Contemplative Practices in Multicultural Instruction

Counselors are called upon to enhance the quality of life in society and to safeguard respect for human dignity and diversity (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MCSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015) standards clearly articulate the importance of training counselors to proficiently address diversity and inclusivity issues in counseling by infusing culturally relevant content throughout the curriculum. Moreover, increasing multicultural competence is a lifelong intentional self-reflective, action oriented process, involving ever-increasing

self-awareness. Counselors must continue practicing techniques to observe and develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills in order to take action when appropriate, beyond a graduate program (Arredondo et al., 1996; Ratts et al., 2016). To this end, transformative learning provides counselor educators and clinical supervisors a way to address students' problematic assumptions and fixed frames of reference about diverse clientele, and to cause these frames to be more open, reflective, inclusive, and amenable to change (Mezirow, 2000) making it especially pertinent to multicultural training.

Traditional multicultural counseling instructional methods include lectures, article reviews, group discussions, journaling, and interpersonal process recall supervision to promote self- and multicultural awareness (Dougherty, 2015). However, when discussing sensitive topics relating to diversity, such exercises may help some students recognize their resistance to the subject matter, while other students may have trouble or experience discomfort and consciously or unconsciously disengage from the discussion and activity (Brubaker et al., 2010). Because discussions involving issues of diversity often produce physical and emotional discomfort for both students and instructors alike, instructors and students require reliable methods to work through such inquiry for these conversations to be effective (Berila, 2015). Transformative and contemplative practices are particularly well-suited to the clinical supervision of counseling students for their potential to regulate affect, facilitate equanimity, empathy, and creative connection to others, communities, and the world at large (Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Contemplative practices have been applied to multicultural (Hilert & Tirado, 2019; Nelson & Quigley, in press), anti-oppression, and social justice andragogy in higher education (Berila, 2015; Howes & Smith, 2017). Using a transformative learning approach in the multicultural training of school counselors, Pompeo-Fagnoli et al. (2020) found that participants reported an increase in their multicultural competence as described in deeper understanding of their own privilege, an increase in knowledge of students from diverse backgrounds, and a better understanding of worldviews. Contemplative practice has been shown to create a safe environment in which to explore biases, manage potentially distressing thoughts and emotions, and develop greater ability for embracing others through the cultivation of an accepting, nonjudgmental attitude (Heselmeyer 2014). Specifically, the practice of *Lectio Divina*, a transformative contemplative practice, can provide students a safe space in which to explore reactions to course material in a way that fosters awareness of their reactions and how these reactions affect their worldviews with a clearer understanding of self and others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Wright, 2019) and has been recommended as a way to facilitate deep and meaningful multicultural conversations (Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a medieval monastic contemplative reading practice meaning, *divine reading* in Latin (Gray, 2009; Wright, 2019). *Lectio Divina* is a type of contemplative practice that can be utilized in a secularized form as a transformative andragogical method. *Lectio Divina* is the practice of listening to the meaning of a text and transitioning this meaning into a deeper understanding of the text. Traditionally, the practitioner's ultimate goal is to move from an acquaintance with the divine to deeper, more intimate relationship and commitment (Gray, 2009). Alongside traditional instructional practices, modified versions of religious contemplation are common in contemplative andragogy and offer enhanced self-reflection, introspection, and increased empathy and compassion during the learning process (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Dougherty, 2015; Wright, 2019).

Lectio Divina Applied to Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is considered foundational to the counseling profession, indicating its critical role in shaping counseling skills, competence, and ethical standards for counselors (Chamberlain & Smith, 2018). Clinical supervision has been defined as an intervention provided by a senior counselor of the profession to a more novice counselor that has unique interactions that could include consultation, gatekeeping, and education, as well as creating an atmosphere that encourages the exploration of self through awareness and insight (Chamberlain & Smith, 2018). According to the Association of Counselor

Education and Supervision (ACES) Best Practices in Clinical Supervision standards (5. c.i., 2011), supervision is intended to promote contextual sensitivity around multicultural factors and should foster the development of students' multicultural competence. The ACA code of ethics (2014) and the CACREP standards (2015) also address the importance of training multiculturally competent counselors. In addition, the MCSJCCs (2016) guide counselor educators in incorporating these competencies into their instruction and clinical supervision. Counselors high in multicultural competence value minority populations, demonstrate awareness of their biases, acknowledge worldviews without judgment, and obtain the skills for providing multiculturally sensitive counseling interventions (Shannonhouse et al., 2020). Knowledge of the codes and standards provides a scaffolding for counselor educators and clinical supervisors to support students in safeguarding and upholding respect for human dignity and diversity.

However, due to the emotionally charged nature of multicultural instruction (Hilert & Tirado, 2019), clinical supervisors face challenges and may lack the tools needed to engage students in deep and meaningful dialogue surrounding diversity. Bringing contemplative methods into clinical supervision can support traditional counseling training practices by helping students cultivate a deeper understanding of the material and thereby enriching their counseling work with clients through enhanced empathy and compassion (Dougherty, 2015). Transformative learning applied to clinical supervision can be used as a reflective, instructional tool to educate supervisees about their normative development (Watkins et al., 2018). *Lectio Divina* provides a supportive and structured method in which to encourage students to broaden their views and strengthen their ability to contextualize how their personal worldviews and use of language may be experienced in relation to others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Lectio Divina offers clinical supervisors a way of engaging counseling supervisees in embodied multicultural supervision to increase not only their cognitive understanding of their interactions with clients, but insight into how their noncognitive reactions (intuitions, emotions, and bodily sensations) impact their thinking and work with clients. Because *Lectio Divina* allows time for reflection and the scaffolding of complex reactions to emotionally charged material (Howes & Smith, 2017) it provides the clinical supervisor a richer perspective on the difficulties supervisees may face in their work with clients involving multicultural issues. *Lectio Divina* can be implemented in supervision to help supervisees recognize their internal thoughts and emotional reactions using texts such as journal articles, poems, vignettes, historical accounts, case reviews, and other material. This contemplative technique supports bringing multicultural awareness into action in the supervision session.

The authors present a four-step secularized *Lectio Divina* process for supervisees to foster self-reflection without judgment of thoughts and feelings, and to promote productive and positive multicultural discussions within the supervision session. Wright (2019) implemented a secularized version of *Lectio Divina* in his classes at the University of Minnesota at Rochester, which is the format used in this study. Instead of meditating on a religious passage, students in this study read a multiculturally themed poem. The authors believed that investigating students' experiences in clinical supervision using *Lectio Divina* to promote multicultural competence might shed light on the quality of students' transformative learning processes.

Purpose of this Study

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of *Lectio Divina* within counseling supervision. Introducing a contemplative and transformative technique that is aligned with the standards of the profession can enhance counselor training in self-reflection to promote multicultural competence. Continued research on contemplative practices within counselor education is needed to provide evidence of the effectiveness of using nontraditional andragogical approaches in the multicultural training and supervision of counseling students. The researchers anticipated the *Lectio Divina* intervention would increase counseling trainees' multicultural competence and would also elucidate their transformative learning process as evidenced by the qualitative inquiry.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in participant's multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and counseling relationships from pre- to post intervention?
2. Is there a difference in participant's overall multicultural competence from pre- to post intervention?
3. What is the experience of counseling trainees' participation in the Lectio Divina activity in terms of their multicultural understanding?

Methodology

The researchers employed a mixed method quasi-experimental design using a pretest/posttest assessment along with qualitative inquiry. The intervention, Lectio Divina, was implemented in clinical counseling courses to determine if students' multicultural competence increased post-intervention. Data from the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) was analyzed using a paired samples t-test, a statistical test of the difference between a set of paired samples. A thematic analysis approach was used to derive themes from the discussions and self-reflective prompts to understand the student's transformative learning experience of the secularized Lectio Divina practice.

Participants

Thirty-nine counseling students in clinical mental health and school counseling programs at a Midwestern university participated in the study. Participants were enrolled in either practicum, internship I, or internship II during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Data Collection

Twenty-one participants completed both pretest and posttest survey data. All participants enrolled received an email announcement a few days before or shortly after the course start date. Students received the first e-mail with a link to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Qualtrics survey during the class session in which the principal investigator conducted the Lectio Divina intervention. The survey began with informed consent and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. During the intervention, qualitative data was collected via discussion and self-reflective prompts and was uploaded in the posttest survey in Qualtrics.

Procedure

The intervention was conducted virtually via Zoom. The learners engaged in the Lectio Divina technique following the framework of Wright's (2019) secularized version. A poem containing multiculturally themed content was selected for use. The introduction to the exercise included an explanation of Lectio Divina and participants were made aware that the goal of discussions and self-reflection was to simply catalog reactions, and not to evaluate their responses, to encourage students to share their true reactions to the poem, including tentative or potentially controversial thoughts and feelings. This nonjudgmental environment fosters openness to understanding reactions, emotions, and thoughts related to the text. The secularized Lectio Divina technique has four steps, as outlined below.

1. In the first step (lectio) the student silently reads the selected poem and notes connections and patterns that come to mind from listening to the text.
2. The second step (meditatio), the facilitator reads aloud the poem and allows time (3 minutes of silence) for the students to reflect on what the text says to them, what main message they get from the poem, why the author makes a point in a particular way, the difficulty of understanding the poem, and their emotional reaction to the poem.
3. In the third step (oratio), the facilitator encourages students to participate in small group discussions about their reactions to the previous step (meditatio), share what they think about the poem, and share an insight they had during their contemplation time.

4. The final step (contemplatio) allows time for contemplation and silence to individually reflect on the overall experience before returning to the whole class discussion. The facilitator then initiates an all-class discussion by asking what takeaways or insights students gained from the poem they just examined.

Risks were minimal, although it is possible participants may have felt some discomfort as they reflected on their experiences during the Lectio Divina exercise. Discomfort may be experienced during contemplative practice as individuals face their true thoughts and feelings on sensitive topics. Dissonance is a common response to transformative learning experiences as new information challenges students' existing beliefs and they begin to assimilate new information (Mezirow, 1997). The researchers felt it was a benefit to the participants to have the ability to reflect on their experiences, which is a common exercise utilized in higher education. After the Lectio Divina activity, learners received the second e-mail with a link to Qualtrics where they could upload their processing notes from the activity. Two weeks after the intervention, the post-intervention survey was sent, which took approximately 10 minutes. All survey data and notes contained no identifiable information and were exported to a password-protected Google drive in a folder to which only the research team had access.

Instruments

The pretest/ posttest surveys contain the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI). The MCI was developed by Sodowsky et al. (1994) to measure multicultural counseling competence containing a 40-item self-report questionnaire using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 4 (*very accurate*). The scale has a total score and four subscale scores including the following factors: multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, multicultural counseling knowledge, and the multicultural counseling relationship. In a large sample size ($n = 2,712$), Shannonhouse et al. (2020) found the MCI total score had good internal validity ($\alpha = .861$).

Variables

The dependent variables in the study are the overall multicultural competence of the counselor measured by the subscales for multicultural counseling skills, multicultural awareness, multicultural counseling knowledge, and multicultural counseling relationship. The independent variable is the Lectio Divina contemplative practice technique.

Data Screening and Analysis

Initial screening of the quantitative data yielded 18 missing responses from pre- and posttest survey data and the qualitative self-reflective responses. Data from the MCI was analyzed using paired samples t-tests, a statistical test of the difference between a set of paired means. Thematic analysis was applied to derive themes from the self-reflective prompts to understand the students' transformative learning experience during the secularized Lectio Divina practice. A software program called *IntellectusQualitative* was used to make analytical conclusions from the data, create codes from the excerpts, and reveal themes from each reflective prompt (Castleberry & Nolen, 2019).

Normality

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to determine whether the differences in each of the multicultural subscales pre and post-intervention (skills, awareness, counseling knowledge, and counseling relationship) could have been produced by a normal distribution (Razali & Wah, 2011). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test for each of the subscales were not significant based on an alpha value of .05 (*skills* = .05, $W = 0.96$, $p = .512$; *awareness* = .05, $W = 0.91$, $p = .064$; *knowledge* = .05, $W = 0.96$, $p = .526$; *relationship* = .05, $W = 0.95$, $p = .309$). These results suggest the possibility that the differences in the subscales produced by a normal distribution cannot be ruled out, indicating the normality assumption is met for each subscale.

Results

Quantitative Research Questions

To test the research questions in this study, a two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was conducted to examine whether the mean difference of each of the multicultural variables (skills, awareness, knowledge, relationship, and composite mean) were significantly different from zero. To answer the first question for the subscales of skills, awareness, knowledge, and counseling relationship. The results are as follows.

Multicultural Skills

For multicultural skills, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.46, p = .654$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. For the multicultural relationship, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = 1.01, p = .325$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural skills preintervention ($M = 3.30, SD = .34$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.32, SD = .32$) was not significantly different from zero.

Multicultural Awareness

For multicultural awareness, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -2.62, p = .016$, indicating the null hypothesis could be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural awareness preintervention and the mean of postintervention was significantly different. Figure 1 represents the mean of multicultural awareness preintervention ($M = 2.96, SD = .32$) was significantly lower than the mean postintervention ($M = 3.11, SD = .42$). Compared to a study done by Sodowsky et al. (1994), who also measured multicultural awareness with the MCI instrument, using a similar demographic of Midwest master's students, assessed pre-course ($M = 3.0, SD = .44$) and post-course ($M = 3.4, SD = .53$) of a Multicultural Counseling course, Lectio Divina Contemplative Technique increased multicultural awareness by an increase of the mean of .82 compared to Sodowky's increase of .40.

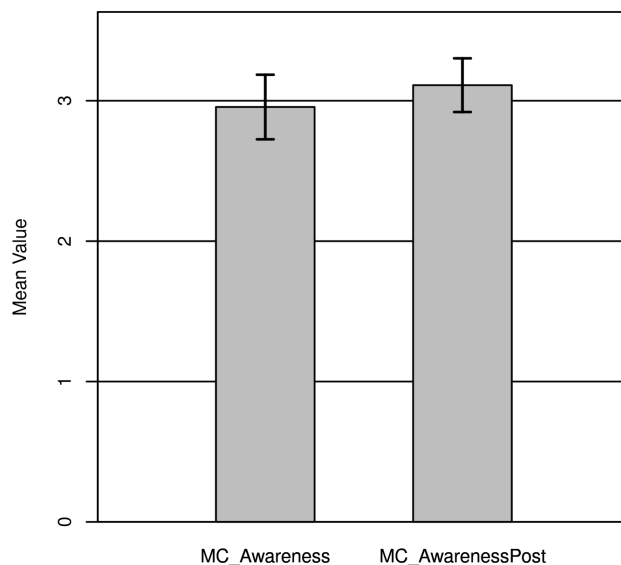


Figure 1: Multicultural Awareness Pre and Post Intervention

Note. The difference in the multicultural awareness means.

Multicultural Knowledge

For multicultural knowledge, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.06$, $p = .951$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural knowledge preintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .40$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .35$) was not significantly different from zero.

Multicultural Relationship

For multicultural relationship, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = 1.01$, $p = .325$, indicating the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural relationship preintervention ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .42$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .39$) was not significantly different from zero.

Composite Mean

For the second question regarding overall multicultural competence, the results of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test were not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.89$, $p = .383$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. These findings suggest the difference in the composite means from preintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .40$) to postintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .35$) was not significantly different from zero.

Thematic Analysis Summary

To address the question of defining the experience of counseling trainees' participation in the Lectio Divina activity in terms of their transformative experience, a thematic analysis of the self-reflective prompts was conducted to determine the themes. Below is a list of the prompts followed by the themes.

Prompt 1: Note connections and patterns that come to mind from reading the text.

Prompt 2: What main message did you get from the poem?

Prompt 3: Note why the author makes a point in a particular way.

Prompt 4: What was your difficulty, if any, understanding the poem?

Prompt 5: What are your emotional reactions to the poem?

Prompt 6: Share your insights and takeaways from the contemplative practice.

Theme 1: Challenging Assumptions and Biases. This theme highlights the importance of recognizing and challenging assumptions and biases, understanding the influence of past trauma on choices, and seeking multiple perspectives for greater understanding. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"The contemplative practice is very useful and allows for greater awareness and curiosity that can lead to more understanding of others and ourselves."

"I think it is a great way to learn and examine situations from different angles. I enjoy thought-provoking exercises and exchange of thoughts with others."

"It is also good to have our views challenged by different opinions."

Theme 2: Judgement and Lack of Empathy. This theme explores the concept of judgement towards others, reflecting on the different walks of life and the consequences of being cruel or lacking empathy. Students expressed sadness for the people being judged and frustration with the existence of such realities. It highlights the importance of understanding and connecting with others, emphasizing that people often judge without knowing the full context or understanding the hardships people go through. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"My main emotion was sadness because of reading how what people prided themselves with were taken away from them. "

"Working with people in these situations might be the best way to learn empathy."

"The concept of we don't understand fully what others are going through. There is shame, guilt, disconnection and feels like similar things could never happen to us."

Theme 3: Challenging Judgements. This theme captures the students' recognition of the poems' ability to challenge societal judgments through emotional reactions and reflections on the lives of marginalized individuals. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"I reflected upon how far I have come in my own journey."

"I believe the author specifically chose instances that are polarizing politically or issues where people tend to be entrenched in their views. Specifically, I believe they were attempting to challenge the excuses people give for withholding kindness, care, support, compassion, or empathy for others."

"Stern calling out to people to be more compassionate and empathetic. People are quick to judge and not help others."

Theme 4: Suspending Judgement. This theme explores the importance of not judging others without knowing their full story, as people may judge without understanding the challenges and circumstances others face. It highlights the need for empathy, compassion, and kindness towards others, as well as the reminder that everyone experiences hardship and struggles in life. It encourages individuals to suspend judgement, remain curious, open, and understanding of different perspectives and life journeys. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"Stop and think about life from someone else's perspective."

"Life is a journey and no one is permanently in a low or high place."

"You shouldn't judge someone for making a choice about something you have never had to do."

Theme 5: The Power of Empathy. This theme represents the statements expressing the impact of the poem in promoting empathy and understanding the pain of others. It highlights the need for compassion and listening to others' experiences. This theme reflects the importance of recognizing other perspectives, practicing empathy, and striving for understanding in personal and professional relationships. The theme also highlights the impact of privilege, the power of reflection, and the need for grace and humility. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"We need to learn to listen to others and learn about their experiences."

"We can connect with anyone because we're human."

"We talked about privilege and how it can interfere with having empathy for others that are marginalized."

Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

The researchers in this study introduced *Lectio Divina* to counselor education and supervision students with the aim of increasing students' multicultural competence and capturing students' qualitative experiences. Overall, multicultural competence did not show a statistically significant change from preintervention to postintervention. There was no change in students' multicultural knowledge, skills, or the counseling relationship. However, analysis revealed that multicultural awareness did increase from pre- to post-intervention. Qualitative analysis yielded themes of *challenging assumptions and biases*, *judgement and lack of empathy*, *challenging and suspending judgement*, and *the power of empathy*.

A mixed methods approach allows for broader understanding of research findings. In this study, increased multicultural awareness scores on the MCI are supported by the qualitative analysis. Awareness is at the core of all counseling endeavors and is a cornerstone in multicultural training. Multicultural awareness is foundational for counselors in maintaining a culturally humble attitude towards others. Awareness of one's own cultural values and biases and awareness of clients' worldviews are critical components of multicultural competence (Arredondo et al., 1996; Ratts et al., 2016). Awareness motivates students to acquire knowledge of other groups' worldviews and experiences and to develop the requisite skills to work effectively with them (Yoon et al., 2014). Multicultural awareness is a critical starting point for developing empathy towards diverse groups (Hilert & Tirado, 2019). In fact, if instructors fail to help students become multiculturally aware before teaching knowledge or skills, counseling students may develop a false sense of mastery and risk stereotyping different cultural groups based on cursory information (Yoon et al., 2014).

The *Lectio Divina* intervention not only resulted in greater awareness scores on the MCI, it seems to have directly affected students' awareness of self and others as evidenced by the theme of *challenging assumptions and biases*. Counseling students reported acquiring an understanding of the importance of recognizing and challenging assumptions and biases by seeking multiple perspectives for greater understanding. The findings in the current study align with Pompeo-Fargnoli et al. (2020) research in which counseling students reported shifts in their assumptions and biases using transformative learning. Additional research using contemplative practice in multicultural training shows that it creates a safe environment in which to explore biases, manage potentially distressing thoughts and emotions, and develop greater ability for embracing others through the cultivation of an accepting, nonjudgmental attitude (Heselmeyer, 2014). *Lectio Divina* has been recommended as a way to facilitate deep and meaningful multicultural conversations (Nelson & Quigley, in press) as it provides students a safe space in which to explore reactions to course material in a way that fosters awareness of their reactions and how these reactions affect their worldviews with a clearer understanding of self and others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Wright, 2019).

Transformative learning occurs when the learner is changed in important ways. Watkins and colleagues argue (2018) that counselor development is itself a transformative learning process. Counseling students in this study not only gained increased multicultural awareness, but they also went through a growth phase, described by Nogueiras et al. (2019) as a process of stability–destabilization–transition–resettlement. After the *Lectio Divina* activity, students' initial stability was challenged as they became aware of their biases, which gave way to destabilizing feelings of sadness and frustration regarding the devastating effects of judging others and the consequences of being cruel or lacking empathy. A transition seemed to have occurred as students acknowledged the importance of challenging societal judgments of others, especially the lives of marginalized individuals, and suspending these judgements by remaining curious, open, and understanding of different perspectives and life journeys. A resettlement can be seen in students in this study as they recognized the role of privilege, the power of empathy in personal and professional relationships and the need for grace and humility.

While the *Lectio Divina* intervention did not result in a statistically significant change in students' overall multicultural competence, the qualitative data sheds light on the transformational learning experiences of the students and may allude to gains in knowledge, skills, and potential improvements to the counseling relationship not captured by the MCI. It is possible that given more targeted prompts

during the all-class discussion, counseling students' may have been able to reflect upon the specific knowledge, skills, and relational nuances that could be applied to their work with clients. For example, to encourage knowledge-building, the clinical supervisor may ask the students to consider how the reading may support their understanding of clients' differing ways of acculturation to the dominant society. To prompt for skill building, instructors may ask students to reflect upon how the reading may help them to recognize and recover from cultural mistakes or misunderstandings when working with clients. Finally, to target the counseling relationship itself, clinical supervisors may prompt students to contemplate on how the text might support their personal conceptualization of client problems free of stereotypes and openness towards their differing physical appearance, color, sexual and gender identity, or socioeconomic status. Targeted prompts to address multicultural knowledge, skills, and the counseling relationship specifically, may support student reflection upon these areas and open a deeper dialogue on their application to support ever-increasing multicultural competence.

Applying *Lectio Divina* to counseling supervision seems like a natural fit for its ability to foster a state of inner calm, centeredness, and by creating a safe space to address sensitive topics. As a contemplative and transformative practice, *Lectio Divina* offers counselor educators and supervisors a structured and reliable method of addressing issues of diversity empathically by slowing down the learning process, encouraging embodied reactions, and valuing multiple perspectives. Slowing down requires students to interact with written materials in a way that counters the fast-paced reading typically employed when completing course work (Howes & Smith, 2017). Because counselors interact with written documents regarding clients in the form of case conceptualizations, progress notes, and assessments, contemplation upon what the text means is an important part of clinical supervision. Clinical supervisors can assist counseling trainees to incorporate contemplation into the intake process, in creating a clinical summary of the client's situation and maladaptive patterns, and contemplation can guide and focus treatment interventions. This study provides a framework for counselor educators and clinical supervisors to incorporate a transformative technique into their work with students to support multicultural awareness.

Limitations

Two significant limitations are worth noting. First the sample size was not randomized and was from one university in the Midwest and therefore cannot be generalized to all counselors-in-training. Future studies exploring this topic should have more of a diverse group of students. Second, the students may not have been fully truthful in their self-reflection due to social norms and the possible perceived expectation they should already be multiculturally competent.

Conclusion

Learning is transformative when one reevaluates expectations about a situation and uses self-reflection and questioning to challenge current assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). To support counseling students in fully developing as whole, integrated human beings, counselor educators can enhance the learning experience by engaging supervisees at the intersection of body, mind, emotions, spirit, and society (Berila, 2015) where transformative learning occurs. Applying contemplative andragogy to the multicultural training of counseling students provides several advantages for instructors which may result in better care for the welfare of clients seeking counseling services in an increasingly diverse world (Nelson & Quigley, in press). The current study adds to the growing body of research on the benefits of incorporating contemplative practices in counselor training programs. Findings from this investigation contribute to the understanding of *Lectio Divina* as a contemplative transformative supervision activity and sheds light on how *Lectio Divina* may be integrated into other courses in counselor education and supervision programs.

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