Multicultural Competencies in Probation—Issues and Challenges

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SINCE JOHN AUGUSTUS introduced the notion of probation in 1841, the number of probationers in the United States has grown exponentially. Today, probation is the most widely used sentencing option in the United States. As of 2001, there were 3,932,751 adult men and women on probation (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). Of this number, 22 percent (870,000) were women. Breaking the total down racially, one-third (1,228,700) were African-American, one-half were white (2,175,600), one-eighth (469,800) were Hispanic, and persons of other race represented 2 percent (58,600). Two of the most demographically diverse states, Texas and California, led the nation in number of adults supervised in the community, together accounting for over one million persons. Furthermore, more than 2.1 million adults entered probation supervision during 2001. Since 1995, the annual number of probation entries has increased by 34 percent. Probationers are sentenced for a wide variety of offenses, and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data indicate that half were convicted of a felony and that a quarter were convicted of drug law violations. Also, three out of four were under active supervision, requiring that they report regularly to a probation authority. Clearly, the vast numbers of persons supervised are a diverse group who exhibit a wide variety of treatment and supervision concerns that probation officers are expected to address. The questions and issues addressed in this discussion speak directly to the role of multicultural competencies in probation as officers supervise this diverse group of offenders.

From "Nothing Works" to "What Works?"

From its inception in the 1800s, probation was considered a form of treatment. John Augustus, acknowledged as the first probation officer, sought out offenders whom he thought could be rehabilitated. This idea dominated correctional thinking for many years. Cullen and Gendreau (2001) assert that positivism was the prevailing philosophy during the early years of modern criminology, with very specific ways of both explaining and controlling crime. They concluded that five principles underlie this philosophy. First, crime has definite causes that can be established through systematic scientific study. Second, punishment has limited effectiveness in an offender's rehabilitation. Third, interventions should be matched to the offender. Fourth, using the correctional system to reform offenders is the only rational approach to crime control. And finally, treatment must be individualized because the causes of crime differ for each person.

Leading writers in the field argued strenuously for these principles. For example, Sutherland (1939) asserted that correctional interventions would be ineffective unless they targeted to change the actual causes of crime. He argued that offenders need contact with law-abiding role models and that treatment and supervision should be individualized. The Gluecks (1950) and Taft (1960) theorized that because crime has multiple causes, the scientific method should be utilized to

ferret out the causes so that, once they were known, effective treatments could be provided. Cressey (1958) also saw the value in rehabilitation. While he believed that there were problems with correctional rehabilitation, he did not favor abolishing the concept. Rather, he believed that the appropriate use of science could establish effective principles of rehabilitation. This attitude prevailed through the 1960s, but the 1970s brought a radical ideological change attributed to the work of one man, Robert Martinson.

In an article entitled "What works? Questions and answers about prison reform," Martinson (1974) revealed in a study of 231 program evaluations that very little worked in rehabilitating offenders. Although other researchers maintained that there were serious flaws in the study, Martinson's argument became the rallying cry of a new generation of criminologists. Basically, the "nothing works" philosophy encompasses several principles, as outlined by Cullen and Gendreau (2001). First, nothing works effectively or reliably to rehabilitate offenders, and therefore nothing the state does to reduce crime will work. Further, since prisons have no effect on crime rates, only the most serious offenders should be incarcerated. Others should be placed into community corrections programs that will not work either, but at least the offenders will be less harmed. Additionally, criminologists should not engage in what Cullen and Gendreau (2001) refer to as a penal science, or becoming tools of the state. Finally, they assert that all crime results from structural factors such as social and economic inequality. Thus, rehabilitation efforts can never be successful because they do not change the root structural causes of crime.

The "nothing works" philosophy remained prevalent throughout the 1980s and 1990s, during which even community corrections became control oriented. Cullen and Gendreau (2001) argued that criminologists spend an inordinate amount of time showing what does not work instead of examining programs and treatments that actually do work. By the end of the 1900s, researchers began to do exactly that. As a result, a list of principles that work with some offenders at least some of the time has been identified.

What Works?

To determine what works, Cullen and Gendreau (2001) outlined a list of principles. First, scientific criminology is the basis for effective correctional intervention and should be used to expose "knowledge" that is not based on evidence. That is, effective interventions target to change the causes of recidivism. Since many correctional techniques simply do not work (e.g., boot camps, "Scared Straight," and other punitive programs), states should stop using them. Third, science should be used to construct what does work with offenders and employ treatments that can and should be tested for their efficacy. According to Cullen and Gendreau (2001), it is legitimate for criminologists to produce knowledge that can reduce crime. In addition, criminologists should not restrict themselves to structural analysis, because individual-level analysis is also appropriate. Finally, scientific criminology will result in more good than a criminology that ignores what works. These authors make a compelling argument for the adherence to a "what works" philosophy. Thus, the question becomes, what does work in the treatment and supervision of offenders?

Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen (1990) found that appropriate interventions reduce recidivism by as much as 25 percent, whereas inappropriate interventions can actually increase recidivism. They also noted that appropriate treatment programs set in the community produce even greater reductions in recidivism than prison-based programs. According to Latessa, Cullen, and Gendreau (2002), successful treatment approaches have certain variables in common. First, certain variables that are known predictors of offender recidivism include: antisocial values, antisocial peers, poor self-control, self-management, and pro-social problem solving skills, family dysfunction, and past criminology. Accordingly, intervention programs that ignore these variables are doomed to fail. Second, a growing body of literature addresses programs that do not appear to work, such as boot camps, punishment or control oriented programs, wilderness programs, psychological interventions that are nondirective or insight-oriented, and radical nonintervention.

These authors assert that effective correctional interventions share certain characteristics. First, a

specific organizational culture exhibits well-defined goals, ethical principles, and a history of efficiently responding to issues that affect treatment facilities. The organizations are characterized by staff cohesion, support for service training, self-evaluation, and the use of outside resources. Successful programs base their treatment programs on empirical research, and staff members are professionally trained and have extensive clinical experience. Clients are assessed in terms of risk and needs. Assessment instruments are widely used and the client's responsivity is also considered. Successful programs aim to change a variety of criminogenic traits by utilizing behavioral/social learning/cognitive behavioral therapies that are targeted to high-risk offenders. Program therapists also engage in core therapeutic practices, including anti-criminal modeling, effective reinforcement and disapproval, problem-solving techniques, structured learning procedures for skill building, effective use of authority, cognitive self-change, relationship practices, and motivational interviewing. Agencies recognize that occasionally referrals must be made; thus, one agency is not expected to serve all client needs. Finally, effective agencies pursue evaluation processes and are vitally interested in program audits, consumer needs, and recidivism rates. Essentially, if they adhere to certain principles, probation agencies can become effective change agents for many offenders. Research has shown that certain types of programs do make a difference.

Gendreau (1996) has written extensively regarding effective intervention. He notes that a number of factors contribute to successful programs. First, services should be intensive and behavioral in nature. For example, well-designed programs might reward offenders with token economies, modeling, or cognitive- behavioral interventions. He also suggests that treatment and supervision are more effective when matched with offender risk level. As such, high-risk offenders are more likely than low-risk offenders to benefit from programs. The most promising programs target antisocial attitudes, styles of thinking and behavior, peer associations, chemical dependency, and self-control issues. Gendreau (1996) asserts that offenders, therapists, and programs should be matched. In other words, it makes little sense to treat all offenders as though they have identical personality traits, attitudes, and beliefs. The responsivity principle, as it has become known, matches treatment with an offender's type and a therapist's style. Therapists should relate to offenders in interpersonally sensitive and constructive ways. The interpersonally skilled counselor exhibits clarity in communication, warmth, humor, openness, the ability to relate affect to behavior and to set appropriate limits.

The evidence shows that it is possible to rehabilitate certain offenders, but their rehabilitation depends upon the type of treatment offered, responsivity principles, and matching. In other words, the methods used to treat an offender should be the ones to which an offender responds, namely relationship variables. The success of a program hinges on the type of relationship that the officer can cultivate with the offender. Because offenders are a diverse group, there is a growing body of research regarding their diverse needs.

Multicultural Counseling Competencies

Key elements that exist in good therapeutic relationships include establishing rapport, adapting to individual needs, being genuine and caring, and empowering the client. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, these key elements may be lacking.

One of the major impediments to building an effective relationship may be found in cross-cultural barriers. Parrott (1997) notes that contemporary helpers realize that a client's culture must be understood if counseling is to be effective. Culture is the totality of ideals, beliefs, skills, tools, customs, and institutions into which each member in society is born (Sue & Sue, 1999). Cultural differences can lead to difficulties in developing the rapport that is necessary to build a helping relationship between the offender and the probation officer. Parrott asserts that ethnic-minority clients often do not take advantage of counseling services, and when they do, they usually terminate the relationship prematurely. Since cross-cultural relationships exist when the helper and the helped do not share the same cultural background, values, norms, lifestyles, roles, and methods of communicating, there are key traits a culturally skilled helper must develop; counselors who receive cross-cultural training have clients who are less likely to terminate early (Parrott, 1997). According to Sue and Sue (1999), culturally skilled helpers are

aware and sensitive to their own cultural heritage, and they value and respect differences. They are also aware of their own preconceived notions and biases, and prejudicial attitudes, feelings, and beliefs. They avoid stereotyping and labeling. Culturally skilled helpers are comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and their client, and they are comfortable referring clients to someone who may be better qualified to help.

According to Sanders (2003), a culturally competent probation officer should exhibit sincerity, high service energy, knowledge of the client's culture, a nonjudgmental attitude, and resourcefulness. Strauss (2002) defines ethno-cultural competency as the ability of the clinician to function effectively in the context of cultural differences. This includes a basic knowledge of the client's ethnic background, a conscious commitment to working with diverse clients, an ability to adapt practice skills to fit the client's background, and flexibility in reaching out to appropriate resources within the client's ethnic community resources.

Pedersen (2003) argues that providers need to increase their cultural awareness, develop multicultural knowledge, and develop multicultural skills. Developing multicultural awareness is the first step. Basically, Pedersen contends that providers can increase awareness by taking courses, participating in discussions, having contact with diverse groups, and by actively questioning their own assumptions. Developing awareness is an ongoing process, and developing knowledge occurs when the provider knows the "salient features of the consumer's cultural context and how that context supports or fails to support the provider's strategy" (Pedersen, 2003:34). This is especially important because most providers are members of the dominant culture and most consumers are members of minority cultures. Developing multicultural skills is the final step in the process of achieving cultural awareness. Pedersen asserts that a skilled provider is one who can generate a variety of responses to every situation or problem based on multicultural knowledge and awareness. Providers also need to be aware of very specific information regarding various cultural groups.

Chung and Bernak (2002) maintain that helpers must develop cultural empathy, which they view as the ability to demonstrate and communicate an understanding of the client's worldview. Basically, a worldview is the ways in which individuals perceive their relationship to the world as shaped through their culture. It is therefore essential that helpers communicate an understanding of the client's worldview. There are six steps that can be taken to demonstrate cultural empathy. First, the counselor must understand and accept the context of family and community for clients from different cultural backgrounds. Second, counselors should incorporate indigenous healing practices from the client's culture whenever possible. Third, counselors must become knowledgeable about the historical and sociopolitical background of clients. Fourth, they must become knowledgeable of the psychosocial adjustment that must be made by clients who have moved from one environment to another. Fifth, they must be sensitive to the oppression, discrimination, and racism encountered by many people. Finally, counselors must facilitate empowerment for those clients who feel underprivileged and devalued.

Focusing on how multicultural competence is related to counseling and psychotherapy, Arrendondo (1999) examined the ways in which competencies can serve to confront racism and oppression. These ways are identified as:

- Knowledge of how a person's culture and heritage affect them personally and professionally.

- Knowledge of how oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping affect them personally and professionally.

- How their negative and positive reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups may prove detrimental to the counseling relationship.

- How poverty, racism, and stereotyping may affect the self-esteem and self-concept of racial and minority clients.

- Knowledge of how institutional barriers prevent minorities from using mental health services.

- Knowledge of the bias in assessment procedures.

- Acting proactively to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory contents in conducting evaluations and providing interventions.

These competencies move from knowledge and awareness of multicultural issues to a more proactive, social justice approach that has the goal of full and equal participation of all groups in a society.

The recent interest in restorative justice has also led to a call for multicultural awareness and skills. Umbreit and Coates (1999) describe the development of restorative justice practices throughout the country. Basically, these practices call for a radical change in the way that justice is served. First, crime violates relationships, and it tears at the social fabric of a community. Second, the proper rule of justice is to repair the damage done and restore relationships. Furthermore, victims must have an opportunity to become involved in the process of justice, and offenders must have an opportunity to accept their responsibilities and obligations towards individual victims and the community as a whole. The local community and its resources should be used to restore both victims and offenders. Finally, the system should utilize the least restrictive interventions before resorting to incarceration (Umbreit & Coates, 1999). Approaches that can be used under this model include mediation, restitution, reparative community boards, and circle sentencing. Umbreit and Coates (1999) note that there are considerable barriers to this approach, not the least of which are multicultural issues.

These authors stress that it is vital for the criminal justice system to become more sensitive to differing cross-cultural worldviews. Because cultural backgrounds of the victim, offender, and staff member are likely to differ, there may be miscommunication. Also, there are likely to be as many differences within cultures as between cultures. For this reason, Umbreit and Coates (1999) recommend attending to such factors as proximity, body movements, paralanguage, and density of language.

Sue and Sue (1999) conclude that proximity differences abound both between and within cultures. Some cultures favor closer positioning, while others are uncomfortable with face-to-face interactions. Facial expressions may also be interpreted differently. For example, a smile may not convey the same meaning to every person. Additionally, eye contact is perceived in varying ways. Some cultures believe that maintaining continuous eye contact is disrespectful, while others deem it appropriate. Paralanguage consists of hesitations, inflections, and silence. The Native- American culture, for example, highly values silence, whereas the traditional Anglo-American culture views it as rude and inappropriate. Density of language also differs by culture. Sue and Sue (1999) found that African-Americans, Native-Americans, and Hispanics tend to be more low-key and indirect in their communication styles, while Anglos tend to be more task-oriented and objective. Furthermore, differences in ideas regarding individualism, religion, and politics may impact the practice of restorative justice.

Umbreit and Coates (1999) believe that restorative practitioners should follow certain guidelines to foster good multicultural relations. First, practitioners should know themselves by examining their own culture, values, and biases as well as their own communication styles. Practitioners should also become acquainted with their clients by asking questions and listening carefully. Because cultural influences affect each person differently, Umbreit and Coates suggest that each client be understood as a unique individual within the context of culture. Finally, practitioners should prepare their clients for the experience by explaining the different viewpoints and communication styles that they will encounter. Overall, Umbreit and Coates conclude that a just and healing response to crime can be effected through the use of multicultural communication skills and techniques.

Arnoff (1999) developed a manual for cross-cultural communications between Hispanic and

Anglo-American populations. The manual contains many compelling ideals, but it should be noted that Hispanics who have assimilated the dominant American culture may not adhere to the behavioral patterns and ideologies outlined. Rather, the behaviors and philosophies Arnoff notes tend to be embraced by those who still reside in the country of origin. Still, the information can provide invaluable insights into the Hispanic culture. She notes that there are many philosophical differences between the two groups, including their understanding of human nature, time, activity, and social relations. For example, Hispanics see themselves as subject to forces in nature as opposed to having dominion over it. She also notes that, as a group, they tend to view human nature as a mixture of good and bad as opposed to being at one end of the spectrum or another. Furthermore, she finds that Hispanics tend to have a different time orientation from Anglo-Americans. That is, they are more oriented to the present than to either the past or the future. They also exhibit a polychromic time orientation, which means that they can attend to several things at the same time. For example, Hispanics may interrupt conversations to engage in other tasks or to talk with others. They also tend to exhibit less eye contact when they are speaking to those whom they perceive as authority figures. There is also a tendency for Hispanics to be less conscious of time. That is, they may arrive late for appointments.

Arnoff (1999) notes that there are traditions in the Hispanic culture that those in the majority culture should be made aware of. Hispanics traditionally focus around the family, and they value their extended family. A high regard is generally placed on friendships, and their relationships tend to be life-long. In the workplace, they are inclined to be more people- oriented than task-oriented, and they are more personal than businesslike in their interactions. Communication styles are often less direct, and they also prefer to make small talk before engaging in business. Finally, Hispanics tend to subordinate the self and self-interest to the good of the family. Arnoff (1999) argues that the dominant culture embraces individualism, or concern for oneself as opposed to concern for the rules and proprieties of the groups to which one belongs. In the Hispanic culture, however, the extended group is the major source of identity.

An additional concern is the amount of emphasis placed on goal attainment. The majority group generally places a premium on reaching personal goals and assertiveness, which is contrary to the Hispanic culture (Arnoff, 1999). The majority also embraces an achievement orientation. Hispanics tend to be more ascriptive in their business dealings; in other words, they believe that people should be rewarded for seniority as opposed to achievement.

"Culture context" is another dimension differentiating groups. Basically, group communications can be categorized as either "high context" or "low context." "High context" groups look to the environment for cues and believe that it is unnecessary to be verbally direct. Most minority groups are high context, according to Arnoff (1999). "Low context" groups, including Anglo-Americans, transmit most of their information verbally and little is embedded in the context of communication. "High context" communicators tend to give implicit messages and rely on nonverbal communication for important cues. "Low context" communicators may over-explain themselves, and "high context" communicators may appear underhanded or uncommunicative. These differences may lead to numerous misunderstandings between the groups.

Additional difficulties may occur via the use of nonverbal communication. It has been noted that most information is communicated through nonverbal cues (Arnoff, 1999). There are several categories of nonverbal communications; one of the most important is personal space. Some cultures, including Hispanic, Arabic, and Southern European cultures, are "high contact" cultures that engage in closer physical communications. That is, they tend to stand closer to one another when speaking, use more eye contact, touch each other more frequently, and speak more loudly than "low contact" cultures like those of Asia, Northern Europe and the United States (Arnoff, 1999). Cross-cultural communications may be misunderstood due to these many differences in communication styles.

In an investigation of the effectiveness of Sociocultural Competency Training (SCCT), Wong (2003) found that training was successful in improving a number of measurable variables. Specifically, SCCT was effective in:

- improving interpersonal skills;
- lowering social avoidance tendencies;
- increasing social self-effectiveness; and
- increasing the participants' sociocultural competencies in multicultural communities.

In the SCCT study, the trainees were immigrant and native-born health science trainees.

Finally, Kim & Lyons (2003) developed a game-focused instructional strategy for achieving multicultural competence. They indicate that this training approach can be effective in developing improved awareness of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The advantage of a game format is that it can be used to:

- reduce feelings of vulnerability;
- increase safety in exploring bias, prejudices, and limitations;
- decrease reluctance to risk making mistakes;
- increase camaraderie in trainees; and
- increase exploration of difficult and provocative issues.

The game format is also particularly attractive due to the scarcity of training strategies designed to instill and enhance multicultural competencies.

Assessing Multicultural Competencies

One of the traditional difficulties in multicultural awareness training is the availability of a technique or method of assessing knowledge, awareness, or skills in this complex area of professional development. Assessment can involve serious threats when instruments are developed for use in multicultural settings. Geisinger (2003) indicates that these threats include equivalence and bias. In relation to equivalence, the questions that are asked are: Are the constructs being measured conceptually equal in the cultures being assessed? Do the behaviors being sampled have the same purpose and meaning in both cultures? In relation to bias, Geisinger cautions against using an assessment instrument in a new culture when it had been previously standardized in an original group. In addition, there can be bias in how the assessment is administered, in the sample, in the items, and in the instrument. Multicultural assessment requires that cultural and racial concepts be carefully defined and incorporated into assessment procedures and instruments. Nevertheless, several useful instruments have been developed. Graham and Miller (1995) developed the *Cross-Cultural Interactive Preference Profile* that measures an individual's preference for level of context (high or low) as well as his or her ability to interact effectively across contexts. The profile is intended for use with individuals who are involved in cross-cultural activities so that they can become more aware of and sensitive to contextual orientations that affect interactive behavior in culturally diverse groups. The authors of the instrument report acceptable reliability and validity statistics to support the psychometric properties of the instrument.

Tulin (1995) developed the *Diversity Awareness Assessment,* which is a tool to get people 1) thinking about diversity, 2) challenging implicit assumptions and biases, and 3) considering other points of view from the perspective of other cultures. The results of the assessment are intended to evoke discussion among respondents rather than measure competencies. The tool is not a test, so, except for face validity, no other psychometric properties are provided by the author. On the other hand, the instrument could be used as a stimulus for discussion in multicultural training in probation.

In order to assess multicultural awareness, Ponterotto (1997) developed the *Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale* (MCKAS). The scale includes 20 knowledge and 12 awareness items that comprise multicultural awareness. Research has determined that the two factors are internally consistent, with coefficient alphas for the Knowledge scale in the 0.92 range and 0.78 in the Awareness scale range. Thus, it appears that the instrument is capable of discriminating between knowledge and awareness.

Wang, Davidson, Yakushko, Savoy, Tan, and Bleier (2003) present three studies on the initial validity and reliability of the *Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy* (SEE), a self-report instrument that measures empathy toward people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Empathy is the ability to understand another's perspective even though it varies from one's own. Specifically, the exploratory factor analysis yields four factors: Empathic Feeling and Expression, Empathic Perspective Taking, Acceptance of Cultural Differences, and Empathic Awareness. A confirmatory factor analysis provides evidence for the stability and generalizability of this four-factor solution. The SEE is correlated in the predicted directions with general empathy and attitudes toward people's similarities and differences. Women were found to exhibit higher levels of empathy than males, and non-White participants exhibit higher levels of general and specific ethnocultural empathy than their White counterparts. High internal consistency and test-retest reliability estimates were also found across the three studies.

Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, and Browne (2000) developed the *Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale* (CoBRAS) to assess the cognitive aspects of color blind racial attitudes. A person who exhibits a color blind racial attitude believes that race should not and does not matter. Some argue that it is not possible to be color blind. This scale measures perceptions of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. Higher levels of color blind attitudes are associated with higher levels of racial prejudice. The authors suspect that those who hold color blind attitudes may hold an inaccurate or distorted view of racial and ethnic minorities and race relations (Neville et al., 2000). There is also a relationship between color blind attitudes and gender prejudice. Those holding these attitudes are also more likely to embrace the just world hypothesis, which is the belief that people get what they deserve. They also tend to embrace the philosophy that people are rewarded on the basis of merit alone and that one's circumstances have nothing to do with social structures (Neville et al., 2000). The findings also suggest that females are more sensitive to social injustice than males. The authors found that CoBRAS scores are sensitive to multicultural intervention. That is, those who receive training exhibit a change in their self-reported scores.

Finally, Kocarek, Talbot, Batka, & Anderson (2001) studied the reliability and validity of three measures of multicultural competency. They studied the *Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale* (MCAS), the *Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-and-Skills Survey* (MAKSS), and the *Survey of Graduate Students' Experience with Diversity* (GSEDS). They determined that, with a few exceptions, all three of the instruments were stable, acceptable tools for measuring multicultural competency.

Overall, there are only a limited number of valid and reliable instruments that can be used to assess multicultural competence. The need for this type of assessment is becoming more obvious and, over time, more instruments will most assuredly be developed.

Multicultural Competencies in Probation

Two trends in multicultural competencies are quite clear. First, this topic has received a great deal of empirical and theoretical attention in the counseling profession (Pope-Davis, Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, Ligiero, Brittan-Powell, Lio, Bashshur, Codrington, & Liang, 2002; Vera & Speight, 2003) and in substance abuse treatment (Straussner, 2001; Springer, McNeece, & Arnold, 2003). Second, the topic has received very little attention in the general area of criminal justice, and the specific area of probation. Villarreal and Walker (2002) have provided a call to action on behalf of Latino and Latina youth in the U.S. justice system for communities, parents, law enforcement, and the justice system. They suggest, for example, that risk and needs assessments need to be valid, racially and ethnically unbiased procedures. Furthermore, they suggest that law enforcement, mental health, justice system, and educational professionals be adequately trained in cultural competence regarding specific Latino ethnic group.

Cintron and Lee (2002) studied the need for bilingual probation officers in the future workforce. In a survey of chief probation officers, they found that most community corrections departments were not keeping up with national trends, and the ratio of bilingual professionals lags behind that of non-bilingual professionals. They also suggest that bilingual probation officers provide

services (court order interpretation, understanding the conditions of probation, compliance with court requirements, getting on time to appointments) that might enhance the probationers' chances of a successful probation. They did not directly study multicultural competencies, but the national demographic trend and survey responses would seem to support a sense of urgency in multicultural competencies.

Finally, Tarver, Walker, and Wallace (2002) have identified the primary components of "cultural competence." Their presentation is in the context of victim services, but the components would seem to apply to several areas of criminal justice, including probation. The first step in "cultural competence" is awareness of the predominant philosophical schemes of the other person's culture. These schemes include views of life and death, of conflict resolution, and of individual vs. family control. The second step is to maintain true respect for the other person's culture, accepting it as valid in its own right and equal in status to the customs of the dominant culture.

The third step is to maintain an awareness of one's own limitations. Cultural competence means that the probation officer should be open to human differences and enthusiastic about these differences.

Fourth, according to Tarver, Walker, and Wallace, cultural competence is client-centered learning, which means the officer admits what he or she does not know to the probationer. The officer should also request cultural information and seek out the probationer's view of the crime, probation process, or the court process. Again, even though the writers do not speak directly to multicultural competencies in probation, they do provide extensive guidelines for probation officers to prepare for effective cultural contact.

Issues and Challenges

These professional trends present some interesting issues and challenges for the probation profession, especially in light of recent discussions about reinventing probation and community probation (Petersilia, 2002; Reinventing Probation Council, 2002) and recent demographic changes in the southwestern United States. These issues and challenges can be approached by a series of questions about the role of multicultural competencies in probation. The philosophical issues are:

- What should be the appropriate social justice role for a probation officer working in a criminal justice setting? For example, to what degree should a probation officer be socially active in reducing bias, discrimination, or stereotyping when a probationer is involved? Is knowledge and awareness sufficient to be culturally competent or should the officer be proactive in eliminating barriers for cultural and ethnic groups?

- How much transfer is there from the counseling profession to the work of a probation officer in the area of multicultural competencies? Supervision is a major part of a probation officer's role and a therapeutic relationship is very different from the role of the probation officer.

- Except for recent "hate crime" legislation, the criminal law has been traditionally and theoretically color and culture blind. Should the role of a probation officer tend to follow this tradition?

Several challenges related to multiculturalism that could be met by specific research efforts are:

- What is the relationship between multicultural competencies in probation officers and probation outcomes? Are offenders more likely to complete their probation successfully when they are supervised by culturally competent officers? Do different ethnic and cultural populations have unique needs that must be addressed for probation to be successful?

- What is the current level of multicultural competence in probation officers? It might be an

erroneous assumption to assume they are either competent or incompetent. How would we assess the level of competency and what would be the standard?

- What would be the critical curriculum areas required for training probation officers in multicultural competencies? Several sets of curriculum modules have been developed for police officers around the country. What are the similarities and differences in a curriculum for probation officers? Are there additional multicultural competencies needed by probation officers?

- What is the relationship between multicultural competency and the various strategies of probation departments? Should officers who lean more toward casework and development of community resources be more culturally competent than officers who adopt a law enforcement and strict supervision role or vice versa?

- Should officers be matched to offenders based on culture, race, or ethnicity? The results of research on a similar question in the counseling field are inconclusive at this time.

- How do probation officers administer racially and ethnically unbiased risk and needs assessments, assuming these instruments exist? How does a department conduct assessments if unbiased assessments are unavailable?

- Does multicultural training have a significant effect on the quality of probation services?

- Can multicultural training and education be developed for probation officers based on reliable and valid assessments?

The nature of the probation officer's role is the subject of much discussion and debate. Issues and questions about an additional variable in the role have been accelerated by concerns within the probation profession, demographic changes in society, and collateral changes in related professions. How should probation respond to these changes? Not many answers have been forthcoming in the literature of probation. It would seem that the conclusion reached from this condition is that the probation profession needs more research, discussion, direction, leadership, and awareness of the need for multicultural competencies if the profession is going to meet the challenges of a changing society.

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