

The Minority Fellowship Program: Promoting Representation Within Counselor Education and Supervision



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In 2012, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded funding for the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) to be managed by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Foundation. The MFP aims to increase representation of minoritized students enrolled in counselor education and supervision doctoral programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). From 2012 to 2018, the NBCC MFP has disseminated 20–24 monetary fellowships each year. This article reviews representation within counselor education, offers a history of the MFP, provides doctoral fellowship recipient outcome data, and concludes with implications for counselor education.

Keywords: Minority Fellowship Program, counselor education and supervision, National Board for Certified Counselors Foundation, CACREP, representation

In August 2012, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded \$1.6 million to the National Board for Certified Counselors Foundation (NBCCF) to oversee the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) for underrepresented, minoritized students in doctoral counselor education and supervision (CES) programs (Shallcross, 2012). The groundbreaking award for the counseling profession aimed to increase minoritized student representation in CES doctoral programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). It is important to note that NBCC now also offers MFP master’s-level fellowships for those students committed to collaborating with underrepresented and minoritized populations (NBCCF, n.d.). The goal of this article is to review the status of underrepresented racially and ethnically diverse faculty within counselor education, describe the doctoral MFP, and share the grant outcome data from its inception in 2012 through 2019.

Underrepresentation in CES

Diverse racial and ethnic representation within counselor education impacts recruitment and retention of master’s- and doctoral-level students of color (Henfield et al., 2013), perceived quality and content of course instruction to promote diverse perspectives (Seward, 2014), and preparation for graduates to work with diverse client populations (SAMHSA, 2020). Further, the *ACA Code of Ethics* (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014) mandates that “counselor educators are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty” (F.11.a, p. 15). Similarly, CACREP (2015) requires that counselor education programs seek to recruit and retain both diverse faculty and students. Although representation of faculty of color in counselor education has increased (Baggerly et al., 2017), the majority of counselor educators are White (71.38%), with 14.52% Black, 4.77% Latinx, 4.03% Asian American, and 0.7% Native American (CACREP, 2018).

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Gains made in ethnic and racial diversity among counselor education faculty and their subsequent experiences have shed light on oppressive factors that impact minoritized faculty members' success. Spanierman and Smith (2017) urged ACA and the American Psychological Association to initiate a closer examination of how White hegemonic practices can be dismantled within their profession and training programs. Research has documented the experiences of faculty of color with microaggressions and disappointment in the counselor education profession during the on-campus interview process (Cartwright et al., 2018) and throughout the tenure and promotion academic journey, including experiencing isolation as a faculty member of color (Pérez & Carney, 2018). Other studies of female faculty of color in counselor education have illuminated the professional and personal strain experienced as they navigate a system traditionally built for White male faculty (Haskins et al., 2016; Shillingford et al., 2013).

However, despite the documented challenges for counselor educators of color, research also has highlighted factors that support their success and resilience in the academy. Cartwright et al. (2018) recommended that counselor education programs seek to understand the mentorship experiences of students of color in order to bolster retention. Henfield et al. (2013) and Spanierman and Smith (2017) echoed support for ongoing mentorship for students of color by faculty of color and intentionally recruiting and retaining faculty and students of color. Likewise, Pérez and Carney (2018) supported developing mentorship for new faculty of color as well as concerted preparation tailored for doctoral students of color to enter the academy. Lerma et al. (2015) additionally proposed the promotion of bicultural flexibility for faculty of color, which includes encouraging maintaining family ties as well as creating academic family support systems to include mentors, advisors, and allies. Next, a review of the MFP will be presented with focus on its incorporation into CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs.

The Minority Fellowship Program (MFP)

SAMHSA commenced the MFP in 1973 in an effort to increase the number of ethnically and racially diverse, doctoral-level mental health practitioners to serve minoritized communities (SAMHSA, 2020). Currently, the SAMHSA (2020) MFP website notes that although racial and ethnic minority populations account for approximately 28% of the population, only 20% or less of the behavioral health care workforce includes those who identify as ethnically or racially minoritized individuals. Hence, the MFP also aims to reduce mental health disparities with regard to quality of service and access to behavioral health care (SAMHSA, 2020). J. M. Jones and Austin-Daily (2009) described the inception of the MFP as born from the advocacy of a group of Black psychiatrists. They reported that the initial MFP grant funding was distributed to ten doctoral-level minoritized psychology students led by an inaugural MFP Advisory Committee composed of prominent minoritized psychologists. Eventually, SAMHSA awarded MFP grant funding to additional mental health disciplines, including the American Nurses Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the Council on Social Work Education, and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (Shallcross, 2012).

The counseling profession was notably absent from the MFP grant awardee list until 2012, when the U.S. Congress approved the funding to include professional counselors (Shallcross, 2012). At the time, NBCC was awarded a \$1.6 million grant to initiate and oversee the MFP for doctoral-level CES students. Then-NBCC President and CEO Thomas Clawson stated:

The NBCC Minority Fellowship Program will strategically promote and provide fellowships to doctoral students in the counseling profession. The fellows will obtain training in mental health and substance abuse, with specialty training in culturally competent service delivery. Fellows will provide leadership to the profession

through education, research and practice benefiting vulnerable underserved consumers. The fellowship program will increase system capacity by increasing the number of culturally competent professional counselors available to underserved populations through engaging 24 doctoral fellows per year, by promoting national standards in culturally competent care and by providing online and conference-based training to practicing professional counselors. We like to project this yearly number over a decade to imagine more than 200 doctoral-level counselors and counselor educators being added to our ranks. (as cited in Shallcross, 2012, para. 8)

The inaugural NBCC MFP awarded 24 fellowships to doctoral students enrolled in CACREP-accredited CES programs (NBCCF, 2014). From 2013 to 2018, NBCC MFP doctoral-level fellowships were awarded to 138 students (NBCCF, 2018). Table 1 offers a demographic breakdown of doctoral-level NBCC MFP recipients.

Table 1

MFP Demographic Information from 2013–2018

| Year | Number of Fellowships Awarded | Female | Male | Other | Racial Category | | | | | | Doctoral Completion | Post-Doctoral Employment | |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------|------|-------|-----------------|----|----|----|------|----|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | | | | | AA | W | H | AI | A/PI | MR | | CE | Clinical |
| 2013 | 24 | 17 | 7 | | 17 | 2 | 5 | - | - | - | 100% | | - |
| 2014 | 22 | 15 | 7 | | 10 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 100% | 1 | 2 |
| 2015 | 23 | 20 | 3 | | 18 | - | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 100% | 7 | 2 |
| 2016 | 23 | 19 | 4 | | 9 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 2 | IP | 6 | 2 |
| 2017 | 23 | 19 | 4 | | 12 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | IP | 2 | 2 |
| 2018 | 23 | 19 | 3 | 1 | 15 | 5 | - | - | 3 | - | IP | 2 | 2 |
| 2019 | 20 | 13 | 7 | | 10 | 4 | 5 | - | 1 | - | IP | | - |
| Total | 158 | 122 | 35 | 1 | 91 | 24 | 23 | 5 | 10 | 5 | | 18 | 10 |

Note. The U.S. Census defines racial categorization based on identifying with “original peoples” of designated racial group (N. A. Jones & Bullock, 2012, p. 2): African American (AA), White (W), Hispanic/Latinx (H), American Indian (AI), Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PI), and Multi-Racial (MR). IP = degree completion in progress; CE = counselor education.

NBCC MFP Structure

Applications for the doctoral MFP are reviewed by NBCCF volunteers, many of whom are NBCC MFP alumni (NBCCF, 2019). Applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to working with underserved and marginalized populations—including those who identify as racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse as well as members of the LGBTQIA population—after completion of their CES doctoral degree. Final applicant decisions are made by the MFP Advisory Council, composed of six counselors and/or counselor educators who represent diverse ethnic, racial, or linguistic backgrounds and have extensive experience “providing mental health counseling services to underserved racial and ethnic minority communities” (NBCCF, 2019, p. 63). Before MFP awards are conferred, finalists must agree and attest to the terms of the MFP: (a) documentation of enrollment in a CACREP-accredited program, (b) attendance at required MFP orientation and relevant training, and (c) continued and ongoing collaboration with underserved and marginalized clients or students within counselor education (NBCCF, 2019).

Individual Fellowship Plan. NBCC MFP staff work with each individual fellow to craft an Individual Fellowship Plan (IFP) in which educational and impact goals for the fellow's targeted underserved community are created with the goal of completion during the fellowship year (NBCCF, 2019). Goals must have a stated benefit for or impact on the underserved or marginalized community with whom the MFP fellow is working and must also demonstrate an educational impact for the MFP fellow. Progress toward IFP goals are tracked by MFP staff and in collaboration with assigned mentors throughout the fellowship year in order to provide the necessary resources and support (NBCCF, 2019).

Mentors. MFP fellows are paired with volunteer mentors, many of whom are MFP alumni themselves and/or serve as counselor educators and practicing counselors (NBCCF, 2019). Mentorship occurs throughout the fellowship year in an effort to provide support and guidance for fellows as they navigate completion of their IFP, journey through the CES doctoral program, and consider professional careers (NBCCF, 2019). Mentors and mentees determine mutually agreed-upon goals, meeting times, and frequency, and establish the boundaries of the relationship for the fellowship.

Webinars and Trainings. All MFP fellows attend a minimum of six live or recorded webinars offered by NBCCF in their webinar series *Innovations in Counseling: Working with Minority Populations and Building Professional Excellence* (NBCCF, 2019). Training opportunities, such as attendance at the ACA or Association for Counselor Education and Supervision national or regional conferences promote fellows' educational and professional IFP goals. The fellowship year culminates in the annual Bridging the Gap Symposium on Eliminating Mental Health Disparities where "counselors, counselor educators, and counselors-in-training come together from around the country to focus on the provision of mental health care for underserved minority, military, rural, and marginalized groups" (NBCCF, 2019, p. 58).

NBCC has awarded MFP fellowships to seven doctoral cohorts since 2013. Many MFP fellows have graduated from their doctoral programs and entered the counseling profession as advanced practitioners, supervisors, and counselor educators. However, a comprehensive description of outcome information from all the cohorts has not been undertaken. Therefore, we aimed to collate MFP data gleaned from awardee demographic information and annual surveys completed by the fellowship cohort members.

Method

In order to access the NBCC MFP cohort data for our analysis, we sought permission from the NBCC MFP administrators. Because our analysis utilized previously collected data by the NBCC MFP administrators and would not divulge protected health information, the project was deemed to be "not human research" by the first author's institutional office of the IRB. Therefore, IRB approval was not warranted.

We aimed to collate the descriptive statistics gleaned from demographic data captured from applications of those doctoral students awarded the fellowship. We also culled qualitative responses from surveys distributed to NBCC MFP doctoral fellows during their fellowship year and 1 year after fellowship completion. The survey created by members of the NBCCF staff overseeing the MFP was developed to meet SAMHSA's reporting criteria for MFP grant recipients. The survey consisted of 39 questions and included nine open-ended questions, allowing for short answers from the survey recipients. We aimed to analyze responses to only one of the survey questions—"In what ways has this scholarship or fellowship been meaningful to you?"—as we believed responses would offer a broad range of fellow experiences. In total, surveys were distributed to 158 active and alumni fellows.

Sample

Surveys were distributed once per quarter, or four times, throughout the fellowship year to active MFP fellows. Alumni fellows who had completed their fellowship year received the survey in June. All surveys were distributed via electronic correspondence using the email on record for each fellow. During the MFP orientation, all fellows were instructed to complete the end-of-fellowship survey as a condition to acceptance of the NBCC MFP enrollment. The demographic and doctoral completion rate data was retrieved from the MFP applications and the surveys captured responses from 54 NBCC MFP cohort members from 2013 through 2018 (Table 1).

Procedure

First, we ensured that all NBCC MFP fellows had previously offered consent for their feedback and participation in the program to be used in a variety of ways including research activities as evidenced in the "Terms and Conditions of Program Participation" (NBCCF, 2019, p. 7). Next, we collated all MFP fellow demographic data using information found in their MFP applications and from the survey responses (Table 1). Surveys were distributed to active fellows four times a year and to alumni fellows once per year in June. In total, the surveys were sent to 158 fellows (both active and alumni).

Authors' Stance

The first author is a 2014 NBCC MFP cohort doctoral fellow alumna and identifies as a Latinx cisgender woman. She is a licensed professional counselor and is also a clinical assistant professor in a CACREP-accredited master's in clinical mental health counseling program. The second author identifies as an African American cisgender woman and is a licensed professional counselor associate. She serves as the Professional Development Coordinator for NBCCF. Both consulted frequently with regard to collating the descriptive and qualitative data for the manuscript.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

We utilized thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) to categorize the qualitative data culled from one survey question: "In what ways has this scholarship or fellowship been meaningful to you?" Braun and Clarke (2012) suggested that thematic analysis specifically allows for exploration and understanding of "meaning across a data set" to allow the researcher to "see and make sense of collective or shared meanings of experiences" (p. 57). Specifically, we adhered to the following steps in the thematic analytic process.

We familiarized ourselves with the data and read through the entirety of the survey questions and responses multiple times and then separated out the short-answer responses to the survey question of focus. We then reviewed each short answer to the survey question in multiple rounds to absorb the content. We initiated the coding process by way of extracting meaning from the survey response phrases, and we utilized qualitative software to aid in the categorization of codes, ultimately developing an initial codebook. Next, we examined the codes to note patterns of connection in order to group data together to generate themes and subthemes. The categorization was added to the revised codebook. We reviewed the themes, then created and compared the codes to the themes to determine coherence and/or if we needed to recategorize. During this quality review phase, as described by Braun and Clark (2012), we asked ourselves critical questions to ensure that themes were not really codes and if there was enough data in the survey responses to support the themes. Then we defined and named our themes to aid in clarity and included relevant participant quotes from the survey responses to illuminate the themes. Finally, we added our findings to our initially written literature review.

We followed Nowell et al.'s (2017) recommendations to increase trustworthiness within thematic analysis to correspond with previously described analytic steps. We reviewed the survey responses at multiple points in the data gathering process prior to initiating analysis. We then utilized peer debriefing to discuss the coding process and developed an audit trail where we stored the coding iterations within qualitative software. In this step, we used the developed codebooks to organize codes into themes where subthemes emerged. We continued the vetting process of the themes to ensure the codes fit coherently within each theme and subtheme and adjusted the codebook accordingly. Eventually we reached consensus on the final theme and subtheme definitions. Then, we utilized an outside auditor, a counselor educator, who confirmed coherence for the themes, with one recommendation to provide justification for one subtheme, which we addressed. Lastly, during the reporting phase we asked a staff member of NBCCF to read through the manuscript to confirm that the themes aligned with the data presented.

Results

In regard to the survey question, "In what ways has this scholarship or fellowship been meaningful to you?", the overarching theme of *access to the profession* emerged, as evidenced by the number of responses highlighting the MFP as the "open door that gave me access." Within this theme, the subthemes of *doctoral program completion*, *networking*, *supportive cohort*, *financial support*, and *mentorship* surfaced. The remaining themes included *clinical and multicultural competence*, with the subtheme of *counselor identity*, and *paying it forward*, with the subtheme of *leadership*.

Access to the Profession

Survey respondents' experiences spoke to the overall sentiment of the MFP offering them an opportunity to enter the counseling profession, either as counselor educators or as clinical supervisors. The subthemes in this category described those aspects of the MFP that respondents utilized to gain access to the profession. Many of the responses reflected more than one subtheme.

The first subtheme, *doctoral program completion*, captures those respondents who indicated the MFP aided in their overall success to complete their studies. Examples included:

- "I achieved my dream of a PhD."
- "I would not have been able to complete my degree without it. I have made some lasting relationships."
- "Helped me graduate."
- "I was able to finish my doctoral program."

The following responses demonstrate how several factors supported a successful completion of the CES doctoral program:

- "The fellowship allowed me to complete my PhD and receive extra training to prepare for my career."
- "The fellowship helped me complete my program and support my family."
- "It allowed me to finish my PhD, strengthen my private practice, and get a job as an assistant professor. This fellowship has been the most meaningful and beneficial award I've ever received."

The *networking* subtheme describes how access to other CES doctoral students, professional counselors, and counselor educators benefited fellows' entrance into the profession. Responses underscored how networking aided the fellows both during and after the fellowship year:

- “I was able to connect with other scholars of color and the resources provided by the Foundation.”
- “Through the fellowship, I have developed professional and personal relationships that have resulted in jobs, consultation opportunities, and peer networks.”
- “Networking has been the key element of the fellowship.”
- “It has provided invaluable contacts and collegial relationships that are invaluable.”
- “The fellowship was instrumental in making connections with other counselor educators. We have done presentations at conferences together as well as sharing our experiences in counselor education. Also, we have shared resources.”

The following responses also merge into the next subtheme related to the benefit of supportive cohort members:

- “I continue to benefit from the fellowship experience through connections with other fellows and by continuing to plow the ground cleared during the fellowship experience.”
- “This fellowship has connected me with many leaders in the profession that I would not have been able to connect with. It has also provided another cohort of peers to receive support and encouragement from when career challenges become overwhelming and discouraging.”

The next subtheme, *supportive cohort*, reflects how the camaraderie, encouragement, and relationships developed with cohort members acted as positive reinforcement throughout the doctoral CES experience. Statements emphasized the respondents’ healthy dependence on the MFP cohort model, in which members may provide motivation and guidance even beyond the fellowship year:

- “My NBCC MFP cohort is my family. I have continued the relationships with other cohort members, and we share resources with one another as well as support one another in the work we are doing.”
- “The network of fellows has been my peer group and support system since 2013.”
- “The group has guided me through my dissertation and job search.”
- “The relationships built from the fellowship provided a long-lasting impact in my professional development.”

The penultimate subtheme, *financial support*, described how the \$20,000 financial grant offered to doctoral-level fellows aided in their ability to successfully complete their CES doctoral education:

- “The fellowship provided a financial opportunity that allowed me to graduate with less debt. Even more so, it has provided an invaluable professional network.”
- “It has changed my life and my career. Being part of the NBCC family is amazing! Taking leaps of faith with the money was the best thing I could have ever done.”
- “The NBCC fellowship has meant the world to me because otherwise I would have been in a significant amount of debt in completing my doctoral studies. In the last year of the doctoral program, our school did not provide any funding, so the fellowship brought me to the finish line so that I could initiate my career as a counselor educator.”

All exemplify MFP fellow statements regarding the benefit of funding toward their doctoral degree. Similar to other subthemes, some respondents identified many areas that crossed subthemes and contributed to their success: “This fellowship has been instrumental in my successful completion of the doctoral program through resources, mentorship, financial support, and a network of professionals.”

Mentorship, the final subtheme in this category, reflects the impact of the mentors supporting fellows through their doctoral journey. Respondents indicated, “It allowed me to get the funding and mentorship needed to successfully graduate and transition into the mental health counseling field,” and “The scholarship was meaningful in providing collegial relationships with others pursuing their PhD, connected me with mentors and provided useful resources.” Mentorship, among other resources, is a core component of the MFP.

Clinical and Multicultural Competence

Survey respondents spoke to the NBCC MFP’s structured training in clinical and multicultural competencies woven within the fellowship year. Some responses included the following:

- “It helped me become more confident about my counseling skills, especially when working with minority populations.”
- “Assisted me in completing my dissertation and getting the cultural training I needed.”
- “The fellowship allowed me to intern at the U.S. Department of Education, which enriched my understanding of services to people with disabilities.”

The annual Bridging the Gap Symposium and its emphasis on mental health inequalities was mentioned in one response: “The [Symposium] networking with other fellows has been valuable. I’ve been able to build upon my education in regard to health care disparities for people of color.”

The subtheme of *counselor identity* describes survey respondents’ development as counselors within the profession. Examples included, “This fellowship validated my counselor identity because my interest is with minority populations,” and “Expanding my professional development and further defined my counselor identity.”

Paying It Forward

The final theme highlights how NBCC MFP fellow respondents desired to give back to the MFP community via mentorship, application reviews, and/or serving on the MFP Advisory Council. Some statements included:

- “I’ve also been able to give back and mentor others as well as review scholarship/fellowship proposals. Having those opportunities allowed me to have an influence on the counseling field.”
- “Further, I have been able to share my experiences as a fellow with my master’s students and encourage them to apply.”
- “The most meaningful elements of the fellowship have been the increased professional network and the opportunity to give back to the MFP by working with NBCCF and new fellows.”

The subtheme of *leadership* spotlights how the fellowship experience strengthened fellows’ leadership capacities and skills. One example included, “The fellowship has afforded me the opportunity to

increase my leadership skills within the counseling profession, as well as provided me with resources and tools to enhance professional networking.” Another respondent encapsulated leadership within their fellowship experience:

I was able to complete my PhD with less financial burden than I had expected. I have made fabulous professional connections with other giants in the field of counseling and cohorts in the fellowship program, which has encouraged my ongoing research and presentation schedule. I have been motivated to give back to my physical community and my academic community because of a newfound sense of responsibility to utilize my degree and skills to their fullest advantage. The fellowship made me realize that my education was much more than a personal and professional milestone, but an opportunity to become a leader and an advocate in the counseling field. I take that very seriously.

Discussion

Since its inception within doctoral counselor education, the NBCC MFP has awarded fellowships to 158 CES doctoral students all committed to continued work with marginalized and underrepresented students and/or clients within the profession. The SAMHSA-funded MFP aimed to increase diversity among doctoral-level clinical providers and educators. The findings suggest the MFP within counselor education is successfully meeting this goal as evidenced by the theme of *access to the profession*, in which survey respondents described how the support system offered by the MFP, including networking, the cohort model, the \$20,000 financial award, and mentorship, aided in their completion of their doctoral studies and, in many cases, supported their transition to the profession, either as clinical practitioners or counselor educators. According to the survey results, 18 MFP fellows have entered the counselor education profession.

Additionally, the NBCC MFP is meeting its intended goal to promote multicultural competence by training doctoral-level counselors who then may appropriately serve diverse communities and students. The theme of *clinical and multicultural competence* reflected the advantages of ongoing clinical and multiculturally competent training offered throughout the MFP fellowship year. Former NBCC President and CEO Thomas Clawson also reported that another goal for the NBCC MFP was to train and prepare doctoral-level leaders within the counseling profession (as cited in Shallcross, 2012). This goal is also being met as evidenced by the subtheme of *leadership* within the *paying it forward* theme. The survey respondents described their commitment to give back to their communities as a result of their participation in the NBCC MFP and indicated that acting as leaders within the profession is one relevant way in which to do so. The survey results report 10 participants are serving as clinical supervisors and/or practitioners in their target communities.

In addition, the survey responses also offer glimpses into the NBCC MFP’s potential buffers to known challenges faced by counselor educators of color. These include lack of mentorship by other faculty of color (Henfield et al., 2013), isolation (Seward, 2014), and overall lack of preparedness to adjust to the demand of a system created for White males (Spanierman & Smith, 2017). Participants’ responses suggest that MFP resources, including mentorship, networking, and the cohort model, offered ongoing opportunities for fellows to engage in communities of support, encouragement, and motivation to complete their doctoral degrees and, in many instances, enter the academy. In some cases, responses indicated that fellows experienced a heightened level of support well beyond their

fellowship year and into their new roles as early professionals. These reported factors might prevent and or buffer challenges experienced by counselor educators of color.

Implications

Several recommendations for counselor educators, supervisors, and doctoral students of diverse backgrounds can be ascertained from what we know about the NBCC MFP since its inception in CES in 2012. First, counselor educators can become knowledgeable about the NBCC MFP and its application deadlines to encourage CES doctoral students committed to working with diverse communities to apply. In so doing, counselor educators can also mentor CES students as they gather application materials.

Secondly, counselor educators and clinical supervisors may increase their multicultural competency knowledge by accessing the clinical trainings offered by NBCCF and may likewise encourage all doctoral- and master's-level counseling graduate program students to access those resources. Such training aligns with Seward's (2014) call to systemically infuse training to address the needs of students and faculty of color. In addition, more direct and open communication about such training needs may also promote an improved classroom and program racial climate (Seward, 2014).

According to survey respondents, many aspects of the NBCC MFP bolstered and supported their efforts to complete their doctoral programs and transition to the profession. Counselor educators, supervisors, and CES doctoral students may capitalize on the access and relationships that are made available through the MFP, thereby creating inclusion and support in academic spaces where faculty of color might otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood. Counselor educators and supervisors may consider how the structural elements of the MFP could be replicated within their programs in addition to the focus on clinical and multicultural training, mentorships, networking, and a collaborative student experience, with emphasis placed on addressing cultural factors to create a supportive environment for students and faculty of color (Shillingford et al., 2013). Such an endeavor requires intentionality through an honest evaluation of CES program recruitment and retention practices of faculty of color (Baggerly et al., 2017), an examination of how multiculturalism and social justice are infused throughout the program (Spanierman & Smith, 2017), and ongoing program assessment.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One significant limitation is the low number of survey responses. Although we had access to survey responses from cohort members between 2013 through 2018, approximately one third of the 158 fellows across the six cohorts responded to the surveys. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all MFP fellows' experiences. Given this limitation, future reviews should include larger numbers of cohort data. To address this limitation, in 2020, MFP administrators initiated a fellow engagement committee to encourage ongoing fellow participation after fellowship completion as well as enforce stricter regulations surrounding survey completion (M. Davis, personal communication, June 29, 2020).

In addition, only one out of the nine short-answer survey questions was selected for data analysis. The remaining survey data could be further analyzed for a more in-depth examination of respondent experiences. Future research should include qualitative studies to gain greater clarity on fellow experiences in order to better understand what aspects of the MFP structure were perceived as most beneficial as well as MFP fellow recommendations for improvements to the program. Additional quantitative research focusing on fellow self-efficacy within counselor education could be conducted

utilizing pre- and post-fellowship year assessments. Another area deserving attention is how the NBCC MFP might recruit and maintain more male-identifying applicants of color given the lower number of males awarded MFP fellowships. Finally, exploration examining counselor education faculty awareness of the MFP would be helpful to learn how to reach a broader audience of potential doctoral applicants.

Conclusion

Since 2012, the SAMHSA-grant funded MFP in collaboration with NBCC has awarded 158 fellowships to CES doctoral students throughout the country. This article reviewed the most recent demographics reflecting diverse representation within counselor education and included challenges encountered by counselor education faculty of color. Next, descriptive outcome data and qualitative themes culled from MFP fellow survey responses were presented. The findings demonstrate evidence that the goals of the NBCC MFP to promote diverse representation within counselor education are being met.

Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure

The authors reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

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