

# Using a Relational-Cultural and Adlerian Framework to Enhance Multicultural Pedagogy



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Counselor education (CE) programs are expected to provide counselors-in-training (CITs) with a diversity-infused curriculum. Throughout the CE literature, there are many available methods to accomplish this goal, yet trainees have reported a lack of self-efficacy in essential multicultural competencies before entering clinical work. Graduates of CE programs have also noted feeling unprepared when working with culturally diverse clients. The integration of culturally responsive models in CE programs is limited, and methods to decolonize current educational practices remain sparse. To address these gaps, we propose a culturally responsive and decolonizing framework grounded in the extant research that integrates relational-cultural theory (RCT) and Adlerian theory principles. The Relational-Cultural and Adlerian Multicultural Framework (RAMF) is intended to be a new pedagogical approach to enhance multicultural education across CE programs. By integrating RCT and Adlerian theory frameworks, the RAMF may offer a more comprehensive lens to view multicultural and social justice issues.

**Keywords:** relational-cultural theory, Adlerian theory, multicultural competencies, counselor education, decolonizing

Counselor education (CE) programs are charged with preparing counselors-in-training (CITs) to become culturally competent counselors. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) require multicultural education training to ensure that CITs develop essential multicultural competencies needed to ethically and effectively serve diverse client populations (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2015). The 2016 CACREP Standards define *multicultural* as “denoting the diversity of racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage; socioeconomic status; age; gender; sexual orientation; and religious and spiritual beliefs, as well as physical, emotional, and mental abilities” (CACREP, 2015, p. 42). CE programs must equip trainees with the knowledge and skills crucial to providing culturally responsive treatment (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2015). We begin by defining multicultural competence as it relates to the counseling profession, followed by a review of key terms that lay the groundwork for the proposed pedagogical framework.

## Multicultural Competence

Many definitions of multicultural competence exist in the literature. We operationally define *multicultural competence* as a counselor’s awareness and knowledge of their own culture and their clients’ cultures, which allows them to tailor counseling approaches to client cultural identities and appreciate and embrace cultural differences (Ratts et al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992). C. C. Lee (2019) also outlined three self-reflective questions to promote multicultural competence: “1) Who am I as a cultural being? . . . 2) What do I know about cultural dynamics and how they may influence my client’s worldview? . . . [and] 3) How do I promote client mental health and well-being in a culturally competent manner?” (p. 10). These reflective questions are crucial to multicultural competence development, particularly given the recent increase in cultural pluralism throughout the United

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States (C. C. Lee, 2019). In response to the growth in diverse client populations and the call to infuse social justice into CE, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development has endorsed the revised Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016) to facilitate clinical competency in this domain.

### *The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC)*

The MSJCC serve to impact, influence, and broaden the scope of multicultural training in CE programs (Ratts et al., 2016). Building from Sue et al.'s (1992) seminal tripartite model, four essential competencies comprise the MSJCC and are inherent to producing culturally competent counselors: attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action (Ratts et al., 2016). More than ever, our current sociopolitical climate tasks counselors with the ethical responsibility of cultural sensitivity and increased diversity awareness, which is central to being multiculturally competent and fundamental to the counseling relationship itself (ACA, 2014).

The MSJCC highlight the importance of social justice and advocacy by addressing mental health disparities and empowering marginalized groups (Ratts et al., 2016). Throughout the professional literature, there is a lack of consensus on defining this construct, furthering the experience of oppression for marginalized group members (C. C. Lee, 2019). For this article, we operationally define *marginalized group members* as historically oppressed persons and communities in society that experience discrimination and lack access to systemic benefits that privileged groups receive because of structural power advantages; this power imbalance occurs within sociopolitical, economic, and cultural dimensions (C. C. Lee, 2019; Ratts et al., 2016). Marginalized group members include a host of group identities, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); LGBTGEQIAP+ individuals; persons with disabilities; and undocumented immigrants and refugees (C. C. Lee, 2019). Integral to the MSJCC and overall multicultural competence is an awareness of clients' and counselors' intersecting identities, which allows for a deeper examination of privilege, power, and oppression dynamics.

### *Intersecting Identities*

Because culture encompasses classifications that extend beyond race and ethnicity, *cultural identity* can be viewed as one's self-identification as a member of a specific group based on a connection with the group's core beliefs and values that fit with one's sense of self (C. C. Lee, 2019; Ratts et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020). According to intersectionality theory, individuals who hold multiple marginalized identities may experience a greater risk of mental health concerns because of the compounding effects of various forms of discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Thus, CITs must understand intersecting identities (e.g., Hispanic Christian lesbian) to holistically and effectively conceptualize clients' presenting issues and examine dynamics of identity and power within the counseling relationship (Ratts et al., 2016). Intersectionality theory also provides a framework for counselors to critically investigate Westernized counseling theories stemming from a White Eurocentric lens and move toward a decolonizing paradigm. When conducting multicultural and social justice research, Hays (2020) noted the cruciality of applying intersectionality and decolonizing practices to enhance client and training outcomes.

### *Decolonizing Counseling and CE*

A definition of decolonization is warranted to further the discussion on dismantling oppressive systems impacting marginalized communities. In the literature, scholars have described *coloniality* as the dominant culture's attempts to socialize marginalized communities into adopting Westernized ideals and values (Goodman & Gorski, 2015; Hernández-Wolfe, 2011; Singh et al., 2020). Therefore, *decolonization* requires critically analyzing and challenging hierarchical structures that perpetuate inequities and injustices in underrepresented groups (Hernández-Wolfe, 2011). Integration of

decolonization is also crucial to informing multicultural counseling and education (Goodman & Gorski, 2015; Singh et al., 2020). Within CE programs, Singh et al. (2020) argued that social justice theories should be “taught alongside traditional counseling theories” to provide culturally responsive counseling and challenge colonizing educational practices (p. 262). Despite the persistent calls to incorporate the MSJCC and decolonizing practices into counseling and educational paradigms, scholars have continued to note deficits within multicultural education (Barden & Greene, 2015; Singh et al., 2020).

### Deficits in Multicultural Education

The literature reveals gaps between the pedagogical practices, acquired skill development and theory integration, and personal awareness needed to become culturally competent and prepared to work with diverse clients (Barden & Greene, 2015; Priester et al., 2008). CITs have also indicated a lack of self-efficacy in essential multicultural competencies upon entering their practicum sequence (Flasch et al., 2011). In addition, graduates of counseling programs have reported feeling unprepared to work with culturally diverse clients (Barden et al., 2017; Bidell, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2011). This issue reflects the current deficits in multicultural education among CE programs. Many definitions of *multicultural education* exist in the literature. For this study, we define it as a holistic approach to critically analyzing systems of power and privilege and inequitable policies that serve to disenfranchise marginalized group members; at the same time, multicultural education centralizes matters of social justice and the decolonization of discriminatory educational practices (Gorski, 2016; Singh et al., 2020).

Across CE programs, one notable factor that influences multicultural education is educational delivery method. Swank and Houseknecht (2019) conducted a Delphi study of teaching competencies in CE, which revealed that students were twice as likely to rate a professor as effective based on their content knowledge and delivery method. Thus, educational delivery method may play a significant role in facilitating multicultural competence among CITs. As such, there is a need for more effective diversity training approaches in CE programs, with an emphasis on fostering CITs’ ability to integrate theory and therapeutic techniques to fully meet clients’ needs with diverse and deep intersectional ties (Killian & Floren, 2020).

Although studies conducted on multicultural education have increased (Chang & Rabess, 2020; Uzunboylu & Altay, 2021), there remains a paucity of available research on integrating culturally responsive models in CE programs (Pieterse et al., 2009; Shelton, 2020; Trahan & Keim, 2019). Similarly, researchers in related fields, such as teacher education, have also noted ongoing challenges pertaining to multicultural education, including minimizing or avoiding challenging conversations about race and privilege, misrepresenting the voices of marginalized group members, integrating content over equity-based practices, and underemphasizing the factors that impact the teaching practices of multicultural educators (Chouari, 2016; Gorski, 2016; Kim, 2011; McGee Banks & Banks, 1995). Relational-cultural theory (RCT) and Adlerian theory are detailed and presented as grounding for a proposed pedagogical approach to address these training limitations.

### Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)

RCT is a feminist approach rooted in Jean Baker Miller’s (1976) *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. In collaboration with colleagues Judith Jordan, Janet Surrey, and Irene Stiver, Miller developed RCT and challenged Westernized psychotherapy theories that portray human development as a journey from dependence to independence (Jordan, 2010). From an RCT lens, healing occurs in the context of mutually empathic, growth-fostering relationships. Rather than focusing on separation and self-sufficiency, RCT is grounded in the assertion that human beings need connection to flourish. J. B. Miller

and Stiver (1997) stated that “five good things” occur when individuals engage in growth-fostering relationships: 1) a greater sense of “zest,” or vitality and energy; 2) increased self-worth; 3) a better understanding of self and others in the context of relationships; 4) elevated levels of productivity and creativity; and 5) a desire for more connection.

Conversely, isolation is perceived as a significant source of suffering (Jordan, 2018). Across the life span, relational development is highly interrelated with a person’s racial, cultural, and social identities (Pedersen et al., 2008). RCT addresses the breadth and depth that identity and power structures have within relationships and the intersectionality of culture across various contexts (Comstock et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2019). RCT also emphasizes acknowledgement of how hierarchical systems contribute to cultural oppression and social isolation for traditionally marginalized communities. Further, this theory centers contextual and relational factors that impact clients and encourages counselors to examine dynamics of privilege and oppression that perpetuate suffering and create disconnection (Jordan, 2018). Disconnection can be conceptualized as a routine part of relationships, yet when left unaddressed, the invalidated person may experience shame, withdrawal, and disempowerment. Therefore, RCT highlights the importance of attending to ruptures in relationships when they occur. By centering connection, authenticity, and mutual empowerment, humans can differentiate relational patterns and develop meaningful self and other relationships (Jordan, 2010). RCT also recognizes the ability for multiple truths within a relationship, which allows the individual’s unique experiences and perspectives to be acknowledged within the social and cultural subsystems that they are embedded within (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2018).

RCT has feminist, postmodern epistemological underpinnings that make it a suitable theoretical framework to implement in the various facets of CE. Several authors have proposed the use of RCT as a framework for pedagogy (Byers et al., 2020; K. G. Hall et al., 2014), mentorship (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016), supervision (Bradley et al., 2019), and advising students of color (Dipre & Luke, 2020). As a pedagogical model, RCT is applied in several courses, including human diversity (Byers et al., 2020), group counseling (B. S. Hall et al., 2018), and counseling theories (Lertora et al., 2020). Thus, RCT appears to be an emerging and robust framework to enhance students’ relational, multicultural, and social justice competencies.

## Adlerian Theory

Individual psychology, better known as *Adlerian theory*, is a phenomenological framework that examines the social and contextual factors which inform a person’s reality (Bitter et al., 2009; Watts, 2013). At its core, Adlerian theorists believe in *social embeddedness*, or the idea that individuals are comprehensively understood within a social-relational context (R. Miller & Taylor, 2016). Additionally, this framework is rooted in the following core principles: 1) behavior is purposeful (teleological) and used to satisfy the primary need of belongingness; 2) human beings are innately creative and unique; 3) human beings are indivisible and, therefore, must be viewed holistically; 4) human beings prosper through social interest (community feeling); and 5) relational interactions are influenced by one’s lifestyle, or their cognitive worldview (Adler, 1946). Adlerian theory possesses flexible and growth-fostering tenets, making it well-suited for incorporation into a multicultural pedagogical model, such as the MSJCC.

Adlerian theory eschews fundamentally decolonizing tenets such as an either/or perspective and values a dialectical stance to view the individual and social environment as mutually interacting factors (Watts, 2003). The research literature has long documented the integration of Adlerian theoretical principles with supervision (Bornsheuer-Boswell et al., 2013), counseling (Yee et al., 2016), and school

frameworks (Pryor & Tollerud, 1999). Adlerian theory has also demonstrated applications as a creative pedagogical framework for enhancing case conceptualization competency among CITs (Davis et al., 2019) and promoting student satisfaction with the learning environment and student–teacher relationships (Soheili et al., 2015).

In a clinical setting, Adlerian counselors conceptualize clients from a social-contextual perspective to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive events. One of an Adlerian counselor’s roles is to assist the client with examining maladaptive lifestyle convictions while also encouraging engagement in cooperative and social interactions to inhibit disconnection, considered to be the root of suffering (Watts, 2013). Neuroscience findings have supported this focus on social interest as critical to improving relationships and enhancing overall mental health (R. Miller & Taylor, 2016). In addition, its social-relational orientation makes it well-suited for increasing multicultural competence among counselors. Specifically, this framework supports client examination of multicultural issues through a lens of community feeling, in which establishing equality is central to addressing challenges (Bitter et al., 2009). Key tenets and values of Adlerian theory align with pro-feminist and decolonizing values, making it inclusive of marginalized group members (Watts, 2013) through its support of social interest, equality and advocacy, egalitarian relationships, empowerment and individual choice, and a social-cultural view of issues (Bitter et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2019; Soheili et al., 2015).

## **The Relational-Cultural and Adlerian Multicultural Framework (RAMF)**

We aim to bridge research and training gaps in multicultural education by integrating RCT with Adlerian theory. The core tenets of these two frameworks undergird the Relational-Cultural and Adlerian Multicultural Framework (RAMF), a pedagogical approach to enhance multicultural competence among CITs. In order to develop multicultural and social justice competence, trainees must first learn and understand the subtle complexities of theory before they can use and integrate it into their clinical practice. We believe that the RAMF can bolster current multicultural education practices by promoting the development of clinical competence in this domain while also modeling theoretical integration for CITs.

### **A Cross-Paradigm Framework for Pedagogy**

In the realm of counseling, an individual conceptualization has long dominated as the primary means to conceptualize clients’ issues. In this regard, Singh et al. (2020) highlighted the need to critically examine and move beyond Westernized counseling theories:

Although traditional counseling theories certainly may be utilized in culturally competent ways, they are often situated in a paradigm that focuses on the individual when the source of difficulties may be rooted in oppressive structures within the environment that require direct advocacy. (p. 261)

The integrative nature of the RAMF may lend to improved multicultural and social justice competency among CITs and clinicians. This framework can be conceptualized as a cross-paradigm pedagogical approach, rooted in psychological and postmodern/social-constructivist paradigms, which blend techniques and tenets from both theories (Cottone, 2012). Despite RCT and Adlerian theory originating from different theoretical paradigms, these theories are complementary and have overlapping social and relational constructs. Specifically, Adlerian theory originated from the psychological paradigm of counseling and psychotherapy, as it centralizes an individual conceptualization of clients’ issues (Cottone, 2012). However, Watts (2003) noted that this theory’s unique encapsulation of cognitive

constructivist and social constructionist elements make it better classified as a relational constructivist paradigm (i.e., emphasizing individual agency within a social-relational context). On the other hand, RCT is rooted in a postmodern philosophy, best categorizing this theory as belonging to the social-constructivist paradigm (Cottone, 2012), given its emphasis on the role that social-contextual factors (i.e., hierarchical systems) play in perpetuating oppression, inequity, and suffering. Moreover, Singh et al. (2020) recently recognized RCT as a social justice theory that can help counselors decolonize counseling and integrate the MSJCC in their work with clients.

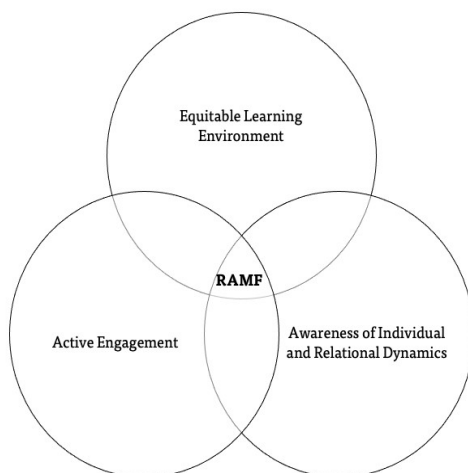
The RAMF is intended to be a new decolonizing pedagogical approach to multicultural education that fosters an equitable learning environment and overall inclusive program culture. The RAMF is a unique approach that integrates the counseling profession's core values, such as social justice, cultural competence, advocacy, and wellness (ACA, 2014). In contrast, many other theories, such as critical pedagogy, stem from educational fields and have different core values central to their professions. Combining RCT and Adlerian theory frameworks may provide a more holistic lens to view multicultural and social justice issues. Within the classroom, the RAMF centralizes growth-fostering relationships between students and professors. This outcome requires that professors be mindful of their positionality, minimize the power differential inherent in the professor–student relationship, and create mutually empowering relationships within the classroom (Walker, 2015). The RAMF also promotes practicing intentionality, incorporating experiential training strategies, and routine processing of CITs' reactions to further develop multicultural competence. Ultimately, the RAMF seeks to address bias and inequity by promoting self-awareness, authenticity, personal responsibility, mutual empowerment, acceptance of differing worldviews, and a non-judgmental and curious attitude. Because the RAMF aims to cultivate a culture of mutual empowerment and social interest, diverse students may feel more supported and valued. In this next section, we will outline components comprising the RAMF, offer an integrative description to apply the RAMF effectively, and discuss implications for future research.

### RAMF Components

The following three components found in Figure 1 are proposed as foundational to the RAMF and stem from RCT's and Adlerian theory's tenets: an equitable learning environment, awareness of individual and relational dynamics, and active engagement. These components and supporting research are examined in depth below.

**Figure 1**

*RAMF Components*



### *Equitable Learning Environment*

Successful implementation of the RAMF requires an equitable learning environment to effectively assist diverse students while also fostering multicultural and social justice competence (see Figure 2). Gorski and Swalwell (2015) purported that multicultural education is grounded in social justice and equity values. Failure to ensure both equity and equality in the classroom poses detrimental implications to student professional growth and overall well-being. For instance, in a qualitative study conducted by Baker et al. (2015), marginalized doctoral students in a CE program expressed feeling excluded from class information and discussions; they also shared concerns about being misjudged because of their racial identities. These findings are consistent with previous research on the experiences of marginalized master's-level CITs across CE programs (Henfield et al., 2013; Seward, 2014).

**Figure 2**

#### *RAMF Integration Application*

<b>RCT</b>	<b>Adlerian Theory</b>	<b>RAMF Component</b>	<b>Integrative Application Examples</b>
Growth-fostering relationships	Social interest	Equitable learning environment	Creating a safe space for all students to contribute in a way that empowers them; open discussions/exposure to diverse worldviews
Mutual empathy and empowerment	Social equality and advocacy	Active engagement	Creating a classroom environment that mutually benefits both students and professor; collaborating on journal article
Exploration of power differentials	Egalitarian relationships	Equitable learning environment	Offering an outlet for students to provide anonymous feedback
Authenticity in relationships	Empowerment and individual choice	Individual and relational dynamics	Giving yourself permission to be human; cultural humility
Consideration of contextual and relational factors	Being curious about diverse perspectives; social-cultural view of issues	Individual and relational dynamics	Awareness of self and other cultural identity membership; role-plays, reflective journaling, classroom dialogue, etc.

Using the RAMF, an equitable learning environment is cultivated through embracing classroom norms driven by Adlerian and RCT values. Examples include embracing a genuinely curious attitude, accepting differing worldviews, exhibiting compassion for self and others while navigating conflicts, and modeling authenticity during moments of disconnection (i.e., cultural humility). Additionally,

fostering this classroom atmosphere is contingent upon incorporating decolonizing educational practices. CE programs can accomplish this task through the intentional examination of course curricula. Specific examples include things like being mindful of the language used in course content and infusing textbooks, assignments, and supplementary materials in the syllabi to address inequitable practices and discrimination against marginalized group members (e.g., current news reports, community service-learning experiences within marginalized communities, guest speakers). Thus, the RAMF encourages counselor educators to practice intentionality by diversifying curriculum and incorporating diverse scholars' perspectives to dismantle colonized counseling and pedagogical practices.

The RAMF also stresses the importance of acknowledging the significant impact of professor interactions in fostering an equitable learning environment. Research findings have noted several factors that strengthen trainees' experience of their learning environments, such as an emphasis on teaching and mentorship, peer support, and faculty–student connections (Henfield et al., 2013; Sheperis et al., 2020). In this regard, enhancing relational factors among professors may alleviate the power differential between professors and CITs, thereby facilitating a more equitable learning environment. Additionally, student feedback and perceptions of the teaching environment should constantly be solicited in any learning environment that aspires to be inclusive and equitable. Hopefully, if a safe and collaborative learning environment is achieved, this feedback will be provided authentically and without direct solicitation. Anonymous feedback can also be gathered in various formal and informal approaches, such as the use of specific assessments or scaling and qualitative inquiry.

Gorski (2016) noted the importance of systemic change as crucial to analyzing power and privilege in the classroom; thus, faculty support is necessary to effectively carry out this systemic endeavor. As such, it is recommended that CE programs assess their organizational climate before implementing the RAMF. A discriminatory CE program climate serves to uphold colonizing and inequitable learning practices, thereby interfering with the development of multicultural and social justice competencies. The RAMF seeks to dismantle this issue by valuing diversity and modeling equity in the classroom, directly influencing CITs' perspectives and overall multicultural competence growth. Sanchez Bengoa et al. (2018) found that students developed multicultural competency skills faster in international teams than national teams; this finding speaks to the critical need to foster a culturally rich classroom environment where students can be exposed to diverse worldviews and engage in a cooperative learning process.

### *Awareness of Individual and Relational Dynamics*

As a cross-paradigm approach, the RAMF acknowledges the importance of individual and relational dynamics that impact the overall learning process and program experience. Within counseling programs, CITs are encouraged to engage in ongoing self-reflection, which is essential in multicultural education. According to the MSJCC framework (Ratts et al., 2016), self-awareness is at the core of multicultural and social justice competence. Counselors must critically examine their personally held attitudes, beliefs, and biases that affect their work with diverse clients. This awareness may then contribute to counselors' understanding of power, privilege, and oppression dynamics that impact the therapeutic relationship (Ratts et al., 2016). The RAMF takes a unique perspective on trainee self-awareness by drawing on core counseling values, such as examining the individual's role and identity in the context of relationships. From a RAMF lens, professors can facilitate this process with CITs by modeling authentic interactions (e.g., cultural humility), which may promote personal exploration and shared disclosures in a classroom setting. In Morgan Consoli and Marin's (2016) qualitative study on graduate students' experiences in diversity courses, students noted the essentiality of instructor self-disclosure and viewed it as indispensable to a positive diversity course experience. Thus, valuing authenticity and cultural humility may instill the importance of multicultural competence as a lifelong process (Hook et al., 2013).



Although an individual commitment to learning and self-awareness is at the core of multicultural competence, counselors must move beyond self-reflection to foster empowering therapeutic relationships. In a descriptive content analysis of multicultural course syllabi, Pieterse et al. (2009) found that a large percentage of course syllabi focused on developing knowledge, awareness, and skills; yet, knowledge and awareness were emphasized more often, while relational skill development was not. The RAMF emphasizes relational skill development by actively addressing ruptures that may occur between professors and CITs. Although the RAMF conceptualizes conflict as a standard component of relationships, ruptures must be addressed and repaired, especially attending to feelings of disempowerment (Jordan, 2010). To address this concern, the RAMF encourages professors to model *broaching*, which is defined as an ongoing commitment and openness to exploring diversity and cultural issues with clients and students (Day-Vines et al., 2018). Because research has shown that broaching early on in counseling can reduce attrition and strengthen therapeutic relationships with racial and ethnic minority clients (Jones et al., 2019), CITs must have the opportunity to practice broaching within the classroom setting. Central to this practice is creating a safe space, whereby professors actively encourage students to practice vulnerability and cultural humility by leaning into challenging conversations and providing feedback to enhance both self and relational awareness.

### *Active Engagement*

The RAMF posits that active engagement is necessary to multicultural education and effective diversity training of CITs. Ikononopoulos et al. (2016) conducted a study that demonstrated that practicum-level CITs developed their self-efficacy by actively engaging in direct client contact and peer-group interactions. We define active engagement as the process of encouraging students to learn in a deeper context, engage in activities, and reflect upon the material in a meaningful way. Depending on the course, there is no one “correct” way to attain or measure active engagement, yet active engagement should be seen in student questions, writings, and participation. Fundamental to Adlerian theory and RCT is the belief that individuals and groups are best understood in their relationships. Using the RAMF, CITs are required to actively engage in cultural immersion experiences and service-learning projects to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and unique challenges of marginalized group members.

Research has demonstrated the utility of service-learning experiences for CITs to develop clinical competencies (Dari et al., 2019), enhance a sense of preparedness to apply learned clinical skills (Havlik et al., 2016), deepen their understanding of human development from a social justice perspective (K. A. Lee & Kelley-Petersen, 2018), and promote social justice advocacy competency and cognitive development (K. A. Lee & McAdams, 2019). Following these experiences, scholars have noted that open dialogue about cultural and diversity matters is needed to bolster CITs’ clinical knowledge and attitudes (Celinska & Swazo, 2016; Wagner, 2015). For instance, in a study conducted by Villalba and Redmond (2008), an experiential learning exercise was incorporated in which students were exposed to a film to help facilitate multicultural competence through self-reflection. This study’s findings revealed the essentiality of open discussion on relevant social justice issues to process the experience fully. Further, Ratts et al. (2016) indicated that counselors who embody multicultural and social justice competence demonstrate cross-cultural communication skills. In using the RAMF, we emphasize classroom dialogue, such as open processing and role-plays, as a crucial part of developing these competencies in CITs. Counseling programs are tasked with preparing CITs to be future leaders and allies within the profession. This endeavor requires the exposure of CITs within culturally diverse groups by actively engaging with the community at large. In doing so, CITs stand a greater chance of developing essential multicultural and social justice competencies needed to effectively treat and conceptualize diverse client populations. The MSJCC endorses the implementation of counseling and advocacy interventions crucial

to holistic diversity training; specifically, CITs must actively engage beyond intrapersonal self-reflection by considering relational, community, societal, and global interventions (Ratts et al., 2016).

Inherent to the RAMF is its focus on active engagement in social justice and advocacy initiatives to facilitate multicultural competence. Some strategies include engaging trainees in open conversations about current sociopolitical challenges and the subsequent impact on marginalized group members, promoting attendance and engagement in presentations at professional conferences, and collaborating on professional journal articles related to multicultural competence. Ultimately, the RAMF is intended to be the vehicle that translates applied multicultural knowledge and skills into active engagement. The fundamental links between RCT and Adlerian theory are social equality and relational connections. These factors are crucial not only to the active engagement component of the RAMF but also to the framework as a whole. An integrative application outlining strategy relevant to the RAMF components is illustrated in Figure 2.

### **Considerations and Implications for Using the RAMF in Pedagogy**

The RAMF poses several implications in the realm of CE, namely enhanced clinical competency and self-efficacy with multicultural concepts. This is particularly important as graduates of counseling programs have often indicated feeling unprepared to work with culturally diverse clients (Barden et al., 2017; Bidell, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2011). They have also reported a lack of self-efficacy in key multicultural competencies when first engaging in counseling work (Flasch et al., 2011). This competency deficit among trainees may be attributed to the historical overcrowding of multicultural competencies and skills into a single-course format, which is insufficient considering multiculturalism's depth and scope (Celinska & Swazo, 2016). The RAMF's multimodal approach to infusing multicultural and social justice competencies across the curriculum may help bridge this gap.

Given the rise in diverse client demographics and cultural pluralism (C. C. Lee, 2019), it has become the professional responsibility of all counselors to develop essential multicultural competencies needed to provide culturally competent counseling (ACA, 2014). This need is addressed through the RAMF, which serves as an integrative vehicle to effectively transmit this knowledge to CITs. CE programs are tasked with engaging in culturally responsive gatekeeping practices to maintain professional standards, namely protecting clients from culturally incompetent trainees. Counselor educators have noted the critical importance of seeing trainees' multicultural competence development beyond the classroom and throughout the program within their gatekeeping role (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

### **Directions for Future Research**

The RAMF may be used to bridge the gap in multicultural competency and self-efficacy among CITs in CE programs. Currently, there is no evidence regarding the efficacy of this integrative framework as a pedagogical model. Therefore, directions for future research may include a quantitative study measuring the RAMF's effectiveness using a pretest-posttest design. For example, pre-post of the RAMF in a course may illustrate its overall effectiveness from the beginning to the end of the semester. The RAMF can be incorporated in CITs' practicum and internship courses, after which a posttest can be administered to measure confidence and competence upon graduating. This method will serve to address the current deficit in CITs' multicultural competence following graduation. Future research may also include developing an instrument that measures the constructs illustrated in the RAMF. Hays (2020) noted the importance of moving beyond traditional counseling research and integrating decolonizing methodologies, such as qualitative designs, that allow for triangulation with CITs and

program faculty. Thus, we suggest collecting qualitative data to learn about the individual lived experiences of CITs following their course.

Further research on implementing the RAMF into CE programs is also needed to validate its evidence base. Regarding the evaluation of multicultural competence utilizing the RAMF, we recommend that CITs take Holcomb-McCoy and Myers' (1999) Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey-Revised (MCCTS-R), which will provide insight into CITs' perceived level of multicultural competence. This 32-item measure is grounded in the MSJCC (Barden et al., 2017) and assesses competency in three domains—multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and multicultural terminology—using self-report, Likert-type questions ranging from 1 (*not competent*) to 4 (*extremely competent*; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). To evaluate the effectiveness of the RAMF and facilitate formative feedback, we recommend administering the MCCTS-R to all CITs at the beginning and end of a course. The successful implementation of the RAMF is evidenced by CITs' growth in the following MSJCC domains: attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action (Ratts et al., 2016). These domains must be routinely evaluated as part of an ongoing CE program evaluation to enhance multicultural and social justice competency among CITs (Hays, 2020).

## Conclusion

CE programs may use the RAMF to address challenges to CITs' self-efficacy and ability in treating culturally diverse clients, thereby potentially reducing gatekeeping concerns that stem from lack of multicultural competence. Overall, implementation of the RAMF could pose several benefits to CE programs. A limitation of this framework includes possible compassion fatigue because of its emphasis on authentic interactions and contact with difficult conversations (e.g., power and oppression, unique challenges faced by marginalized group members). However, the RAMF's integrative approach to addressing multicultural and social justice competence throughout the curriculum may allow for CITs to develop knowledge and skills proactively rather than retroactively engaging in future remediation strategies.

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