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Counseling at the borderlands : a workshop for counselors

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Counseling at the Borderlands
A Workshop for Counselors

A Research Project

Presented to

The Department of Counselor Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master's of Arts

By

Jesus Angulo

May 2008

Approved by the Department of Counselor Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a horizontal line.

Approved by the Graduate Research Advisor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, similar in style to the one above, positioned above a horizontal line.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and show my appreciation to my wife, mother and family for their ongoing support in my education. Without their continuing support, none of my achievements would have been possible.

Preface

I was born and raised in San Ysidro, California, exposed to gang activity, prostitution, suicide, high crime and homicide, indigenous peoples and poverty. Everyday I heard the sirens of police cars, ambulances or fire trucks. These are some of the sounds and people I was surrounded with as a child. Some of the most important images which had an impact on my life included those of seeing other people die, friends use drugs, neighbors abuse the welfare system, indigenous people being hurt or dying of hunger, illegal immigrants being discriminated against by other Latinos, police, border patrol or other residents, as well as being under constant surveillance of police and border patrol. At the time, I didn't understand why these things continued to happen. Everyday was not a new day, but merely a repetition of the days that had come before, also filled with negative reminders of border life.

As a child, my teachers and counselors didn't understand the culture and lifestyle at the border. Thus, I feel strongly a need to work with other scholars and researchers to help to develop better schools, teaching curriculums, teachers, counselors, courses and educational programs. The more prepared we are as educators, the better prepared our students will be in their educational careers and for their lives in the community.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

The following project describes a workshop designed to improve counselor competency and awareness related to the unique problems of people living along the U.S.-Mexico border. This workshop is an attempt to provide counselors with a series of educational experiences that will sharpen their theoretical counseling skills with U.S.-Mexico border students by means of a group process. Many students living under the chaotic conditions which prevail at the U.S.-Mexico border are alienated, disconnected and disenfranchised from the benefits of life in the ordinary world. Their communities are plagued by negativity, rapid population growth, frequent violence, high levels of crime, high dropout rates as well as sexual and emotional abuse. Students exposed on a daily basis to such extreme conditions eventually adapt to and adopt the U.S.-Mexico border lifestyle. They grow up assuming this very violent and chaotic situation represents the normal way to live. Such a situation tends to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. People who grow up expecting violence and chaos tend to only create more violence and chaos. The lack of positive role models and parental support make the situation worse with each passing year. Propositions 187, 227 the subsequent increase of violent and chaotic activity at the border, and the intensification of the activities of police and border patrol agents has only further contributed to the expectation within the minds of the local student population that everything will either remain the same or get worse at the U.S.-Mexico border.

This intervention workshop contains a series of activities designed to allow students to discuss many issues affecting their community, family, school, career development, life, future and self-esteem. In this workshop, the counselor will experience through the series of structured

educational exercises intended to make students feel comfortable discussing crime, illegal immigration, violence, gangs, prostitution and oppression. These unpleasant realities are ever-present features of border culture and lifestyle. The prevalence of these extremely negative activities contribute to common belief among mainstream Americans that Mexico has little sociocultural, economic, or educational value to inform or offer U.S. society. Such a narrow perspective overlooks the complex reality of interaction, integration, and complexity around the U.S.–Mexican border (Jaime Romo 2005).

The pursuit of an education can be a difficult task at the U.S. Mexico border. The environment can consume one's identity. Students living at the Borderlands experience more than just the everyday struggle in the community and school. Living in close proximity to the border of Mexico is an extreme experience quite different from ordinary social life in any other part of either Mexico or the United States. Approximately 11.5 million people reside in the 42 U.S. counties and 39 Mexican municipalities located along the United States–Mexico border, and 86% of those people reside in 14 pairs of sister cities. Sister cities are metropolitan areas divided by the international border. On the U.S. side, the population is predominantly of Spanish origin, young, and poor (35% live under the officially defined poverty level), and it is estimated the population grows three times faster than in the rest of the country. The border population is expected to double by the year 2020 (Nuria Homedes 2003). With the population growing so rapidly, students at the U.S. Mexico border need counselors who are culturally competent and confident. The numbers of people are increasing, as are the number of students living under extremely stressful circumstances. Many of them feel helpless, lost, and overwhelmed. Most have been disoriented and emotionally drained by the impact of the border environment. School counselors are needed to provide direction and support at the borderlands.

Students at the borderlands live and share two countries, the United States and Mexico. Many students cross the border from Mexico everyday to attend school. The experience of living in Mexico and acquiring an education in the United States is a unique student experience. Transitioning at the US Mexico border from one country to the other is a lifestyle unlike any other. The students often live in Mexico because housing and services are cheaper. Some live at home and commute back and forth each day, while others stay with relatives on the American side during the week and cross back into Mexico on the weekends. Many work part or full time at a maquiladora, one of the hundreds of American-owned factories peppering the Mexican side of the border (Michael Arnone 2004).

The conditions placed on students in this environment challenges them physically and mentally to become adults at an early age. Students at the border share a city of violence and crime. Most are exposed to graffiti, prostitution and drugs. Not only do these children continuously witness drug abuse and prostitutes plying their trade on street corners, but also constantly hear the sirens of police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, helicopters, gunshots and screams. These screams are not the exuberance of ordinary children playing ball in the streets, but the screams of distressed people crying out for help. Over the past two decades, the U.S. has spent billions of dollars on the "war on drugs," with a sizeable portion of the funds going to interdiction efforts along the U.S.-Mexico border. The majority of students report it is easy to purchase marijuana, cocaine, and rohypnol in the schools. Such findings suggest the escalation of interdiction efforts along the border has failed to halt the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. (Ben Brown 2007).

The US Mexico border is a unique playground where young students become adults at an early age. People living at the borderlands are disenfranchised. They are of diverse

socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of them are Mexican American and bilingual. Most of them are first generation students born in a city in which they are accustomed to fighting and looking at the world from the bottom up— oppressed, and sharing with each other an experience which is difficult for outsiders to relate to.

Counseling in this unique setting requires additional training and understanding beyond what the conventional educational system ordinarily provides. In order for counselors to adequately do their jobs in this environment, a training workshop about border lifestyle and culture is required. Such professionals must not only understand the counselee as an individual, but also be able to create interventions that can allow students at the border to acquire knowledge, strength and motivation so their next day will be better than those that have come before. Positive social and emotional change can come about through a workshop which can allow students the space to identify change in themselves, family and society in their pursuit an education.

A different approach to developing culturally appropriate theory is to examine existing theories for their cultural relevance for previously underserved groups. Theories are inherently imbued with a cultural perspective that is influenced by the sociopolitical milieu, the background of the theorist, and the receptivity of the dominant forces in the field (Rebecca L. Toporek 2005). Thus, such a workshop needs to facilitate the commitment of working in a growing culture.

Problem Statement

Students at the borderlands experience a different type social life than that experienced in other parts of the U.S. or Mexico. An everyday struggle for survival and identification are driving forces for students in this region. These are the motivations and feelings that need immediate attention of counselors. Counselors are seldom prepared to face the growing

challenges at the borderlands. Counselors must prepare to provide direction and guidance to a population in need of assistance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to improve counselor competency with students at the U.S.-Mexico border region of the United States. The intervention workshop will provide the counselor with a series of activities that guide the counselor to work adequately with students to provide support, leadership, mentoring and direction through a group counseling process.

Research Questions

1. What are the major challenges facing students at the border?
2. How does the border environment impact student success?
3. What would be an effective workshop to assist students at the borderlands?
4. How does language impact educational development?
5. What previous techniques, methods or strategies have been used before in this environment?
6. What social services in the community are available for counselors to accommodate students and parents?
7. What programs are school districts at the border currently implementing to assist students?
8. How do police and border patrol deal with students at the border?
9. Are there any laws or educational codes in school districts that deal constructively with the student experience at the borderlands?
10. How has funding, such as allocation and budget cuts, affected school districts and student programs at the border?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are referred to in this study and defined as follows.

Borderlands: U.S.-Mexico border region in the Southwest.

Border Patrol: Government agents assigned to protect, guard and monitor the border.

Maquilidora: A factory in which skilled workers are compensated with very low wages, and work under extreme conditions.

Mexican American: Refers to students and people at the borderlands of Mexican descent.

Limitations

The research project has the following limitations.

1. The border experience is different for each individual.
2. Not every student at the borderlands is Mexican American or bilingual.
3. The workshop was designed for students living at the borderlands.
4. Not all students are exposed to prostitution, violence, gangs, or crime.

Summary

The experiences students at the borderlands face everyday are emotionally and physically challenging. The challenges lead many students to failure. As a result, a counseling pedagogy is needed to work with students in this environment. Counselors must be competent, aware and familiarized with border culture and lifestyle in order to be able to address the challenges and assist students at the borderlands.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this workshop is to provide competency training for counselors doing multicultural counseling at the borderlands. This chapter will explain the challenges and barriers students at the borderlands face in great detail, utilizing both statistics and examples. In the workshop, counselors have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, familiarity and exposure to border lifestyle and culture. There are several themes that are unique at the borderlands. The concept of self-fulfilling prophecy is another theoretical construct that is examined.

Some of the themes explored in this section will include crossing the border to get to school, alcohol abuse, underage drinking and intoxication, drugs, gang violence, crime, government surveillance, malnutrition, high drop out rates, increasing population rate and poverty.

Person-centered theory

One methodological approach that is recommended for counselors working at the borderlands is Carl Rogers's person-centered theory. This theoretical dimension allows students to be fully accepted regardless of sex, gender, preference or past experiences. Because of the unique conditions at the U.S.-Mexico border, person-centered theory and unconditional positive self-regard should be considered as fundamental methodologies in group counseling with underprivileged and disenfranchised clients. According to Thomas Patterson (2006) the theory predicts that, given the presence of the core relationship conditions of congruence (or genuineness), empathy and unconditional positive regard (UPR; or acceptance), the client is

enabled to achieve positive therapeutic change, evidenced by an increase in the individual's unconditional positive self-regard (UPSR; a less contingent form of self-acceptance), and a decrease in conditions of worth (the internalized rules upon which the individual's self-acceptance has become contingent), leading to greater autonomy, congruence and openness to experience, and reduced defensiveness of the individual. Moreover, the selection of themes can have an impact on the counselor's acceptance in a counseling session. The person-centered approach must take into account the clients needs as a person and as a member of a systemic family. The most common breakdown in the future planning process occurs when people place too much emphasis on the initial meetings and do not value, plan, and invest in the ongoing process of follow-up and renewal. The first several meetings are powerful, and people are energized by describing the capacities of people and creating a vision together. But after this comes the hard work of making the ideas into reality and slogging through the details, obstacles and frustrations of implementation (Steve Holburn 2007).

Hispanics are a Growing Minority Group

Hispanics continue to be the fastest largest growing minority population in the United States. Statistics show many alarming problems facing the Hispanic community each year. At the borderlands, the majority of the population is Hispanic, primarily Mexican American. As the number of people rise, it is critical careful attention be directed to the unique problems of this population in order to better understand the needs of this population. The Hispanic population in the United States is growing, and with it, the urgency of addressing its needs. In the 1980s, the Hispanic population of the United States comprised 6.4% of the total, while Whites comprised 79.6% and African Americans comprised 11.7%. By 1995, the numbers of Hispanics had increased so dramatically that numerous researchers were predicting a new Hispanic majority for

the early part of the new millennium. Hispanics are now nearly equal to African Americans in terms of their overall numbers in this country, and will be the largest U.S. minority as early as 2005. In 2000, the figures show Hispanics represented 11.9% of the overall population; Whites, 71.3%, and African Americans, 12.2% (Nuñez 2003).

Education at the borderlands

Educators at the U.S.-Mexico border have struggled to create an effective curriculum for students. The overall changing environment has plagued the educational system at the borderlands. (Cline 2006) says borderland educators often channel their energy into addressing the complex social and academic needs of a diverse student population. Passion for the borderlands takes teachers on an ongoing journey to discover the unofficial curriculum and instructional practices that are grounded in students' lives. These teachers see a natural beauty that enriches their classrooms and view the differences in student cultural and linguistic background as tremendous assets rather than liabilities. The powerful personal narratives that students bring to the classroom become the heart that provides the pulse for designing more effective borderland curriculum-one that incorporates the rich tapestry of personal stories, accounts, and legends that make up the fabric of the students' experiences. These narratives could help teachers understand the intricacies and complexities of the borderlands, and thus serve as the pillars of professional development programs and curricular designs for the border region.

Schools at the borderlands are under pressure to increase test scores. Students are failing and teacher curriculum is creating poor academic achievement. According to Gilbert Mendez (2006) one of the greatest challenges facing educators today is raising the academic achievement of poor, and language minority students while at the same time providing a high quality education for all students. With the advent of standardized testing and accountability, there is

temptation for low-performing schools to focus solely on rising test scores by implementing remedial classes, testing preparation courses, and “teacher proof” standardized curricula.

The dropout rates among Hispanic students is continuing to climb. According to a federal study, Hispanic students continue to drop out of high school at rates much higher than those for blacks and non-Hispanic whites. These same differences have persisted since 1972, the earliest year cited in the study by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. Nearly 9% of Hispanics in grades 10 through 12 in the 2000-01 academic year dropped out before the end of the year. By comparison, the rates were 6% for black students and 4% for non-Hispanic whites (Vaishau Honawar 2003). Furthermore, the high dropout rates has an impact not only to the Hispanic community, but also upon society at large. Students who drop out from school experience lower income, greater unemployment, are significantly overrepresented in the adult corrections population, and are more likely to require social services during their lifetimes compared to high school graduates (Rumberger & Larson, 1994; Secada et al., 1998).

US Mexico Border Culture and Lifestyle

The existence of the border itself creates a host of alarming problems. Many of these concern the impact of excessive traffic. Traffic near the U.S.-Mexico border is very congested. There are about 1.1 million legal northbound crossings each day (Nuria Homedes, 2003). Alcohol and drugs are also a problem at the border. Student consumption of alcohol and use of drugs are increasing rapidly. Overall, substantial rates of alcohol use and alcohol-related behaviors are observed among border student respondents. Border students appeared to have higher rates of alcohol related behaviors than observed in both state and national data (Sarah McKinnon 2003). Another concern is age. Students living at the borderlands can cross the

border to Mexico and purchase alcohol. For those close to the Mexican border, there is an alternative to the U.S. drinking scene. In Mexico, although the legal drinking age is technically 18 years of age, this rule is very inconsistently enforced. Further, many establishments catering to Americans specifically encourage binge drinking (James Lange 2000). Intoxicated students returning from Mexico to the United States create a major problem. This drinking problem manifests itself in drunken fights and alcohol poisonings at the border, as well as in alcohol-related automobile accidents requiring police intervention and ambulance service to local hospitals (Robert Voas 2002).

Border culture and lifestyle is perpetuating excessive drinking and alcohol abuse amongst students in the region. Easy access to beer in Mexico allows young adults and teenagers the opportunity to explore alcohol at a young age. This is an extremely dangerous phenomenon effecting students at the U.S.-Mexico border. At a young age, alcohol can have serious problems. Access to alcohol has been a problem that has proven to affect both genders at the U.S.- Mexico border. Acculturation was related to lower rates of alcohol use disorders among men and a higher frequency of heavy episodic drinking among women. Multivariate analyses indicate that men who report heavy episodic drinking and those who are "very Mexican," "bicultural Mexican," or "bicultural Anglo" are more at higher risk for alcohol abuse and/or dependence compared with "very Anglo/Anglicized" men. For women, acculturation level did not predict alcohol disorders. Statistical analyses included testing for bivariate associations and multivariate logistic regression predicting heavy episodic drinking alcohol abuse or dependence.

In addition, the border lifestyle propels individuals to desperation and confusion. According to Ernst VanBergeijk (2005) this is a tale of two cities. One city is geographically small and the people live in close proximity. One city is large and sprawling. In one city,

inhabitants still suffer from diseases considered exotic in the other: cholera, polio, typhus, tuberculosis, and rickets. In the other city, separated from the former mostly by an imaginary line, lies some of the richest real estate in the richest state in the richest country on the face of the earth. There is not a physical boundary between two countries. It is economics that divides them.

Negative Government Intervention Strategies

Government intervention has not always been positive for students, residents and wildlife at the U.S.- Mexico border. U.S.- Mexico border has been damaged by powerful forces of government actions against residential property, border culture and wildlife. According to Daniel Sharf (2006), migrants and drug traffickers crossing the border illegally are not the only parties damaging U.S. wildlife resources. Several environmentalist groups have expressed their concern over the environmental impact of the ABC. Environmentalists note that by using off-road vehicles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, helicopters, and airplanes, the Border Patrol is significantly contributing to the adverse environmental impact already taking place along the border. Interested parties will have to wait and see whether the impact of the U.S. effort to secure the border will cause more damage to the delicate ecosystem than the illegal activities it is attempting to stop.

Government intervention is not always positive. Students at the borderlands are continuing to be exposed to interventions that are harmful to their health and prosperity. Parks, increased traffic and construction are just some examples of how government decisions are harmful to the lifestyle and wildlife at the border. According to Emma Maris (2006) defenders of wildlife contend the Border Patrol has neglected the environmental impacts of its work, and has not fulfilled its legal responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act. In a statement to *Nature* the Border Patrol said: "Our primary responsibility is to prevent terrorists and their weapons from

entering the country. We will continue to move forward and work with other federal agencies to minimize our effects on the environment.” But in an informal conversation, a Border Patrol spokesman said he felt that conservation projects are just not on the agency’s radar screen. The power the government and local politicians have on decision making at the U.S.-Mexico border is stronger than resident opposition. The borderlands culture is always changing. Instead of creating and establishing healthy interventions or programs for residents at the U.S.-Mexico border, politicians and constituents lobby for hazardous and environmental agendas. According to Mimi Hall (2008) the Homeland Security Department used its legal authority to waive environmental and land management laws so it can complete 670 miles of fence along the U.S.-Mexican border. The waivers will allow the department to move ahead with miles of pedestrian- and vehicle-fence construction as well as roads and detection systems.

Summary

Counseling at the borderlands requires caution and patience. Residents at the U.S.-Mexico border are a leading majority of many statistics. Continued growth in population and dropout rates make the region a concern. In addition to having hazardous conditions and environmental problems with excessive traffic and congestion of commuters, tourist, and government agencies such as border patrol and police are creating an unhealthy atmosphere. Counselors must be able to engage clients in diverse themes that can allow both clients and counselors to work effectively. There are sociocultural factors in the region that counselors must comprehend in the lives of students at the U.S.-Mexico border. Allowing students to be fully accepted in a counseling session allows students comfort.

CHAPTER THREE

Workshop Design

Theoretical Foundations

There are several methodologies utilized in the workshop. The first is Carl Roger's notion of person-centered theory and unconditional positive self-regard. This theory is utilized in the workshop as a method to allow students to be fully engaged and accepted as equal participants regardless of age, ethnicity or gender. Rogers hypothesized that in a therapeutic milieu of unconditional positive regard the client becomes less defensive, and hence more open to their experience of themselves and of others (Dagirmanjian 75). The second methodology is group counseling theory. This theory allows the counselor to work with individuals through a group process incorporating parents and other family relatives, teachers, counselors, administrators or participants.

Workshop Introduction

The workshop was created to help counselors develop familiarity and competency with border lifestyle and culture while developing their theoretical orientation in multicultural counseling.

Workshop Goals

The counselor will provide a workshop that will allow him or her to gain experience working with students at the borderlands through a series of structured educational activities. The experience gained will allow the counselor to grow professionally, provide support to clients and develop interventions for further sessions. The overall goal is to develop counselors in the community.

Workshop Objectives

1. Provide skill training on building counselor relationship.
2. Provide insight and knowledge of the pressures and challenges of border lifestyle and on the impact on children.
3. Learn how border culture impacts perception and skills with children.

Workshop Components

1. Understanding family and school responsibility.
2. Communication: Personal and Professional Growth.
3. Handouts.

Summary

The three sessions in the workshop will allow counselors to gain experience and develop competency with students living at the border. The sessions will provide students the opportunity to explore different topics and share experiences with peers and counselors. This workshop will collect data that can be utilized to strengthen the field of multicultural counseling and counseling at the borderlands.

The participation of parents in the session is a strategy to allow parents the opportunity to know about their child's educational experience. Parents also provide support for students as role models. The counselor also has the opportunity to observe the different generational and familial components of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

Workshop

Introduction

The participants in the study are recruited from U.S.- Mexico border schools. The researcher distributes informational fliers to students and parents after school hours. The flier informs parents about an important voluntary study being conducted to strengthen student services in schools. The participants are asked to contact the researcher by telephone or email about participation. The workshop is conducted at a local library at the U.S.- Mexico border. The flier contains a visual map with directions to the library in Spanish and English. The library has been selected because of its location and easy access.

Upon arrival at the library, students and parents are given a brief orientation to the study in both Spanish and English. The participants are informed that they will be working in small groups, and that this will be done by first dividing the groups to students and parents and then later by combining both parents and students into a single group.

The workshop is presented in two sessions. In the first session, students will work closely with the counselor on specific activities related to critical thinking and analysis. The topics and themes are diverse and have been selected to correlate with border culture and lifestyle experience. The second session will incorporate parents into the activities. This aspect of the session is important, for it allows parents and children to share knowledge, experiences and insights. Group counseling allows the counselor the opportunity to have a unique systemic family, a structured family system that allows members to listen to other's subsystems and share similar experiences and insights.

The sessions have a time limit, objective and theme. Each session and theme is different. The room must be arranged in an appropriate fashion in order to allow the counselor to see the students. Chairs must be arranged in a circle, leaving the counselor's chair in the middle so that they are directly facing each student.

Each session will begin with a quick warm up. The goal of the warm up is to get students comfortable sharing their experiences and developing their confidence towards one another in a group setting guided by the counselor.

At the end of the workshop, students and parents are given two sheets of paper to facilitate reflection and data collection.. The first sheet is a brief survey about the counseling session and the second sheet is a take-home survey that is to be filled out and turned in two weeks after the session. This is done for the purpose of allowing families and students to contemplate and allow life to continue as a process in which changes, continuity or modification is assessed.

1. Personal and professional growth

Introduction: The counselor will introduce him or herself to the group and provide a brief outline of the workshop. The counselor will discuss the expectations of the students in the systemic family and the importance of collaboration through sharing experiences to group members.

Activity: Warm up

Time: 30 minutes

Warm Up: Reflecting

This activity will ask students to think about their current lifestyle and their decision-making processes over the past few years. The counselor will ask the students to restrict their examples to critical learning experiences which became moments of personal insight, growth and direction.

The students will be given several minutes to decide which experiences are the most powerful to share with the class.

Activity: *Letter to your unborn child*

Time: 100 minutes

The counselor will instruct the students to write a letter to their unborn child. The purpose of the assignment will be to make the students think about their lifestyle and future as it pertains to their unborn child. Because the conditions at the borderlands are unique and every person's experience of it is different, each student will present a different perspective and reflect the personal insights of their life. The counselor must be clear about instructing students to focus on how specific incidents in their life have given them insight towards achieving personal goals for their unborn child.

Activity:

Time: 45 minutes

Important points to present:

1. Remember that change is not always easy or instant. Change is accomplished with time, through a daily struggle, effort and perseverance to achieve weekly and daily goals.
2. Seeking the advise of parents in the process of change is a growing experience. Parents can allow you an important foundation towards recovery, maintaining confidence or rhythm in your pursuit of change.
3. Prioritize. Obtain a notebook for notes and calendar submissions. This will allow you to keep track of your meetings, thoughts, people, personal information, important dates, goals, commitments and deadlines.

4. Rearrange your room and begin to address your needs slowly in the process of change.

Make sure your room does not allow you loose track of your goals. Take unwanted items or rearrange the room to your personal preference placing items within an easily reachable distance. This will allow you to easily find your gear or items. Having an orderly and well-organized room will give you flexibility and subtly encourage your mind to learn how to organize not only your bedroom, but hopefully your backpack, agenda, home and commitments.

5. Place items such as stickers or posters of positive role models in your wallet, notebook, bedroom and computer. Role models are positive indicators and provide positive reinforcement. These can be slogans or images, or anything else that allows you to be constantly exposed to people or slogans that are meaningful and inspirational for you.

2. Understanding family and personal responsibility

Introduction: The counselor will provide positive reinforcement to all the students in the group. Prior to the beginning of the next activity, and before the parents enter the room for the session, the counselor will share his or her thoughts on how the sessions have provided an opportunity of growth for all participants. The counselor must strive to bridge differences and emphasize similarities. They must begin to construct the member's experiences as equal encounters of life span development and personal and mental growth. The counselor must focus on discussing border culture and lifestyle as positive experiences in growth and development.

Activity: Warm up

Time: 30 minutes

Warm Up: Conjoining

Parents will now join their children in the room. Parents will sit next to the students at their own separate student desks. This activity will ask parents and students to write down positive role models in their lives. They will be asked to specify a physical place where they feel safe at the Borderlands. The counselor will focus on giving a few examples of how these questions might be answered in order to allow parents and students to develop their own rhythm and begin to write their own responses.

Activity: Sharing reflections

Time: 120 minutes

The counselor will ask the participants to share their responses to the group. Once everyone has finished, the counselor will ask parents to reflect on the discussion, to examine themes and ideas. The counselor must be specific and not allow discussion to lose momentum or direction. Themes and topics of discussion should be written on the board for all group members to see. Counselors should take adequate notes on the roles of communication and examine nonverbal communication during the conversation between parents, children and group members. Each cue is important and must be documented carefully for later evaluation and analysis. After this discussion, group members will be asked to keep quiet while children read their letters to their unborn child without any interruptions. The counselor must keep momentum and allow students to read one after the other until the last student finishes reading their letter. Afterward, parents and group members will be allowed to share their thoughts about the letters. The counselor must focus on creating a bridge between border culture and lifestyle. Counselors should ask what the border symbolizes and how culture is unique according to their own life experiences in their pursuit of the American dream.

Activity: Debriefing

Time: 90 minutes

Important points to present:

1. Life experiences can teach everyone a lesson. This allows people to observe and learn new information, and to see the world through a different perspective.
2. Developing family activities can allow for family bonding and sharing. Members can have space for dialogue, creativity and solidarity.
3. Group dynamics demonstrate conformity, participation and group membership. Be flexible and allow people in your family the space to dialogue and speak.
4. Communication is important. Allow people in your life the space and time to communicate.
5. Lifestyles can change as generations change. Acceptance of new ideas or change must be seen as an attempt for dialogue of discussion in terms of unity rather than separation.
Take ideas or suggestions as examples.

Written assignment: Write down your thoughts about the session by giving examples of the activities. Make sure you mention how living at is unique.

Name _____

Warm up #1

Student Activity Handout

Reflection: Border culture and lifestyle

How has culture and lifestyle at the US Mexico border affected you?

Describe how other incidents in your life support your response

Name _____

Activity # 1
Student Activity Handout
Letter to your unborn child

Write a brief letter to your unborn child

Name _____

Warm up# 2

Student Activity Handout

Positive roles models at the Borderlands

Describe how positive role models have helped you in school, community and life.

Give a brief example of how a teacher, mentor, parent, friend or family member inspired you.

Name _____

Activity # 2
Student and Parent Activity Handout
Sharing reflections

What are some things that you learned from hearing others in the workshop?

Provide a personal example of how you might help others who are experiencing the same encounters?

Name _____

Counseling at the Borderlands

Example Questions

The following questions are for counselor use after activity #2. The counselor can choose and explore any of the questions. The counselor has the autonomy to choose his or her questions.

1. Were the topics and themes covered in the session important to you?
2. Did the discussions help you with any of your goals?
3. How did the stories of other group members affect your understanding of border culture?
4. What story had the biggest impact on you and why?
5. Do you consider parents an important element in the session? Are there stories useful?
6. Have you ever worked in a group before? What did you learn from working in this group?
7. How is border culture and lifestyle different through your experience?
8. Who are some people you identify with at school and neighborhood?
9. How many times have you been exposed to drugs, prostitution or crime?
10. What makes your experience different?
11. What are your favorite subjects in school which you want to explore more as a career?
12. What type of job are you considering taking once you are finally done with school or college?
13. How has language effected your position in society and school? Positive or negative?
14. With whom did you feel more connected with in the counseling sessions?

15. When you are walking to and from school, what images impact you the most at the borderlands?
16. What do you expect to get from school counseling?
17. What do you expect and want your school counselor to know about you and your culture?
18. What are some extra curricular activities you are interested in?
19. How often do you visit a counselor?
20. Have you ever been a role model to anyone? Would like to be?
21. What are things you wish teachers would appreciate from you?
22. What are some things you wish you could get help with?
23. What is your expression of border culture and lifestyle?
24. How has the border patrol or police impacted your life?
25. How do you want your family to remember you?

Counseling at the Borderlands

Parent counseling roundtable

Warm up exercise

Provide each parent with a pen and several sheets of paper for notes. For this quick warm up exercise, have the parents think about the following questions. The idea is to have parents contemplate their childhood and educational career. During the assignment, place special attention on nonverbal cues.

Counselor:

The following questions are about your childhood and adolescent years. Please reflect and think about your early educational experiences in school and home.

Allow parents to articulate by giving unlimited time to respond. Ask the parents the following questions. Take notes and allow parents the opportunity to dialogue.

1. How much time did you spend doing homework when you were in school?
2. Who helped you with homework at home?
3. How much time did your parents or any other family members spend helping you with homework or school?

After the warm up, begin the roundtable by asking the following questions. The task is to point out similarities amongst group members.

- A. What are some ways you as a parent can become more active in your child's school?
- B. What role do language, work, environment, and culture play in your daily life?

Name _____

Counseling at the Borderlands

Parent Handout

1. Would you like to schedule an appointment to find out more about your son or daughter's educational career and school performance?

a. Yes

b. No

2. Did you feel you need extra social services to help you with your child in school?

a. Yes

b. No

3. Would you like to participate in more counseling workshops?

a. Yes

b. No

4. What part of the workshop did you like the best?

5. What are some topics you wish the workshop could have covered?

Counseling at the Borderlands
Counselor
Data analysis information sheet

1. Examine each survey for similarities.
2. First circle and write recurrent adjectives according to participants, students or parents.
3. Narrow down similarities to parent and students.
4. Write down people, agencies or things that are recurrent.
5. Develop dyads or groups according through responses 2 to 4.

Search for positive and negative adjectives in each survey. This will allow the counselor to examine counselee communication based on personal choice, creativity, writing and expression. Example: arrogant, focused, willful, loyal, affirmative, creative, prompt, amazing,

Positive adjectives:

Negative adjectives:

Write the name of the participants according to their similarities and data.

Dyad #1

Dyad #2

1. Name: _____

Name : _____

2. Name: _____

Name: _____

3. Name _____

Name: _____

Group #1

Group#2

1. Name: _____

Name: _____

2. Name: _____

Name: _____

3. Name: _____

Name: _____

4. Name: _____

Name: _____

Counselor notes:

Counseling at the Borderlands

Counselor

Questions for Current and Future Counselees

Three easy transitioning assessment questions:

Look for special dates, people, occurrences, and places.

1. The US Mexico border has changed over the years, what are some changes you've noticed?
2. How has the borderlands environment impacted your pursuit of the American dream?
3. How many people have you lost to gang violence, death or relocation?
4. How does exposure to globalization and commercialization of border climate affect you?
5. What are some gender differences that you see at the borderlands?

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The workshop is important for many reasons. The most important reason is that the largest growing population in the United States, the Hispanic population, also has an increasing school dropout rate. This population is therefore in need of assistance to lower its dropout rates. A second major reason is the U.S.- Mexico border region is unique, and therefore requires special attention and competency from counselors. Thirdly, the impact of high dropout rates and population is a concern for society as a whole, and anything that can be done to lower the dropout rates of any segment of the population helps the entire society.

Summary

Life at the U.S.- Mexico border can become a more of a positive experience if counselors can reach out to students. The environment is not as safe, growing and changing as it could be. Students must graduate from school and continue on to college. Having the majority of the community remain uneducated or unskilled only creates additional problems.

Conclusion

This workshop was focused upon counselor development and competency when working with students at the borderlands. In order to improve the lives of students at the U.S.- Mexico border, this workshop allows counselors to become more familiar with U.S.- Mexico border culture by means of a series of structured educational activities designed to allow the counselor to use his or her counseling repertoire while acquiring new data about border culture and lifestyle. The intent is to increase the competency of counselors serving the Southwest.

It is the goal of this project to serve students living and transitioning at the borderlands. The objectives are to increase graduation rates for Hispanics, provide better counseling for students, and to assist border students in achieving their goals and succeeding in their endeavors.

The workshop can allow counselors to grow and become practitioners in multicultural counseling. The experiences students encounter at the borderlands can allow counselors to become aware of the changing American and counseling field.

The training counselor must realize that each moment is critical and is a potential learning experience. Students are sharing a border, a school and classroom. Many students only attend school in the United States while they reside in Mexico. Proper comprehension and attention is critical for counselor relationship.

Recommendations

One of the most powerful recommendations when working with students at the U.S.-Mexico border is the nonverbal cues students express. It is important to get to know your clients. One way of doing so is to examine what the students are not saying verbally. Abuse or signs of fatigue or stress can be indicators that something is wrong. Counselors should also be alert for any scars, cuts or odor from the clients. Signs of physical and emotional abuse can be physically seen. Therefore counselors must take immediate action. Students having cuts on their wrists or hands might be indicators of potential thoughts of suicide or stress. Counselors should recognize these signs and have a list of local social service agencies handy for referencing or acquiring additional help.

Language can also be a problem if the counselor does not recognize local slang and culture. Much of the vocabulary is mixed from both sides of the border therefore the counselor must pay close attention to unfamiliar words or slogans. Counselors should research local slang

and use this workshop as an opportunity to acquire knowledge of local language usage. Another recommendation is having a translator present if parents do not speak English. If the counselor does not speak or understand Spanish, it is wise to obtain professional assistance for communication purposes. Students at the borderlands are mostly bilingual, but many of their parents do not speak English.

It must also be borne in mind that Latinos tend to be shy in counseling sessions. Proper orientation, support and questions can allow for students to gain confidence with the counselor. Most Latino parents work all day. Therefore, a good recommendation would be to inform parents about free social services in the region. Latino parents can gain confidence and acquire additional support with references for their children.

This model can be tested and implemented at any U.S.- Mexico border school. Students and parents will be able to collaborate to strengthen counselor skills at the borderlands. Counselors will be able to learn through this workshop what the major challenges are that students face at the U.S.- Mexico border and how the border environment impacts learning, behavior and the family. The counselor will be able to assess which techniques, methods and strategies have worked best with the population and which methods do not facilitate the counselor's orientation with students and parents at the US Mexico border.

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