# BECOMING MULTICULTURAL: USING THE POWER OF THE TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL OF CHANGE

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to argue for the adoption of the transtheoretical model of change as a means to inform current practice for culturally competent educators and counselors. Much of the literature dealing with effecting the reduction of racism or the promotion of multiculturalism focuses on providing multicultural curriculum to one or more of a variety of constituent groups. Although a multicultural curriculum is an important element of both reducing racism and promoting multiculturalism, it is only effective to the extent that it takes into consideration the stage of change of the recipient. It is the failure to consider the stage model of change that has hindered progress in attaining the pluralistic society that counselors believe to be essential to individual mental health and to a just society. This paper reviews one article that proposes what makes a competent multicultural school and another that describes a method of teaching multiculturalism to teachers. An argument is then made that both these models imply a continuum of change model for modifying multicultural behavior and that a better model is a stage model of behavior change.. Two examples of studies using the stage model of behavior change are reviewed, one study involves changing domestic violence behavior of perpetrators and the other involves changing bullying behaviors at the middle and high school levels. Both these studies use an "expert" computer learning platform for implementing their interventions.*

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between multicultural identity development and the transtheoretical model of change as a means to inform current practice for culturally competent educators and counselors. The current standard for promoting multiculturalism has been developed with the assumption that behavioral change occurs along a continuum which begins at one point and progresses towards completion. From within that paradigm there has been a focus on three tiers: awareness, knowledge and skills. These are seen as necessary for counselors and educators in particular but, for all people generally (including students), in order to be effective in our increasingly multicultural world. Langelier (1996) and the Multicultural Education Consensus Panel (Banks et al., 2001) make the case that educators must be multicultural in order to meet the needs of contemporary students and students of the future as demographics continue to trend toward more diversity. Both authors discuss the importance of culturally competent professionals to the successful academic and social development of students. The Multicultural Education Consensus Panel report deals with principles for teachers and four other areas as well. A summary of the whole report is included because of its general interest even though only the teacher domain is strictly relevant to Langelier's work. In contrast to the work in cultural competence, public health and mental health researchers have been working to a large extent from a stage model of change.

## A Design for Multicultural Schools

Banks, et al. (2001) studied both the research and practice of multicultural education and organized their findings into twelve essential principles within five domains.

### Domain 1: Teacher Learning. Principle 1.

Teachers need to know how components of diversity interact to influence children in schools. They identify five areas for teachers to work on: 1) personal attitudes towards diversity; 2) knowledge about different cultures within their schools and the nation; 3) appreciation for the different world views and perspectives of different cultural groups; 4) the effects of institutions on multiculturalism, particularly the effects of their own school as an institution; and 5) skills required to develop a pedagogy of equity providing all students "with an equal opportunity to attain academic and social success" (Banks et al., 2001, p. 2). Later we will see how Principle 1 relates to Langelier's (1996) work.

### Domain 2: Student Learning. Principles 2-5.

Within the Domain 2: *Student Learning*, there are principles 2 through 5. Principle 2 ensures that all students have the same academic opportunities and high standards. Principle 3: A curriculum teaches that knowledge is a social construct, which is influenced by the cultural experiences of the researchers and academics. They emphasize the disclosing that the dominant culture generally decides what should be included and excluded from the curriculum. Principle 4: Students should all have opportunities to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities because they help students develop academic and social skills and attitudes by improving contacts with students from other categories.

### Domain 3: Intergroup Relations

Within the Domain 3: *Intergroup Relations*, principle 5 states that schools must provide activities that create mixed learning groups. Principle 6: Teach students about the effects of stereotyping. Principle 7: Students should be made aware of basic common values held by most cultures. Principle 8: Give students the social skills that will allow them to interact effectively within their own cultures and across cultures. Principle 9: Schools provide safe social opportunities for different groups to interact with one another.

### Domain 4: School Governance, Organization, and Equity

The fourth domain: *School Governance, Organization, and Equity* is where we find the 10th and 11th principles. The 10th principle: Broaden the decision making process to include as many stake holders as possible, who can have a voice. The 11th principle states that all schools must be equitably and respectively funded.

### Domain 5: Assessment

The final 12th principle is within the *Assessment Domain*. The principle states that cultural variables must be factored into all student evaluations.

It is clear that these principles are quite inclusive and, for the most part, the authors have delegated tasks to specified parties. A weakness of the report is that it does not offer strategies for implementing any of these principles. The authors of the three works reviewed below have used the structured learning strategies to change behaviors. The researchers chose specific structured experiences depending on

whether they believe that change is a continuous process or that change occurs in stages. Those models become the focus of this paper.

## A Multicultural Identity Training program for Teachers

Langelier (1996) studied the implementation of a program for teachers that emphasizes the three critical concepts for developing a multicultural identity; multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. This roughly parallels Banks et al.'s principle 1 within the *Teacher Learning* domain. Langelier's premise is that in order to work effectively in a multicultural society, counselors and educators must become multicultural in context. In order to do this, they must be engaged in a transformational process that leads to the development of a multicultural identity. This demands an identity change.

Langelier describes a multicultural identity, which could be characterized by a pluralistic worldview. A pluralistic worldview is one that accepts and appreciates that there are multiple, valid ways of accounting for reality without imposing judgments on them. She posits that development of a multicultural identity can be viewed as moving a long a continuum from a *monocultural worldview to a multicultural worldview*.

Langelier's hypothesis is that a three-part cultural diversity training program would enable participants to become multicultural in context through structured learning experiences. (Langelier 1996, p. 3). Ultimately, 40 subjects from a pool of 68 volunteers were randomly selected to participate in either a control group that received no training or the group that received the full training. A pre-test post protocol was used to determine efficacy of the training. The results indicate that through training educators can increase their multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills but not "their affective attitudes towards personal contact with racial diversity" (Langelier 1996, p. 15), cultural flexibility nor cognitive flexibility. Does this support the idea that individual identity change from less to more multicultural can be taught by increasing multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills? It does not seem to be the case. Even though the subjects improved on the three targeted cognitive domains they did not change the affective attitudes that this writer suggests are predictive of positive changes in multicultural behavior. Why not?

## The Transtheoretical Model of Change

James Prochaska (Prochaska, J. O., Evers, K. E., Prochaska, J. M., Van Marter, D., & Johnson, J. l. 2007), (Velicer, W.F. and Prochaska, J.O., 2008) has an answer. Prochaska's work over the past two decades has explored how people can change behaviors that have negative health outcomes to behaviors that have neutral or positive health outcomes. Before his ground breaking work, most research about problem behaviors studied groups with the behavior and groups without the behavior (Velicer and Prochaska, 2008). He discovered that change is not a continuum but it is a process of moving, over time, through stages of relative unwillingness and non-readiness to change to willingness and readiness to change. When researches take stage of change into account they can develop interventions that are appropriate for people no matter what their levels of willingness and readiness are. This is very unlike the studies where change is considered a continuum that only focused on people who were at least willing and probably near ready to change. These latter studies generally exclude most people who are at risk for the factors they are studying. Velicer and Prochaska (2008) site the U.S. Clinical Guidelines for Treatment of Tobacco that identify multiple interventions for smokers who intend to quit in the next month and none for smokers who do not intend to quit in the next month. The second group represents 80-90% of all smokers. If our intent is to be helpful, it would make sense to focus on the people who need the most help. In his

Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM), Prochaska delineates five stages of change that people need to achieve in order to effect a change of behavior that is stable over time (see Table 1).

**Table 1**. The Five Stages of Change (Boegel, 2008. Adapted from various works by Prochaska et al.)

| Stage | Description |
|---|---|
| 1) Pre-contemplation | No intention to change, deny problem and neg. consequences |
| 2) Contemplation | Intention to change in the next six months or so, ambivalent |
| 3) Preparation | Intention to change soon. A plan is in development |
| 4) Action | Behavior change/life-style modification is occurring |
| 5) Maintenance | Relapse prevention |

In addition to the stages of change the TTM model includes general processes of change which are outlined below in Table 2.

**Table 2**. Consolidation of Processes and Interventions, The Transtheoretical Model (Boegel, 2008, Adapted from Prochaska, et. al., 1994, table 2).

| Process | Goals | Techniques |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Consciousness Raising | Increase awareness about self and problem and strategies for change | Confrontation, interpretation, education |
| 2) Social Liberation | Increasing social alternatives for non-problematic behavior | Advocating, empowering, public policy interventions |
| 3) Dramatic Relief | Experience emotional arousal about the problem | Role playing, testimonies |
| 4) Environmental reevaluation | Consider impact of behaviors on others and social environment | Empathy training, family interventions |
| 5) Self reevaluation | Cognitive and affective assessment of self image related to the problem | Value clarification, role modeling, imagery |
| 6) Stimulus control | Replaces old triggers with new cues | Problem solving, planning, rehearsing |
| 7) Helping Relationships | Support for the new behavior | Rapport building, therapeutic alliance, buddy systems |
| 8) Counter conditioning | Substitute alternatives for target behavior | Relaxation, desensitization, positive self-talk, learn new behaviors |
| 9) Reinforcement management | Create system of rewards | Contingency contracts, overt and covert reinforcement |
| 10) Self liberation | Commitment to act, self efficacy | Decision making skills, resolutions, time tables, multiple options (2 or 3) |

The first five of these processes are described as experiential and the last five are behavioral. When we juxtapose these processes with the five stages of change we see that experiential processes take place during the first 3 stages and the behavioral processes occur during the last three with an overlap during the third stage, preparation (see Table 3).

**Table 3**. The relationship between Stages and Processes of Change (Boegel, 2008)

| Stage | Processes |
|---|---|
| Pre-contemplation | Experiential 1-5 |
| Contemplation | Experiential 1-5 |
| Preparation | Experiential/Behavioral 1-10 |
| Action | Behavioral 6-10 |
| Maintenance | Behavioral 6-10 |

Using this model as a tool it is possible to design programs to promote change for any specific behavioral domain for anyone, regardless of their willingness or readiness. Recently, Prochaska has written about two such programs he has researched that are relevant to developing multicultural identity (Prochaska, J.O. et al, 2007 and Levesque, D. A., Driskell, M., & Prochaska, J. M., 2008).

In the first case he and his colleagues developed a computer based bullying prevention program to be used with middle and high school students from a homogenous selection of school districts around the country. Prochaska's team worked with colleagues with expertise in bullying to develop measures that assessed "stage of change, pros and cons of changing and processes of change and self-efficacy" (Prochaska, J.O et al., 2007, p.174). They then developed feedback interventions targeted to those variables. The results were used by software staff who incorporated this into an *expert system* that provides real time feedback to users and extracts data for research data bases that would then be used later to analyze results. When the results were analyzed it was found that the treatment groups at both the high school level and the middle school level were about 4 times as likely to move into action or maintenance behaviors as their controls. It is interesting that this study involved three roles of bullying related behaviors; bully, victim and passive bystander. The results mentioned above were consistent across all three roles.

The second study (a pilot study) involved using a similar type *expert system* to create an intervention for domestic violence offenders (Levesque, D.A. et al., 2008). The authors analyzed data from studies of various offender interventions and concluded that court ordered interventions have little effect beyond the effect of being arrested.

This study also found that participants in both the treatment and control groups were at various stages of change at the beginning of the trial. The results of this pilot study indicate that this expert system intervention, based on the TTM model of change, is likely to facilitate engagement in the change process and that when used in conjunction with traditional treatment it can enhance outcomes. Enhanced outcomes in this case, meaning that abusive behaviors decline and partner safety increases.

**Discussion**

Multicultural counselors and teachers are essential so that our schools and our society can adapt to the changing demographics in twenty-first century America. The work of groups like Banks and his colleagues, that seek to define the essential principles of multicultural schools and of individual researchers like Langelier, who seek the best ways to implement those principles are critical to the task. However, if change is what we are talking about and, of course it is, we cannot afford to ignore the data about how people change their behavior. Behavioral change is not continuous. Change happens in stages separated by periods of stasis. We know what these stages are and we know what processes must be

activated to create movement from one stage to another and, we know what processes are necessary to maintain changes.

Researchers, who, like Langelier, are developing programs to effect movement of counselors and educators from a monocultural worldview to multicultural worldview, would be well served by applying the TTM to the problem. For example, Langelier found out through her research that after completing her program educators learned what she intended they would but, they did not change their attitudes towards multicultural behaviors. This suggests that some of the educators were not ready to make that change because they were either pre-contemplative or contemplative. People in those stages need interventions that are both experiential and didactic, like those generally described in Table 2. After they have moved to preparation, behavioral interventions should be used to help them identify and practice new multicultural behaviors and develop strategies to reduce old monocultural behaviors. Prochaska learned a long time ago that it is easy to teach people the difference between a smoker and a nonsmoker: the former smokes and the latter does not. It is much harder to help a smoker become a nonsmoker. It is not good enough to know what a multicultural person is. Only becoming a multicultural person is good enough and that means learning to do what multicultural people do and, doing it.

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