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Shuntay Z. Tarver
Old Dominion University, smccoy@odu.edu

Melvin Herring
Old Dominion University

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Training Culturally Competent Practitioners: Student Reflections on the Process

Shuntay Z. Tarver, *Old Dominion University* and Melvin Herring, *Johnson C. Smith University*

Abstract

A major aspect of cultural competence is developing critical self-reflection skills. Critical self-reflection is a culturally competent practice that positions practitioners with the ability to recognize and respond to the influence of power, privilege, and oppression within client interactions. Contributing to the existing literature on cultural competence, this article posits that teaching critical self-reflection is an essential aspect of training culturally competent practitioners. To investigate this connection, researchers qualitatively examined the retrospective accounts of 15 human services students who critically reflected on an assignment: exploring how they were personally impacted by issues of power, privilege, and oppression. Findings unveiled students' perceptions of developing culturally competent critical self-reflection to be characterized by working through resistance, exploring personal biases, and developing empathy. Implications suggest that instructors seeking to train culturally competent human services practitioners should strategically integrate opportunities for students to work through resistance, explore their existing biases, and develop empathy.

Keywords: cultural competence, self-reflection, human services education

Introduction

According to the ethical standards of the National Organization for Human Services (NOHS), practitioners have a professional responsibility to clients, to self, to students, and to the public to engage in culturally competent practices (2015). For example, NOHS standard 7 states that, "human services professionals ensure that their values or biases are not imposed upon their clients" (p. 2). Similarly, standard 34 requires that "human services professionals are aware of their own cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values and biases [and] recognize the potential impact of their backgrounds on their relationships with others...to provide culturally competent service to all of their clients" (p. 4). These guidelines emphasize that adherence to the NOHS professional standards is only possible through the engagement in culturally competent practice. Although multiple empirical definitions exist that highlight the importance of cultural competence (e.g., Azzopardi & McNeill 2016; Neukrug, 2017), limited attention has been attributed to understanding how vital developing critical self-reflection is to the process of training culturally competent practitioners (Brinson & Denby, 2008; Neukrug & Milliken, 2008). In addition, less is known about how students experience the process of developing critical self-reflection skills. To address this gap, the authors utilized an innovative approach of investigating students' retrospective accounts of an assignment utilizing critical self-reflection to illustrate the importance of teaching critical self-reflection as a vital component of training culturally competent practitioners. The primary purposes of this study were to assert that critical self-reflection is an essential aspect of cultural competence and to illustrate how educators should create classroom environments that enhance students' ability to engage in critical self-reflection in order to effectively engage in culturally competent practice.

Understanding Cultural Competence

The concept of cultural competence has been well defined within existing literature by disciplines such as social work and human services, and multiple definitions of this concept have

been presented empirically (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Neukrug, 2017). Within the field of human services, cultural competence is conceptualized as “gaining the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to be able to work with a wide variety of ethnically and culturally diverse clients” (Neukrug, 2017, p. 340). NOHS embeds this definition into standards that require such acquisition to be translated into practice through the adherence of professional standards. This professional expectation underscores the urgency of human services professionals (HSPs) to develop culturally competent practices (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016). Such development requires a deeper understanding of various aspects of cultural competence skills. The following deconstructs essential aspects of cultural competence that HSPs need to engage in effective practice.

Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence is rooted in an understanding and consideration of the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression (Collins, 2014; Johnson, 2006; Neukrug, 2017; Ore, 2014; Schmidt, 2006). These elements impact the interactions between client and practitioners across multiple diversity factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, ability status, and sexual orientation. As a result, practitioners need to be aware of the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required for engaging in culturally competent practice (Neukrug, 2017). Although each encounter will vary, every successful interaction is predicated upon practitioners’ ability to recognize and respond to the inevitable influence of various elements of diversity. A thorough understanding of how these dynamics interact to impact client-practitioner relationships is critical to engaging in culturally competent practice. In addition, cultural competence also requires continual acknowledgement and response to the influences of power, privilege, and oppression within professional interactions.

Power, Privilege, and Oppression

It is imperative that HSPs are capable of recognizing and critically examining the presence and influence of power in perpetuating privilege and oppression even when it is not explicitly obvious (Kishimoto, 2018). Practitioners need to have the ability to influence, control, and access resources within their respective roles, as well situate themselves as power brokers within society, regardless of their awareness that such power dynamics are embedded within their professional roles (Johnson, 2006; Neukrug, 2017). Power is then executed through the granting or denial of opportunities that enhance or restrict clients’ quality of life (Boyd & Noblit, 2015). When these decisions are based on group membership, privilege is corroborated or restricted from individuals who belong to perceived groups, regardless of intentionality. When people are denied privilege, they experience oppression (Ore, 2014). Thus, HSPs have the power to exacerbate or minimize oppression that clients experience as a result of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, and/or ability status irrespective of their acknowledgement of the existence of such power. If HSPs are unaware of the areas in which they and their clients experience privilege and oppression, their ability to provide culturally competent services will be greatly impaired. It is essential that emerging practitioners be taught to recognize and understand these dynamics in ways that will result in culturally competent practice (Neukrug & Milliken, 2008). Understanding the presence and influence of power, privilege, and oppression within professional interactions is inextricably connected to the ability to engage in critical self-reflection of individual assumptions and socialization (Azzopardi & Mcneill, 2016; Heron, 2005; Larrivee, 2000). Consequently, the development of critical self-reflection is an essential aspect of engaging in culturally competent practice.

Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection is “a deep examination of personal values and beliefs, embodied in the assumptions [practitioners] make and the expectations they have for their [clients]” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294). It is a critical component of cultural competence that requires a keen awareness of the influence of power, privilege and oppression on personal perspectives, and how these factors impact the dynamics of a helping relationship. Through critical self-reflection, students become aware of their personally held beliefs and biases that often go unnoticed (Bender, Negi, & Fowler, 2010; Boyd & Noblit, 2015). This results in questioning the beliefs transmitted through socialization and weighing them against reality and the experiences of others (Larrivee, 2000; Heron, 2005). Through examination of their personal beliefs, students are better able to identify and critique their personal biases (Foronda et al., 2016; Rosen, McCall, & Goodkind, 2017). This awareness enhances their professional ability to become culturally competent practitioners by allowing them to “act with integrity, openness, and commitment, rather than defensiveness or fear” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 295). Thus, critical self-reflection is a vital component of cultural competence that educators should be strategically invested in developing.

Collectively, culturally competent practices include the ability to recognize and respond within diverse interactions. Such diverse interactions include an awareness of differential positionality between clients and practitioners regarding race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability status, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, culturally competent practice also requires practitioners to be flexible and responsive to the unique needs of clients while assessing the presence and influence of dynamics such as power, privilege, and oppression that inevitably influence client-practitioner interactions. To investigate the development of such skills, investigators examined students’ perceptions of their development of critical self-reflection. Such an investigation unveils the significance of developing critical self-reflection skills as an aspect of training culturally competent practitioners.

Method

This study utilized secondary data analyses of de-identified qualitative data to ascertain students’ perceptions of their experiences developing critical self-reflection skills. Students were originally invited to write a short reflection of their experience with a theoretically based assignment designed to enhance their cultural competence as emerging HSPs. The assignment incorporated critical self-reflection into their process of becoming culturally competent HSPs. Their reflections specifically explored their experiences with and reactions to (a) what they did for their assignment; (b) what their initial reactions to the assignment were; (c) what they learned from the assignment; and (d) what they learned from hearing their peers present the assignment. The reflections of the actual assignment are beyond the scope of this paper and the current investigation was conducted two years after the students’ information was submitted and de-identified for data analyses. For the purposes of this study, permission to use the de-identified information for secondary research purposes was obtained from the first author’s university Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon IRB approval, the de-identified data was theoretically examined and thematically analyzed from a cultural competence lens to understand students’ perception of developing critical self-reflection skills as emerging HSPs.

Sample

The de-identified information prevented expanded descriptions of characteristics from the study’s sample. As a result, only self-disclosed and general institutional descriptions were

available. Study participants attended a southeastern, minority-serving public university. All participants were enrolled in an upper level undergraduate course called *Diversity in Human Services*. The course was composed of twenty-five students from various majors, with most identifying as human services majors. All participants were offered an opportunity to write a reflection paper on their experience engaging in an integrative writing assignment designed to enhance their cultural competence as emerging human services practitioners. Participants' reflections captured their experiences with the required assignment, in which they were challenged to consider how they were personally socialized and influenced by issues of power, privilege, and oppression. These reflections also described how they felt about, and what they learned from the required assignment. Of the 25 students in the course, 15 decided to write reflection papers on their experience. Only the voluntary submissions of the reflection papers were theoretically and thematically analyzed for this study. Within the context of their papers, 10 of the 15 participants identified as Black and 5 identified as White. All participants were undergraduate and classified as either a traditional student (i.e. emerging adult matriculating through college post high school) or non-traditional student (i.e. returning students with previous careers and/or military experience). These racial and generational status demographics reflected the larger university demographics.

Thematic Analysis

This study utilized a theoretical thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to engage in secondary data analyses. This methodology is "driven by the researcher's theoretical interest...[and] tends to provide a less rich description of the data overall, and a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (p. 84). Cultural competence, as defined above, was employed as a theoretical framework to examine student reflections in an effort to understand their perceptions on developing critical self-reflection skills. This theoretical lens guided the six steps of thematic analysis utilized for this study.

Thematic Analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a specific qualitative methodology composed of six steps. The first step requires researchers to immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading transcribed information. The initial reading of students' reflections was conducted as the first author's review of students' experience with a theoretically based assignment. Two years after the submission of the students' reflections, the first author de-identified the data, and re-engaged in the first step by re-reading the reflections from a theoretical perspective. These subsequent readings of students' reflections began to unveil a nuanced description of how students experienced the development of critical self-reflection skills. Consequently, the first author entered the second phase of thematic analysis by developing preliminary codes. Doing so required a re-read of all reflections both individually, and collectively (as an entire group). Thus, as codes emerged, all individual reflections had to be re-read to search for the emerging code. This required several iterations of reading through the reflections to ensure that all reflections were coded as codes were identified. These preliminary codes included commonalities and contradictions regarding how students described their experiences. The third stage of thematic analysis is "searching for themes" (p. 87). During this stage the authors incorporated thematic narrative analysis as outlined by Spector-Mersel (2011), by reading through the data at least six additional times for identified themes that captured the thematic narratives of participants. During this stage the authors identified three major themes in the data: resistance, exploring biases, and developing empathy.

During the fourth stage of thematic analysis researchers reviewed the identified themes to ensure that the identified themes adequately represented the data. This was done by re-reading the reflections and coding specifically for how resistance, bias, and empathy were characterized by participants within the data. The fifth stage required researchers to name and define the themes based on the ways in which participants described the themes in the data. Consequently, the identified themes were re-named as working through resistance, exploring biases, and developing empathy. The sixth and final stage is producing the report. During this stage the first author identified specific excerpts from the data to illustrate the themes. The second author verified that the identified themes made empirical sense. This also required both researchers to situate the data within the larger context in an effort to “tell the story” interpreted from within the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thus, both researchers utilized the theoretical framework to reflect how students developed critical self-reflection through the cultural competence concepts of process, power, privilege and oppression. This report is presented in the results section of this paper. However, before presenting this information it is critical that qualitative researchers address issues of trustworthiness in order to substantiate the researchers’ ability to authentically engage in thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke posit that, “the keyness of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures- but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (p. 82). The following trustworthiness section articulates the researchers’ positionality in and expertise for being able to capture the key themes within the data. It also describes the theoretical and empirical triangulation of the data that supports the themes identified in the results section.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the process(s) of addressing validity within qualitative studies (Glesne, 2006). Referring to this construct as “validation strategies,” Creswell (2013) identified eight existing methods of addressing trustworthiness (p. 250). Throughout the conceptualization and implementation of this study the authors address trustworthiness through two of Creswell’s identified methods, triangulation and clarification of researcher bias. Each of these strategies strengthen the study’s validity despite the existing limitations later described.

Triangulation of Data

The authors addressed trustworthiness by engaging in theoretical and empirical data triangulation. According to Creswell (2013), triangulation is defined as “corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 251). The authors utilized cultural competence theory to theoretically triangulate the data by creating codes that captured the process of engaging in critical self-reflection. Thus, the authors highlighted all implicit and explicit references to issues of power, privilege, and oppression. This allowed researchers to theoretically identify student perceptions of their culturally competent critical self-reflections. Empirically, researchers situated the findings within the current and emerging understandings of critical self-reflection and its connection to becoming culturally competent.

Clarifying Researchers’ Bias

According to Creswell (2013), “clarifying researchers’ bias” is another method of attending to issues of trustworthiness within qualitative research (p. 251). This strategy is characterized by researchers acknowledging their subjectivity, including previous experiences, research decisions and orientations that influence the research process. This approach qualitatively deconstructs researchers’ partiality as opposed to assuming that biases can be

bracketed in ways that will completely alleviate the empirical influence of researchers' worldviews. This is also consistent with the theoretical orientation of cultural competence through critical self-reflection that posits the necessity of acknowledging biases in an effort to work through them as opposed to adopting a post-racial ideology that assumes being politically correct could eradicate biased perceptions (Kishimoto, 2018 & Ricks, 2014). Thus, the following reflects the identification and naming of the researchers' subjectivity that influenced their empirical lens.

The research team engaging in this study were educators who have extensive experience training various practitioners (e.g. teachers, professors, law enforcement personnel, human services professionals, and social workers) to engage in the process of becoming culturally competent. They utilized an interdisciplinary model of cultural competence that coincides with the process orientation of becoming culturally competent. The first author was an African American woman from a mid-western state and the second author was an African American man from a southeastern state. Both authors have master's degrees in Social Work and doctoral degrees in Human Development and Family Studies. The first author was a faculty member in a Human Services Program within a south eastern public university. She directly facilitated the diversity course taken by study participants and maintained the reflection papers after the completion of the course. For the purpose of this study, she de-identified the reflection papers two years after the course ended in response to the emergence of social issues within the larger societal context. The first author perceived that current societal issues, including the racially charged 2016 presidential elections, numerous police shootings of unarmed Black men, and heightened campus and community incidents, underscored the need for critical self-reflection. The second author was a program director within a Social Work Program in a southeastern private university. He had no direct contact with the sample and only engaged the de-identified data through secondary data analysis. He was essential in triangulating the theoretical analyses, assessing thematic findings, and validating pedagogical implications. Collectively, each author was instrumental in ensuring the theoretical and empirical validity of the overall study.

Results

Results indicated that participants' development of cultural competence included their engagement in critical self-reflection skills that were characterized by three unique themes: working through resistance, exploring their biases, and developing empathy. Findings revealed that students most readily described their process of working through resistance as a salient influence on their critical self-reflection. Participants highlighted their awareness of power dynamics as a part of their development of critical self-reflection very few times. They most readily addressed understanding issues of privilege and oppression as they discussed their development of empathy. Collectively, the following results reflect that students perceived their development of critical self-reflection to be characterized by working through resistance, safely exploring biases, and developing greater empathy.

Working through Resistance

Consistent with existing research, students described initial feelings of resistance to the course content related to issues of power, privilege, and oppression (Cooper & Gause, 2008; Kishimoto, 2018). Such resistance was defined by various emotions that presented barriers to engaging in critical self-reflection and subsequent personal assessments that allowed them to work through resistance. Participants identified various emotions such as fear, anger, and discomfort as barriers to engaging in critical self-reflection. For example, one participant said, at

first, I was “highly annoyed” with the assignment. Another student said, “it was kind of emotional for me to pick apart those experiences and visit the past again.” Another student explained that the content made her feel exasperated. While another stated, “I struggled and even dreaded [engaging in the course] because I thought it would be too hard.”

Despite existing resistance, students asserted their ability to work through their resistance by engaging in personal assessments. For instance, one student described their assessment by saying, “I still am struggling with identity issues. I am still kind of uncomfortable talking about racial identity because of my own experiences with privilege and marginalization within my own race.” Similarly, other students described privilege and or marginalization when explaining the personal assessments, they engaged in as strategies to work through their resistance to the course content. These personal assessments were defined as a need to engage in deeper evaluation of themselves, or a re-evaluation of others. One student described their experience with privilege as follows:

I never really thought about my capabilities because I have never been physically disabled or known anyone to be disabled so I had nothing to compare it to. I have never experienced any situation where diversity and differences in diversity has slapped me in the face. Basically, what I am trying to say is that I have never really thought about my diversity and everything that plays into diversity (marginalization, privilege, etc.) until this assignment. This assignment really opened my eyes to the world and the people around me.

In this instance, the student acknowledged that never having to think about realities outside of their own was a privilege they experienced. However, the resistance they experienced was only evident through a personal assessment of their privileged existence. Alternatively, another student highlighted their personal assessment of oppression and how their emotions were initially barriers to engaging in critical self-reflection. They reported:

Initially I wasn't excited to do this project because it can be kind of emotional to speak about the social locations because they are sensitive issues. I didn't want to be judged by the class. I just felt uncomfortable. This assignment, has made me aware of the areas of oppression that I had never thought about. Although, this project was really hard for me.

Collectively, students reported that working through resistance was challenging emotionally, but only possible through their engagement in personal assessments through critical self-reflection. As illustrated above, such personal assessments include students' ability to consider 'social locations' or diversity factors for both themselves and their future clients. Those who described engaging in personal assessments also characterized their experiences as life changing. For example, one student explained:

I struggled with this assignment and even dreaded it because I thought it would be hard to talk about myself. In my entire years of education, I've never had the opportunity to write about myself, my experiences and how that's shaped my self-concept until this assignment.

Thus, engaging in critical self-reflection allowed students the opportunity to understand their own diversity and how their respective positionality may interact with others. As illustrated, several students found that such exploration occurred infrequently, yet perceived it to be life changing. Students also identified the classroom climate as an influence on their ability to work through their resistance and explore their existing biases.

Safely Exploring Biases

Several students described that the assignment and class context provided them safety to explore their personal biases. They defined biases as personally held judgments of others that were dismantled during their experiences within the course. For example, one student stated, “I formed opinions about certain others and categorized them as arrogant. But after the project I understood that they have experienced marginalization before and it made me connect to them more.” Another student explained, “I had an idea of what some of my classmates would do or say, but I was actually surprised.” Collectively students who described their ability to explore their personal biases acknowledged existing biased beliefs that were evident through their critical self-reflection. For example, one student described that the course was her first time being honest about her biases in class. Another student stated, “man I did still have some biases but hearing the story of others really challenged me.” Students’ reflections collectively illustrate that a safe context to explore their personal biases allows them to engage in critical self-reflection. In addition, students also describe their ability to understand the influence of power in their interactions. For instance, one student reported that, “I learned [through exploring their biases] to appreciate who I am, where I come from, and how to interact with other[s].” Such realization coincides with an understanding that power dynamics influence interactions between HSPs and their clients (Johnson, 2006; Ore, 2014).

Developing Greater Empathy

The majority of the participants reported that they developed a greater level of empathy from listening to the presentations of their peers. They described that such experiences expanded their perspectives through exposure and insight into the realities of others. For example, one student reported:

I consider it a blessing to get to sit through all the presentations that were given and see all the many different aspects of diversity through my peer’s work...to just get a little taste of their perspective on their life and their diversity was amazing and really eye-opening. I gained more respect for my classmates.

Similarly, several students reported that they had a cross-cultural experience when hearing from and empathizing with their peers. One student described that the assignment was “an opportunity to see how others viewed themselves in the world. As opposed to how I may view them.” These students also described their experience of developing empathy as allowing them to become more aware of how privilege and oppression operated. For example, one student stated, “some of my colleague’s presentations almost had me in tears because of their presentations. They were powerful, meaningful, and I know that some of the presentations were probably hard to give because [of the oppression they experienced].” Similarly, another student articulated, “I left the classroom with some knowledge of how someone else views the world. I learned that one person’s privilege is someone else’s marginalization.” Collectively students who described their development of critical self-reflection skills to include developing empathy reported that the most salient aspect of their experience was being challenged to see things from a different perspective than they previously had. Student perceptions revealed that such a shift required students who were most often privileged, to challenge themselves by finding ways they identified with experiences of marginalization. In addition, it also challenged students who most readily understood aspects of their marginalized identity to explore areas where they also experienced privilege. This challenge is consistent with Collins (2014) theoretical assertion that individuals simultaneously occupy privileged and marginalized identities. In this way critical self-reflection enhanced students’ ability to engage in cultural competence by recognizing the

influence of power, privilege and oppression within interactions. Such an understanding will strengthen their ability to recognize these dynamics within future client-practitioner interactions. Collectively these findings reveal that students' cultural competence through critical self-reflections included their development of empathy through interactions with their peers.

Discussion

The thematic analyses unveiled that students' development of cultural competence through critical self-reflection was characterized by their experiences working through resistance, exploring their personal biases, and developing greater empathy. Students' perceived experiences from engaging in critical self-reflection helped deconstruct the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary for training culturally competent practitioners (Neukrug, 2017). Moreover, findings suggest that critical self-reflection allowed the students to gain introspective insight of their personal biases, beliefs, and assumptions through the juxtaposition of their positions of privilege and marginalization with those of their fellow classmates. This heightened awareness of difference in standpoint as it relates to others may further suggest improved culturally competent practices, given that the students demonstrated a greater ability to recognize and empathize with the social realities of others. This critical aspect of cultural competence is vital to pedagogical practices within the classroom (Neukrug & Milliken, 2008). As a result, human services educators should be strategic about making sure that they specifically address the development of critical self-reflection skills when seeking to train culturally competent practitioners. It is also important that human services educators help students make the connection between their discomfort in being transparent in class with how clients may experience discomfort within a helping relationship (Kishimoto, 2018; Ricks, 2014). This experience has the potential to deepen students' ability to work through their resistance, explore their biases, and develop empathy. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the important role and responsibility of human services educators to create a safe and strategic classroom context for students to engage in critical self-reflection in order to become culturally competent practitioners. When human services educators train culturally competent practitioners by creating a context that is conducive for engaging in critical self-reflection, students are able to develop culturally competent skills by working through resistance, safely exploring personal biases, and developing deeper empathy of others' experiences.

Limitations

Despite the design of this investigation and the future implications that it yields, there are a number of existing limitations within this study. The first limitation is that the study employed a secondary data analysis. Thus, the data utilized was not originally collected for the purposes of the study. Consequently, strengthening the study by checking with participants post analysis was unable to be performed. Another limitation of this study is the inability to generalize the findings to larger populations. Although such limitations may be seen as a characteristic of qualitative research, it is a limitation because the de-identified nature of the study prevented specific descriptions of the actual sample in ways that would unveil how the findings may have pertained to specific populations. Understanding participants' backgrounds may have added insight for understanding if different aspects of the process of developing critical self-reflection skills were more or less prevalent among specific populations such as traditional versus non-traditional students. The implementation of only two (triangulation and clarification of biases) out of eight existing methods of addressing trustworthiness was another limitation of this study. Because the study was designed post-hoc, the incorporation of additional methods for qualitative validation

were unable to be utilized. Future studies can address this limitation by designing a more intentional research that recruits students specifically for the purposes of fully understanding students' perceptions of their development of critical self-reflection skills. Doing so would allow additional methods of addressing trustworthiness, a more detailed description of study participants, and analyses that were designed for the data collected. Despite these limitations, there are a number of future implications that may be drawn from the current study.

Future Implications

This study emphasizes the importance of educators who seek to train culturally competent practitioners to strategically develop students' critical self-reflection as an essential aspect of cultural competence. Findings suggest that cultural competence through critical self-reflection has the potential to mitigate the visceral reactions involved with understanding power, privilege, and oppression. For example, research indicates that when educators teach controversial content related to issues of power, privilege, and oppression there is often resistance from students who are exposed to this information for the first time (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Giroux, 2003). Such resistance manifests in various forms, such as hostile student reflection papers, unwarranted student complaints to upper level administration, and at times disrespectful or threatening e-mails (Cooper & Gause, 2007). These reactions impede the learning process and create barriers for training emerging practitioners to engage in cultural competence by self-reflecting on the influence of power, privilege, and oppression within future client-practitioner interactions. Within this study, participants reported visceral feelings of anger, fear, and discomfort were a barrier to engaging in critical self-reflection. Such findings highlight how essential it is to normalize the visceral reactions that often emerge when teaching culturally competent content specifically related to issues of power, privilege, and oppression (Kishimoto, 2018). Furthermore, findings also suggest that creating a context for students to explore their personal biases and develop empathy are also important aspects of the developing culturally competent critical self-reflection skills. Such skills are vital in training emerging human services practitioners to consider the influence of power, privilege, and oppression within professional-client relationships. Consequently, it is essential that human services educators create a context where students are safe to work through emergent resistance, explore personal biases, and develop empathy. Such training is essential for equipping emerging practitioners to professionally engage in culturally competent practice.

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