Module 8

Objectives

- Review of definition and concept of cultural competence and cultural humility
- Defining the practice of *cultural humility* and its application to social work practice
- Exploring the pros and cons of both cultural competency and cultural humility
- Identifying strategies to assist in enhancing the student learning experience
As a profession (and more importantly as field instructors), we strive to teach students to be respectful of clients who differ by factors such as age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. In exploring both cultural competence and cultural humility, the goal is to provide information, insight, and knowledge that will assist you in enhancing the students’ overall learning experience and broaden the concept of cross cultural development in social work field education.
The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008) states that:

- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients’ cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.
There are several different aspects to this ethical standard. One is its emphasis on knowledge. Cultural competency begins with having knowledge of different cultures or aspects of social diversity. Training in cultural competence has focused on teaching providers about traditional cultural concepts and practices of the racial and ethnic minority patients/clients/communities they serve in order to identify and prevent a plethora of social issues impacting those we serve.

The idea is if providers are more aware of the cultural background and beliefs of their clients, communication will be easier. Providers can build mutual understandings that improve both delivery of services and patient/client compliance. While this type of training can certainly be helpful to some extent, knowledge alone is not enough.
As indicated in the ethical standard, social workers need to be able to use their knowledge to respond to clients in a helping, culturally supportive manner.

The challenge lies in how we respond in terms of practice. How do we demonstrate competence in the provision of services? How do we know that we are using our cultural knowledge regarding different races, gender expression, age, etc., in a way that meets the needs of the individual client?

Cultural humility is one construct for understanding and developing a process-oriented approach to competency.
Cultural Humility:

- Reflects the complex attitude and sensitive skills required to meet the needs of clients and families in a way that empowers them to participate in a two-way therapeutic relationship, where both client and provider are understood to have something to contribute.
Cultural Humility Involves:

- A lifelong process
- Serious self-reflection and self-critique
- A commitment to respecting different viewpoints
- Engaging with others from a place of learning
- An attitude that acknowledges that culture is individual & can only be understood individually
Cultural Competence:

Is a conceptual framework to help providers understand, appreciate, and work with individuals from diverse cultures. Its components are:

- awareness and acceptance of cultural differences between/within cultures
- self-awareness
- knowledge of the client’s culture, and adaptation of skills (to better accommodate the client’s culturally-influenced needs).
### Cultural Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Shortcomings</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To build an understanding</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Enforces the idea that there can be 'competence' in a culture other than one's own.</td>
<td>Allows for people to strive to obtain a goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of minority cultures to</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Supports the myth that cultures are monolithic.</td>
<td>Promotes skill building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better and more appropriately provide services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Based upon academic knowledge rather than lived experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural Humility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Shortcomings</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To encourage personal reflection and growth around culture in order to increase awareness of service providers</td>
<td>Introspection</td>
<td>Challenging for professionals to grasp the idea of learning with and from clients.</td>
<td>Encourages lifelong learning with no end goal but rather an appreciation of the journey of growth and understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-learning</td>
<td>No end result, which those in academia and medical fields can struggle with.</td>
<td>Puts professionals and clients in a mutually beneficial relationship and attempts to diminish damaging power dynamics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural Competence vs. Cultural Humility** Tervalon, Melanie (1998).
How do we learn from our clients? Those who practice cultural humility view their clients as capable and work to understand their worldview and any oppression or discrimination that they may have experienced as well.

- **Communication skills:** Help students use open-ended questions and reflective listening to explore client concerns, thoughts, and ideas. The social worker is not the expert but the learner and the self-reflection process enables the social worker to determine what attitudes and values keep him/her from learning from the client (Ortega & Coulborn Faller, 2011).

- **Normalize not knowing:** Supervisors can aim to instill in staff/students the understanding that it is not only okay to not know, but a necessary condition for growth, central to the practice of cultural humility and good social work practice.
How supervisors can help social workers in the workplace (cont.):

- **Examine and process intent:** when students opt to provide clients advice or direction as though they are the experts in the clients’ lives, examining their intention will allow for growth and awareness.

- **Create a culture-based client self-assessment tool:** Clients need a mechanism by which they can be seen and heard—an instrument such as this affords that opportunity. While clients have the right to refuse to complete it, practitioners can nonetheless remain vigilant and true in the practice of cultural humility.

- **Provide In-service and training:** Supervisors or program managers can lead an in-service style conversation where staff members/students self-report how they differ from the cultural stereotypes others may believe about them. Reflective practice involves the continual challenging of oneself and an openness to learning from those we serve.
“Those who practice cultural humility work to increase self-awareness of their own biases and perceptions and engage in a life-long process of self-reflection about how to put these aside and learn from clients.” (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998).
References

- Moncho, Craig. "Cultural Humility, Part II - Promoting Cultural Humility in the Workplace". *The Social Work Practitioner*
Thank You

The End