

Module 8

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion in social work practice:



**Evolving beyond cultural
competence and cultural humility
in social work education**

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Objectives

- Defining and exploring the practice of diversity, equity and inclusion in social work
- 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

What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Social Work?

- Diversity is about respecting, celebrating, and finding value in people's differences.
- Ensuring equity means recognizing that each person has different circumstances and allocating resources and opportunities appropriately to reach an equal outcome.
- Inclusion is about valuing, respecting, and supporting individuals' needs to build a culture where everyone feels welcome.

What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Social Work? (Cont.)

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to our mission as social workers to enhance human well-being and help meet all people's basic needs — especially those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty.
- Effective social workers learn to recognize individuals' complex and intersecting identities, such as race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or disability, to understand how their experiences and defining influences affect how they perceive and respond to the world.

Exploring Cultural Competence and Humility

As a profession (and more importantly as practicum instructors), we strive to teach students to be respectful of clients who differ by factors such as age, class, color, culture, ability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual identity.

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.

Professional Standard

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (NASW, 2021) states that:

- (a) Social workers should demonstrate understanding of culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should demonstrate knowledge that guides practice with clients of various cultures and be able to demonstrate skills in the provision of culturally informed services that empower marginalized individuals and groups. Social workers must take action against oppression, racism, discrimination, and inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege.
- (c) Social workers should demonstrate awareness and cultural humility by engaging in critical self-reflection (understanding their own bias and engaging in self-correction), recognizing clients as experts of their own culture, committing to lifelong learning, and holding institutions accountable for advancing cultural humility.
- (d) Social workers should obtain education about and demonstrate understanding of 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 ability.

Cross cultural development within social work

- 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.

Cross cultural development within social work (cont.)

- 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 social workers and systems understand, appreciate, and work with individuals from diverse cultures, including:

- awareness and acceptance of cultural differences between/within cultures
- Have the capacity for cultural self-assessment and self-awareness
- Develop programs and services that reflect an understanding of the diversity between and within cultures
- Value Diversity
- Be conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge

■ Cultural Competence

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build an understanding of minority cultures to better and more appropriately provide services
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Training
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforces the idea that there can be 'competence' in a culture other than one's own. Supports the myth that cultures are monolithic. Based upon academic knowledge rather than lived experience. Believes professionals can be "certified" in culture.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for people to strive to obtain a goal. Promotes skill building.

■ Cultural Humility

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage personal reflection and growth around culture in order to increase awareness of service providers
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introspection Co-learning
Shortcomings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging for professionals to grasp the idea of learning with and from clients. No end result, which those in academia and medical fields can struggle with.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages lifelong learning with no end goal but rather an appreciation of the journey of growth and understanding. Puts professionals and clients in a mutually beneficial relationship and attempts to diminish damaging power dynamics.

Cultural Competence vs. Cultural Humility Tervalon, Melanie (1998).

How supervisors can help social work students navigate DEI in practice

Engage in

- **Communication skills:** Help student 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 keeps 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.

Pathways to DEI in practice

- Curiosity about cultural differences
- Interest in other people's experience
- Flexibility – being open to changing perspectives
- Personal humility
- Ongoing self-evaluation, including a realistic appraisal of internal biases and assumptions
- Recognition and sensitivity to power imbalances

Culturally Humble Practice:

“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

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References

Thank You

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