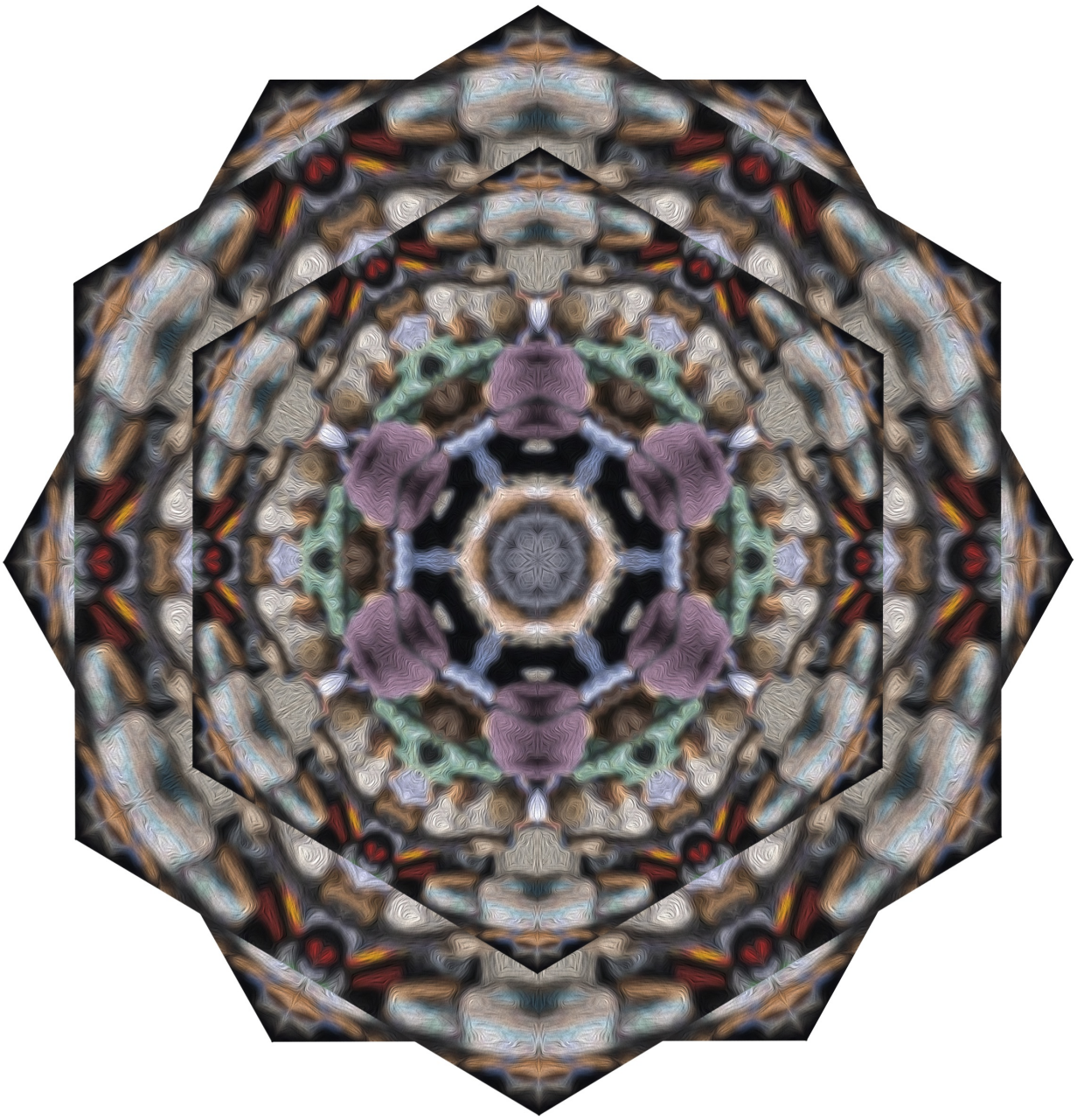
REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING



Special Issue on Cultural Humility in Education and Practice, Part One

Guest Editors: Elizabeth Russell, Pamela Viggiani, and Debra Fromm Faria

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Letter from the Guest Editors: Special Issue on Cultural Humility in Education and Practice

Elizabeth Russell, Pamela Viggiani and Debra Fromm Faria

Abstract: This serves as the introduction to the Special Issue on Cultural Humility in Education and Practice for *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*.

Keywords: cultural competence, humility, microaggressions, intersectionality, criminal justice, social justice, study abroad, counseling, education, practice

When we approached the *Reflections* Editorial Leadership Team to see if they might be interested in publishing a Special Issue on Cultural Humility in Practice and Education, the team responded with enthusiasm. Although we had high hopes that practitioners and educators would be interested in publishing their experiences with cultural humility, we were overwhelmed with the response we received to the call for articles. And, what was to be one special issue on the topic, quickly became two special issues! It was apparent that our fellow practitioners and educators wanted to discuss and write about their experiences, struggles, and triumphs while striving to live, practice, and teach in a culturally humble fashion.

The model of cultural humility was developed by two physicians—Drs. Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-García—in the late 1990s, in the wake of the riots in Los Angeles that developed in response to a not guilty verdict for the police involved in the brutal beating of Rodney King. The events of the time made the two physicians realize that there was a gaping chasm between healthcare providers and the patients they wanted to serve. Tervalon and Murray-García could see that the diversity and cultural training of the time was woefully inadequate in addressing the divide between those who had privilege and those who experienced oppression. In an attempt to bridge that chasm they began to build the cultural humility model.

The model has three basic tenets: lifelong, critical self-reflection; recognizing and mitigating power imbalances in relationships; and institutional accountability (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Cultural humility challenges practitioners and educators to be both committed to lifelong learning and to be humble in their inability to become fully knowledgeable. It also challenges us all to look inward and to critically reflect on who we are— our culture, religion, ethnicity; all of our individual intersecting identities and areas of privilege and areas of oppression. Moreover, it asks us to understand how these intersecting identities affect our understanding of self and others and how others may view and understand us. Cultural humility has challenged our graduate social work program as we have implemented a humility model throughout our curriculum. And, it continues to challenge us as we try to practice its tenets, both personally and professionally, as we walk through our lives.

We have come to believe that cultural humility is important to practicing and teaching effectively because as it seeks to understand the diversity of others, it acknowledges that it is impossible for anyone to gain complete and total knowledge of diversity and its intersectionalities; it requires lifelong exploration. Further, as mentioned, unlike previous cultural competency models, it turns the lens towards the practitioners' and educators' understanding of themselves and how who they are affects how they view others. What is more, it requires practitioners to reflect on how the unique individual experiences of their clients influence each client's worldview and values. Finally, it highlights the intersectionality of individual and group identity. It asserts that various ethnic and racial groups may

have a diversity of beliefs, social structures, interactional patterns, and expectations. Each individual has intersecting dimensions of diversity that include socioeconomic class, sexuality, gender identification, dis/ability, and various other identities.

Although it is likely that Tervalon and Murray-García were hopeful that cultural humility would help heal the wounds created by societal racism, sexism, and classism, it seems our current sociopolitical landscape is fraught with the same inequities. And, it is apparent the present climate has increased the divides between all of us and has brought, even encouraged, contempt and violence towards oppressed populations. If there were ever a time to actively seek to mitigate power imbalances and demand institutional accountability, it is the present. Those of us who endeavor to help others and to educate future helpers can utilize our humility to make a difference within ourselves, our clients, our students, our institutions, and our society.

As we read these manuscripts, many themes emerged. A few of those themes include self-exploration of identity and race. What does our individual whiteness, brownness or blackness mean? How has it influenced our walk through the world and what does it mean in the context of our relationships and our work? How can we effectively teach cultural humility in a multitude of contexts from study abroad to online classroom and to a variety of students from adult learners to traditional undergraduate students?

We hope that this issue encourages you to begin or continue your journey living, teaching, and practicing with cultural humility as it has encouraged us to continue that journey. We trust that the articles you read cause you to self-reflect in new ways and provide you with ideas to continue to critically reflect on yourself and your practice. Further, our hope is that the articles you read encourage you to continue to right power imbalances while working toward institutional change. We believe that reading this issue will inspire you and provide you with hope for change.

Such hope is required in order to sustain the desire and will to address the inequalities within our institutions and within the larger society. In short, we trust that at the conclusion of this special issue you, too, will start to see micro and macro connections everywhere. We hope that you enjoy reading this Special Issue of *Reflections* as much as we did bringing it to you. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Cultural Humility, Microaggressions, and Courageous Conversations

Allan Edward Barsky

Abstract: In this narrative, a social work professor describes how he prepared for and implemented a workshop on how to engage in courageous conversations with clients who are expressing racism and religious bigotry. While preparing for the workshop, the professor discovers the relationship between cultural humility, having the courage to reflect upon and admit one's own biases, and engaging others in constructive conversations about microaggressions and bigotry.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, dialogue, racism, bigotry, microaggression

Introduction

One of the key aspects of cultural humility is openness to others, meaning that helping professionals should not only be respecting of people who are different, but also open to learning from them (Danso, 2018; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013). A key challenge in implementing this aspect of cultural humility arises when working with people who express morally offensive attitudes and beliefs. For me, this tension came to the fore when I was developing a training for social work field instructors on how to help social work students respond when clients are expressing microaggressions, including racism or religious bigotry (RRB) (McCormick, Lewis, Gonzalez, Horton, & Barsky, 2019).

Under the core principles of the *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers* (NASW, 2018), social workers have an ethical obligation to respect the dignity and worth of all people. The duty of respect means that social workers should treat people in a courteous and caring manner, honoring differences and supporting people's rights to good treatment regardless of their differences. Under Standard 6.04 of the same code, social workers also have an obligation to promote social justice (NASW, 2018). Promoting social justice means advocating for equal treatment and opportunity for all and challenging discriminatory policies and practices (Barsky, 2019). So, how can social workers honor the obligation to respect the dignity and worth of all when challenging discrimination and injustice may require engaging with people who are espousing hateful views? This article relates how I came to have a better understanding of the connections between cultural humility, having the courage to reflect upon and admit my own biases, and engaging others in constructive conversations about microaggressions and bigotry.

Preparing for the Workshop

As I started to develop the workshop, I reread some of my favorite references on how to engage people in difficult conversations (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 2010) and how to manage intergroup conflict (Rothman & Alberstein, 2013). Initially, it seemed as though I was preparing a group that was generally respectful and nonjudgmental (social workers) to engage more effectively

with people who were acting in patently disrespectful and judgmental manners. But how do we really understand who these individuals are, what motivates them, and why they might be espousing RRB? I then began to ponder whether the workshop should focus on cultural humility—helping social workers to be open and curious even when they might feel angry or dismissive when others are expressing RRB.

Cultural humility refers to a process that begins with an attitude of *not knowing everything about the client's culture* and having an openness to engage in ongoing learning in partnership with the client (Danso, 2018). To employ cultural humility, professionals need to engage in self-critique and recognize their own prejudices (Danso, 2018), including RRB. Otherwise, professionals may impose their biases on clients, leading to cultural misunderstandings and inappropriate interventions.

The concept of cultural humility struck me as a particularly important element for the upcoming workshop, reminding me that social workers and other professionals are *no better* than their clients. If we want to build effective working relationships with clients, we need to approach them as partners and equals in the helping process. As I struggled with determining the best approach for the workshop, a song from the musical *Avenue Q* (Lopez & Marx, 2004a) came to mind. In the song "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist, " the characters describe how they have laughed at racist jokes, judged others based on race, and described others using racist labels (Lopez & Marx, 2004b). Initially, some characters are reluctant to label themselves as racist. As the song progresses, however, they are more comfortable accepting that each of them is at least a little bit racist. By accepting their racism, they are allowed to engage in more forthright discussions of racism.

When one person admits having racist beliefs, that person models that it is okay for others to openly discuss their racist beliefs. When one person expresses genuine regret about past racist behaviors and commits to positive change, that person also conveys that racism is not a permanent condition. People can then engage in more honest discussions to raise self-awareness of racism. By acknowledging that nobody is perfect, they can also engage in frank discussions about how to overcome racism, including their own.

By reflecting on the song "Everybody's a Little Bit Racist" (Lopez & Marx, 2004b), I realized that if I was going to lead a workshop on how to engage people in RRB discussions, it would be helpful for me to acknowledge my own RRB. By acknowledging my past expressions of RRB, I hoped to make it easier for workshop participants to discuss other expressions of RRB, including their own. I also began to realize that if social workers wanted to use cultural humility to understand and engage with clients, it would be helpful for workers to begin by raising awareness of their own RRB. Accordingly, I began my own process of self-reflection to prepare for the workshop.

Being gay and Jewish, it was easy for me to think of times when others had expressed homophobic and anti-Semitic jokes and sentiments to me. I had worked with clients who called me a "fag" and with others who threw pennies at me to see if I would pick them up. It was much easier to reflect on others' expressions of bigotry than my own. It was embarrassing to think of

myself as prejudiced and even more embarrassing to have to admit my prejudices to professional colleagues. I knew that I wanted to discuss the concept of emotional intelligence in my workshop, including the importance of not only being aware of one's own emotional responses, but also being able to regulate them (Bariso, 2018; Goleman, 2006). Again, applying what I wanted to share with others, I thought about how to manage my own embarrassment. I thought, if I can be brave about sharing my own RRB, perhaps others will do the same. If we all admit we're a little bit racist, then it is easier for us to discuss these issues openly.

Thinking more deeply about my own RRB beliefs, I reflected on what it meant to grow up in a small city in the Canadian prairies, raised in a Jewish home. I began to realize some of the stereotypes I developed from this context. For instance, our city was comprised primarily of people of European descent. The largest minority was comprised of people of First Nations (Native Canadian) descent. We had a professional football team that included many African Americans. I loved that our football team included players of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Because my experience with African Americans was limited, however, one of my pervasive beliefs about African Americans was that they were great athletes. While this may seem like a positive belief system, it is a stereotype with demeaning and insulting connotations—no ethnocultural group's worth should be wrapped up in a single trait.

My beliefs about First Nations peoples were also skewed, but in this situation they were skewed by the "cowboy and Indian" movies that I enjoyed as a child. I had classmates who were First Nations; however, I was essentially color blind to them, unaware of their rich culture, heritage, and value systems. I remember sharing jokes about "squaws" and "injuns, " oblivious to how these jokes could be hurtful. In terms of religious education, I attended a Hebrew school that taught me about the persecution that Jews had experienced throughout the ages—from Biblical times, to the Spanish Inquisition, to the Holocaust, and to modern times with terrorist attacks against Israel and Jews in many countries. Although it is important to be aware of this history of persecution, this education also facilitated stereotypes about Germans, Muslims, and Arabs. I remember as a teen walking through a Muslim neighborhood of Jerusalem feeling afraid. At the same time, I was unaware of how my fear and body language could be perceived by the people living in that community.

As a professional social worker, I have had to confront my prejudices on a number of occasions. When working with street youth, some of my clients self-identified as neo-Nazi skinheads. They were not hesitant to share their views on White, Christian, and heterosexual superiority with me. My job was to help them with alcohol and drug-related problems, not to challenge their beliefs or reform their ideologies. I strived to show them respect, empathy, and authenticity, which are Rogers' (1957) core conditions for effective therapeutic relationships. I struggled with respect, sensing that they did not respect me. I struggled with empathy, finding it difficult to understand the sources of their sense of superiority and hatred of others. I struggled with authenticity, downplaying anything that focused on my gay or Jewish identity and trying to avoid discussions of topics that could turn ugly. If I was going to be helpful to these clients, I needed to come to terms with my own insecurities and stereotypes about skinheads. At the time, sharing concerns with my clinical supervisor and colleagues was particularly helpful; doing so gave me a chance to vent, reflect, and recompose myself. Similarly, reflecting on my own biases, prejudices, and

examples of microaggressions helped me prepare for my workshop on engaging clients in discussions about RRB.

Conducting the Workshop

I started the field instructors' workshop by sharing narratives of my own stereotypes and microaggressions—occasions when I may have insulted or hurt others without intending to do so (Husain & Howard, 2017; Cruz, Rodriguez, & Mastropaolo, 2019). I could sense discomfort in the room—my own as well as that of the workshop participants. There were some awkward silences, and I received some suspicious looks. I imagined participants saying to themselves, "Who is this racist and how does he think he can teach us about responding effectively to clients expressing bigotry?" One of the key themes of the presentation was that in order to engage people in meaningful discussions about RRB, we had to be willing to engage in courageous conversations. Having a courageous conversation meant engaging with people even when there are risks of embarrassment, suspicion, and awkwardness. I told myself that it was okay that this workshop was not going as smoothly or as eloquently as I might have expected for other workshops that I have facilitated.

After sharing some of my own experiences of expressing RRB, I opened the discussion about hot-button issues—topics that are difficult to discuss because people may have deep-seated opinions and may respond with strong emotions. When we discussed the Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, some participants shared views that this moniker was a useful way to raise awareness of the violence and discrimination that Black individuals and communities have experienced at the hands of police (Banks, 2018). Others strongly disagreed. They thought the name Black Lives Matter sounded exclusive, putting off people (particularly Whites and police) rather than engaging them in constructive conversations. Still, others expressed differing views about the concept of Black identity and whether we should be using terms such as African American or People of Color instead. Some participants suggested that terms such as Black or People of Color could be interpreted as insults or microaggressions. The conversation continued to be awkward. Still, participants seemed to feel relatively free to express conflicting opinions.

I presented the discussion as a learning conversation rather than a problem-solving process or a debate. When people are confronted with controversial issues, they often want to convince others about the correct way to resolve the issues. This approach leads to an adversarial debate of whose position is better (Barsky, 2017). In a problem-solving approach, everyone works together to analyze the problem, identify options, and work toward a solution that meets everyone's needs and concerns (Barsky, 2017). For our conversation about RRB issues, I explained that we were not trying to build consensus or win an argument, but rather to listen to one another. Listening means giving everyone an opportunity to be heard. Listening also means giving everyone an opportunity to clarify the meaning of what others are saying and to demonstrate what they are understanding about one another's views.

Having a learning discussion does not mean having a discussion devoid of passion and emotion. The tone of the discussion changed many times throughout the discussion. At times, participants were polite and inquisitive, asked questions for clarification, and built on points that I was

making. When engaging in conversations about Black Lives Matter and the use of terms such as People of Color, some participants raised their voices, expressing frustration or anger. Overall, these expressions of emotion demonstrated that people felt very strongly about the issues. It seemed as if participants did not interpret heated discussions as personal attacks on themselves or their views. One of the key learnings expressed by participants was that it was easier to engage in conversations about controversial issues when there was no expectation that everyone had to agree. Having full and frank conversations might even result in some people feeling insulted. We were fostering a *courageous place to talk* rather than a *safe place to talk*.

The discussion allowed participants to see how language that they thought was respectful could be viewed as discriminatory or demeaning by others. People who identify with Black Lives Matter may react strongly when others try to reframe their moniker. When advocates for the safety of police use rhetoric such as Blue Lives Matter, proponents of Black Lives Matter may perceive them as racist. Both sides feel they have good intent, yet both sides feel slighted by the other. By understanding the differences between intent and how their messages are perceived, each group learns about the other's motivations and sensitivities. They may not agree with each other's choice of language, but at least they foster mutual empathy.

Engaging in constructive RRB conversations does not require us to call others racist or attack them for the slights we may perceive. Rather, we can approach others with courage and humility. We can use strategies designed to open discussion without putting others on the defensive. For instance, we can ask clarifying questions to learn about the other person's intent. We can let others know that even though they had good intentions, we may have felt hurt or insulted. We can use humor to diffuse tension. And we can work together to identify common values and areas of agreement rather than focusing only on differences (Goodman, 2011).

Further Research

The experience of conducting a workshop on RRB conversations and reflecting upon it in this paper raises additional questions about the notion of cultural humility and how it can be applied in the context of facilitating courageous conversations. What are the core elements to cultural humility? What specific role does awareness of one's own biases play in being able to respond to clients and others who express RRB? Future research could further explore the ways that cultural humility may be taught and integrated into educational workshops on RRB conversations. In addition to having didactic discussions and engaging in courageous conversations, for instance, it may be useful to explore the use of roleplays, videos, and reflective journals. It would also be useful to explore the use of similar workshops for educators, mental health professionals, and other human service practitioners.

Conclusion

When social workers and other helping professionals work with clients, it is important to show unconditional positive regard. When working with clients who are expressing views that the professionals perceive as racist or bigoted, it is important to note that respect for the person does not mean agreeing with their beliefs, values, or worldviews. Rather, it means striving for

understanding from the other person's perspective. Incorporating the concept of cultural humility in practice helps professionals develop understanding from the client's perspective.

Professionals can then use this understanding to demonstrate empathy, build trust, and engage in constructive conversations with their clients. Accepting that "we're all a little bit racist" can help us approach clients with the cultural humility required to be open to hearing their beliefs, values, and worldviews, regardless of whether we agree with them.

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Reflections in Cultural Humility: Seeing My Whiteness

Jackie F. Stanmyre

Abstract: The ethnic identities of practitioners can have an immense influence on the ability to develop meaningful and productive relationships with clients served, particularly if unacknowledged. Throughout this narrative, the author reflects on this notion through the lens of her experience as a young, white female facilitating a group in a correctional setting of minority males with current or past gang affiliation. The benefits of increasing self-awareness and infusing cultural humility into clinical interactions are explored.

***Keywords*:** racial identity, self-awareness, cultural humility

Antsy and uneasy, I sat across from the program director, seeking both clarity and resolution. Three months earlier, I had started my job as the clinical supervisor of a novel substance use treatment program that served incarcerated men nearing the end of their prison sentences. I had worked with clients involved in the criminal justice system before, so much was unfolding as anticipated. Not everything, though, was going according to plan.

The overall aim of the agency's treatment program was to prepare the clients for reintegration into the communities they involuntarily left anywhere from a couple of months to a couple of decades ago. The programming was uniquely tailored to target *criminogenic* needs. Criminogenic needs are those areas that, if adequately addressed, can decrease the likelihood of recidivism. Examples include antisocial cognition, antisocial associates, substance use, family and marital relations, employment, and leisure and recreational activities, among others (Wooditch, Tang, & Taxman, 2014).

The target of my assigned group intervention was the concept of *antisocial associates*, criminal peers, which is one of the top four needs most strongly associated with criminal activity (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). This ambitious group had a more specific target—gang intervention.

The group structure was closed, meaning the same group of clients would complete the eight-week curriculum together with no newcomers disrupting that particular group's process. We had adapted the Phoenix Curriculum for Gang Intervention to fit the logistics of the treatment program. Sessions focused on identifying and addressing needs fulfilled by gang involvement, challenging the gang mindset, criminal values, risk reduction, loyalty, and refusal skills.

Before moving forward in this essay, it is important to provide information on me—a white woman of mixed Eastern European and English descent from an upper-middle-class suburb of Upstate New York, where I lived with my two biological parents and one biological brother in a mildly observant Jewish household. My mother has some college experience, my father and brother both have bachelor's degrees, and I have a master's degree in social work in addition to two clinical licenses for practice. I currently live in New Jersey, where my husband—who is white and of Italian and German heritage—and I live with our two children in a home we own. I

am five feet two inches tall and, at this point in the narrative, I was 29 years old.

Superficially, I shared little in common with the men with whom I would be working. All of them were either African Americans or Latinos, raised in urban environments, many without fathers present, and many steeped in poverty and/or born into families who received some form of public assistance. While some clients were as young as 19, others were as old as 60. Less than half had completed high school. Religious observance—primarily Christian or Muslim—varied greatly.

If these racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and religious factors were not enough to set us apart, there also was a significant power differential in our relationship. For starters, I was able to leave the building every night and go home to my family. Meanwhile, my clients' freedom depended largely on my perception of their progress toward pro-social decision-making, which would appear on recommendations sent to the parole board and would influence their ability to qualify for work-release and reenter the community for education or employment during the day. For the clients—still inmates in the eyes of the state—the consequence of failing to comply with agency rules and expectations was to be re-shackled and shipped straight back to prison.

Working toward cultural competence had been a grounding and foundational experience throughout my social work education at Rutgers University. Being at an institution accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, I regularly was encouraged to excel at developing the competency of Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice, particularly to "understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power" (Council on Social Work Education, 2015, p. 7). Specifically, I still recall the "White is Right" assignment completed in my Diversity and Oppression class during my MSW studies in which we were to scan our environment and communities, noting all indications that being white is normative or superior (e.g., flesh-colored bandages are the color of white skin).

Both personally and professionally, I prided myself on being culturally reflective. My husband and I intentionally chose to raise our children in a diverse Northern New Jersey town. My sons' daycare provider is African American. I support local candidates who favor equal pay for equal work and criminal justice reform. I accept the range and depth of religious beliefs shared with me in the clinical setting, allowing clients to self-determine the role spirituality may play in their recovery. I was attentive to local and national events during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement following the fatalities of black men at the hands of law enforcement officials. Each day, I confronted the overrepresentation of minorities in the criminal justice system, where 75 percent of my clients were African Americans. I knew I could be doing better, doing more, and I saw myself as culturally competent if not yet wholly proficient (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment [US], 2014).

Equipped with this knowledge, experience, and attitude, I began my first cycle of the gang intervention group. Colleagues had warned me to anticipate pushback (the group was held on Friday mornings during a time their peers without gang histories could still be sleeping), so I

came prepared. The initial session was intended to address the topic of identifying and addressing needs fulfilled by gang involvement. I chose to structure the dialogue with a decisional balance sheet on the whiteboard: the pros and cons of gang affiliation versus separation. Following a brief re-introduction, I dove right into the material. But immediately a hand waved in the air: "What do you know about gangs?" asked a client. Before I could even respond, a second hand shot up with a question: "Have you ever been in a gang?" Laughter erupted. Seasoned clinician as I saw myself to be, I considered that I may be in over my head.

The tug-and-pull interaction was commonplace throughout the entire first group cycle and then the second. Before the third group cycle started, I sat down with the program director, an African American woman in her late 50s. Why, I wanted to know, was I having so much trouble connecting with the clients in this group? And, how could I do better? I wanted so much to understand and address whatever would make me a more effective practitioner. "Well, " she said to me with a wry smile, "you know you're white, right?" I did know. In fact, I had perhaps never been so acutely aware. I was the only non-Hispanic white person on our eight-person treatment team. Of the 50 or so employees in the entire building, including operations and administrative staff, I was one of about five non-Hispanic white people and the only woman. I often mentally applauded the agency for having a staff so racially and ethnically representative of the clients served. On a policy level, Grissom and Keiser (2011) reported that having minorities represented within a bureaucracy increases the ability of that system to address minority client needs. My agency was increasing its ability to respond to client needs with its employee selection. Except for me. The white person. I was now a minority. "I *am* white, " I said out loud to my director, as if unveiling a secret. Somehow, this felt like new news.

But, according to Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, and Utsey (2013), it was the first step toward cultural humility and the development of self-reflection, self-critique, lifelong learning, and commitment to advocacy and institutional change to guide my work with clients. This, in turn, would lead to the development of a strong work alliance.

I entered into my third group cycle with not just cultural competence but the beginning stages of a separate, but parallel, reflective endeavor of cultural humility. That journey began by saying this sentence out loud: "I am white." The clinical benefits, I expected, could be enormous. The development of rapport remains perhaps the most vital and foundational skill of clinical practice (Joe, Simpson, Dansereau, & Rowan-Szal, 2001). My prior inability to consider my whiteness, in addition to the other numerous demographic factors that *separated* me from my clients, was creating an impenetrable barrier. My clients had seen how white I was, but I had not.

This felt like a new beginning. I moved the group room chairs into a circle, seeking to disassemble the power hierarchy of a lecture-structured room. I sat among the clients to begin my third cycle of the gang intervention group. I informed them I wanted to start with a disclaimer. To a rapt audience, I began: "I'd like to bring something to your attention that you may not have noticed." Dramatic pause. "I'm white. I'm a woman. And, yes, I'm from the suburbs." A few men chuckled audibly while others just grinned. This laughing, though, was quite unlike it had been on previous occasions. I continued, "I say this in acknowledgement that the paths we've taken to end up in this room together have been different from one another, and,

at times, heavily impacted by the color of our skin alone. I will not for a second pretend to know what it is like to be in your shoes. I will, however, ask that you understand my aim is to educate you and help you consider different perspectives as you prepare to return to your communities. And please know that I *want* to understand what it is like to be in your shoes." The group, collectively, nodded.

The differences, though, were not the focus of our work together. Acknowledging them, however, seemed to be the catalyst to deeper conversation. Time and again, during the first group session about the perceived pros and cons of gang affiliation, we discussed the notion of belongingness. The majority of the clients in the room, representative of those gang-involved, began their gang affiliation during adolescence. According to Diego (2009), adolescence is a time when "confusions and ambiguities of one's sex and age require clarification, [such] that the group behaviors and roles of the gang become even more important" (p. 423).

A particularly memorable client side-eyed me during this conversation about belongingness, his non-verbal version of "you don't get it." As a proponent of extremely cautious self-disclosure, I considered this invitation. I told the group that I had grown up playing competitive soccer. No, it wasn't a gang, I acknowledged, but it was a peer community outside of my nuclear family that had grown supremely important to me. On game days, we all wore our jerseys to school. As much as I loved the games themselves, I absolutely cherished walking the halls of my school, as everyone around me knew I was a part of something. After all, Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us the need for belongingness and love is only preceded by the need for food, water, oxygen, safety, and security (Maslow, 1954). In this, I was not so unlike them.

The obstacle of my whiteness, while not removed, was no longer impossible to dismantle. In fact, acknowledging the difference in skin tone and upbringing often allowed me to empower the clients to share their experiences with the group and with me, as they took on the role of teacher and me of student. Heated moments continued throughout these group cycles, eight of which I facilitated throughout my tenure at the agency. Accusations that I "wouldn't understand" persisted. However, now, when a client said to me, "You'll never get what it's like to pull up to a police officer at a traffic light and know he could just lock you up for having dreads and face tattoos, " I humbled myself. I quieted the once-loud inner monologue of intimidation and defensiveness. "You're right, " I said. "Please share about what that's like." And so he did. We engaged in productive conversations about how to interact with police officers, not generically as law-abiding citizens, but specifically as minority men with criminal records in communities where they were known to have inflicted damage.

My very real and now verbalized curiosity about their inner and outer experiences gave way to discussions of social injustice, incarceration as a means of enslavement, the power of peer pressure to those without fathers and in unstable families, and the allure of status. My ability to talk about being white gave them permission to talk openly and honestly about being black or Latino, enriching our dialogue and ultimately becoming exponentially more useful for them as they prepared to navigate the gritty world that awaited them outside of prison walls.

And, in the end, just as Hook et al. (2013) had promised, my quest for humility helped them

partner with me to help themselves. A small victory, I admit. But one that could be replicated over and over and over until we one day come to see the ripple effects of shared understanding.

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Reflections of Two Black Early-Career Social Work Educators Teaching Mostly White Students at Predominately White Institutions

Tuwana T. Wingfield and Raymond D. Adams

Abstract: The social work profession must become more proactive in laying the foundation for developing more culturally competent professionals in the field who can, in turn, practice cultural humility with the clients they encounter. The aim of this article is to share reflections of two early-career Black educators teaching at predominately White institutions. As two Black faculty members, we center race in this reflection of how our teaching practices promote cultural competence and subsequent cultural humility in our class discussions. Through narrative inquiry, the authors provide reflections of their students' perceptions of them as teachers—teaching while Black. Critical race theory is used to explore the social locations of race, class, and gender; of ourselves; and of our students within the classroom and in the field of social work. This reflection has implications on social work education programs preparing undergraduate and graduate students entering the field.

***Keywords*:** Black social work educators, cultural competence, cultural humility, culturally relevant practice, critical race theory, critical pedagogy

As the social work profession continues to grow, social work educators and practitioners will need to find more culturally responsive ways to address the interlocking oppressions of racism, classism, and sexism experienced by clients. These multiplicative forms of oppression (King, 1988), if left unaddressed, will ultimately impact services to racial and ethnic minority populations. According to Abrams and Moio (2009), although the social work field has historically been dedicated to addressing issues of racism, classism, and sexism, the authors note that there are additional oppressions that impact a client's life. Therefore, the current conceptualization of cultural competence "unintentionally promotes a color-blind mentality that eclipses the significance of institutionalized racism" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 245). Thus, this perceived cultural competence in social work education is problematic for clients who experience multiple forms of oppression. As two Black instructors who teach in social work programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), we feel that it is essential to share our experiences of teaching mostly White students culturally responsive approaches to working with persons from historically marginalized and oppressed groups. In theory, social work espouses the importance of cultural competence, yet in practice we see something completely different.

Perhaps one of the most contested issues present in social work practice and education is finding a way to develop a definition of culturally relevant practice that embraces differences while honoring clients' lived experiences (Choi, Lee, & Sohng, 2010; Jackson, 2012; Jackson & Samuels, 2011). Ortega and Faller (2011) suggest that the current socially constructed perspective of cultural competence fails to acknowledge the subtle cultural nuances inherent in individuals, families, and communities of color. The evidence presented thus far supports the idea that social work educators must re-evaluate how we are equipping future social workers to

become culturally attuned to systemic inequalities present among oppressed communities (Daniel, 2011; Gutierrez, 1990; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011).

Today, the social work profession must proactively lay the foundation for developing more culturally competent professionals in the field. Therefore, we believe that the field of social work needs to look at ways to develop research and praxis that embrace the inherent differences of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed. If the profession desires to move toward truly appreciating and recognizing how cultural diversity among oppressed groups is central to how they respond to services, social work education has to become more culturally attuned to the needs and goals of the clients served within these oppressed communities. The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE, 2015) second core competency—Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice—further elucidates this charge. In this competency, CSWE stresses the importance of teaching social work students to understand how diversity and difference of clients' lived experiences must be taken into consideration in our practice. More specifically, the competency states:

> Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. (CSWE, 2015, p. 7)

Although this core competency is present, there is no clear framework on how to approach the difference that exists between the worker and the clients, and in our case, teacher and student. This lack of clarity about how to approach cultural awareness circumvents racial and ethnic differences between the teacher and student or worker and client, which further impedes the helping process (Boehm & Staples, 2002). The answer may emerge if diversity is celebrated and seen as an important attribute in our society. The authors suggest that social work educators, scholars, and practitioners need to devise culturally responsive practices within the theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT) to educate newly minted social workers on the importance of centering the lived experiences of diverse client populations served, which celebrates diversity rather than relegating diversity to the margins.

The aim of this article is to share our personal experiences as Black educators teaching mostly White social work students at PWIs. We understand that we cannot speak for all Black faculty, yet we feel that it is important to center our experiences in hopes that others who are at the margins can gain something from them. The voices of African American social workers are often left out of social work education because of the demographic composition of the field (CSWE, 2018). Historically, the field is mostly White and female. As two Black instructors, we will provide insight into what our experiences have been teaching while Black (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) at PWIs. We will analyze our lived and practical experience in social work education through the lens of CRT. Critical race theory is utilized to further the exploration of these intersectional oppressions in social work education and practice. We will share our stories of what it means to teach White social work students culturally relevant social work practice

through an analysis of our student evaluations and personal reflections. By sharing our experiences in academe, we can add to existing literature about the experiences of Black faculty to create change (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Otuyelu, Graham, & Kennedy, 2016; Randolph, 2010). Also, by displaying our students' respective feedback about their experiences in our courses, we expose their "dysconscious racism" (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011, p. 465). Dysconscious racism refers to a student's inability to reconcile their unconscious racist values and beliefs that function to maintain racism and oppression (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011). It is our belief that open and honest dialogue can counter this dysconscious racism that occurs when social workers try to engage in meaningful discussions about members of oppressed groups to challenge institutional and structural forms of racism that reinforce White dominating ethos. Therefore, the field of social work must look at ways to develop research and praxis that embrace the inherent differences of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed. This article has implications for social work educators, practitioners, policymakers, and students.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This article came to fruition by the shared experience of teaching via a social media group developed to support faculty of color. Collectively, we have 15 years of teaching experience at the baccalaureate level in social work. Through sharing our teaching experiences within this group, we found that we have more similarities than differences, and we felt the need to share what it is like teaching while Black (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) as a woman and as a man. Teaching while Black refers to the surveillance that Black instructors are under when teaching White students. Evans-Winters and Hoff (2011) note how White students in teacher education programs use silence as a weapon to resist "alternative ways of knowing and theorizing" (p. 465). The authors go on to explain how this level of resistance is a danger to the students of color whom they will encounter in classroom settings.

In this analysis, we extend the concept of teaching while Black in teacher education to social work education. Similarly, for social workers, a lack of critical analysis and theorizing of the experiences of African American faculty teaching White students about race and racism could have detrimental effects on the client populations served. Thus, it is important to use theory to provide insight into what it means to center the experiences of racial/ethnic minority faculty members in social work programs preparing White students to work for and on behalf of racial/ethnic minority populations. Theory is an important component in social work education and practice, as it allows for self-examination needed to properly address the complexities present within many social justice issues. Therefore, social work educators must select theoretical orientations that are culturally attuned to populations' unique and diverse circumstances. For the purposes of this analysis, CRT is the most suitable. Last, this paper is organized through the theme of teaching while Black. We will share our personal reflections and student evaluations to unpack the experiences two African American instructors encounter when teaching about issues of race/racism and power/powerlessness to a predominately White student body.

Critical Race Theory in Social Work Practice

Critical race theory can be used to explore what it means to center race/racism in courses we have taught across the curriculum as social work faculty. Critical race theory brings from the margins the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and how these groups perceive acts of institutional and structural racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) to the center in terms of social work practice. For example, a central theme of CRT is that race is permanently present in our everyday lives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory allows for an intersectional critique of the various ways in which minority groups can be oppressed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, CRT challenges the current multicultural color-blind approach in social work education as it relates to educating future social work practitioners about issues of diversity, inclusion, oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege (Gutierrez, 1990; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Therefore, we argue, social work educators and practitioners must consider their own positionality within the larger scheme of societal injustices and how racism manifests itself in social work education and practice (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Randolph, 2010).

For example, the historical dehumanization of Black bodies within the United States, beginning with slavery and further perpetuated into the present day through police brutality, provides unique context into why educating social work students through the theoretical framework of CRT is fundamental to their development as culturally relevant social work practitioners (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gentle-Genitty, Chen, Karikari, & Barnett, 2014; Tolliver, Hadden, Snowden, & Brown-Manning, 2016). Through CRT, social work students can learn strategies for developing critically informed responses to acts of structural and institutional racism. For instance, case studies have been traditionally utilized to stimulate experiential learning among social work students (Holmes, Tracy, Painter, Oestreich, & Park, 2015). Case studies offer "simulated practice situations" (Holmes et al., 2015, p. 4) to provide students with opportunities to use theory in understanding how to assess clients and to develop treatment plans. Research conducted by Asakura, Bogo, Good, and Power (2018) suggests that "simulations offer immediate opportunities for students to apply concepts to practice behaviors and examine practice behaviors using various theoretical perspectives" (p. 2). This supports scholars such as Moore, et al. (2018), who postulate that CRT helps us to understand and analyze inequality and oppression today within the context of historical case simulations.

Last, and equally important, CRT provides the opportunity for social work educators and students to gain the necessary cultural insight to effect change on a systemic level. Critical race theory can also adequately describe the current landscape at PWIs that fosters exclusion rather than inclusion in relation to culturally relevant social work practice. Additionally, CRT helps us critically analyze and assess the experiences of two faculty of African descent at PWIs to shed light on practices of inclusion and seclusion as it relates to cultural relevance in social work practice and education. The next section outlines each author's institutional demographics, which provide further evidence of the ubiquitous under-representation of faculty of color on their campuses.

Institutional Demographics

Both authors are employed at PWIs, one in the mid-central region of the country, and the other in the south-central region of the country. Both programs are small in comparison to larger research institutions, yet they have respectable social work programs at the undergraduate level. The mid-central public institution has a total of 1, 208 faculty members, of which 932 are White and 40 are African American. Comparatively, the south-central public institution has a total of 277 faculty, of which 232 are White and 23 are African American. According to CSWE (2017), the number of full-time African American faculty is 16.7% in comparison to 63.6% of faculty who are White (non-Hispanic). It is obvious that there is a shortage of minority faculty teaching in social work at PWIs across the country (CSWE, 2017). Another troubling aspect of these statistics is that there is no way to discern the gender of the faculty by race/ethnicity. Thus, the experiences of Black women and men are conflated due to their gender or their race. This either/or dichotomy does not provide enough information about the exact number of Black women and men teaching in social work programs across the country.

One author works in a department that has 12 tenured or tenure-track faculty, three of whom are African American women, while the other author is one of three faculty and the only African American male. The racial/ethnic demographic diversity within each social work department is alarmingly low. As a result, there is an underlying assumption that is problematic for African American faculty teaching White students about issues of race/racism because of our racial/ethnic heritage. Our White colleagues assume that we have some special insight because of our ethnicity, and we step into the role of what we call being a *Black whisperer*. A *Black whisperer* is a person of African descent (e.g., cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, LGBTQI) who has insider knowledge of the Black community and, therefore, is called upon by their White counterparts to decipher the meaning of the Black experience. Thus, the burden of teaching social work students about issues of diversity and cultural competence rests with the limited number of faculty of color represented at each institution. Other minority scholars have also noted the pressure to be the *expert* in terms of discussing issues of race and racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Otuyelu, Graham, & Kennedy, 2016). We argue that there is a need for our White colleagues to take initiative and engage in these critical discussions about race/racism. Moreover, social work education needs to critically assess how to prepare newly minted social workers to work with populations who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

The Oppression of Faculty of Color in Academe

The oppressive practices perpetuated by White faculty upon their colleagues of color are too often minimized within the hallowed halls of White academe as *typical growing pains* (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012). However, from the most overt to covert forms of racism, these actions impede faculty of color in areas of research, scholarship, and teaching (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009). It is because of institutional racism that the discourse centered around cultural competence needs to be aggressively discussed. From the literature, one can surmise that institutional and structural racism significantly contribute to the limited presence of faculty of color at PWIs. This

under-representation is not due to the lack of qualified applicants of color, but rather a lack of opportunity—the recruitment of faculty of color (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Randolph, 2010). The next sections outline some of the challenges that each author has had teaching while Black to expose how we use our own positionality to center the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

Teaching While Black in Social Work Education

In our current social and political climate, social work programs need to include the study of institutional racism, White privilege, and White supremacy in the curriculum to adequately prepare White students for the field (Abrams & Moio, 2009). Additionally, from our standpoint as persons of African descent, special attention needs to be paid to the experiences of Black faculty in social work education. As previously mentioned, the lack of specific data on the number of Black women and men faculty in social work programs speaks to the way in which gender and race are often conflated, which marginalizes the experiences of faculty of color. The difficulty in interpreting this data is that there is no distinction of how many of the faculty are women or men. For this reason, our experiences as a Black woman and as a Black man are conflated with the experiences of White women and White men in social work education. Additionally, there is a dearth of knowledge in the literature about African American experiences in social work education. Therefore, we feel that it is necessary to share our narratives of teaching while Black in social work education. Moreover, the academy is a harsh representation of imperialist White supremacist patriarchal capitalism (hooks, 2013) in which faculty of color continue to experience covert and overt forms of racism and oppression. The following sections outline some of our teaching experiences while discussing issues of racism, power, and privilege.

The Beginning of Social Work

The course I teach is the gateway into the profession. Students across all academic disciplines and various grade levels can enroll in this 16-week course. The course is designed using multiple pedagogical practices to keep the students engaged and wanting to learn about the auspices and practices of social work as well as elicit their feedback about the course throughout the semester. For instance, films, music videos, songs, case vignettes, discussion forums, and small in-class and out-of-class activities are utilized to address the numerous ways in which students learn. The goal of the course is to not only introduce students to the social work profession, but also to debunk any misperceptions that are held about what social workers do and about the client populations they serve. While teaching about the various ways in which social workers practice, I also go beyond lectures and infuse the course sessions with dialogue about issues of social justice, equality versus equity, diversity, cultural competence, sex/sexism, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, and race/racism, all within the context of institutional and structural barriers that impact marginalized and oppressed groups. Ortiz and Jani (2010) assert that CRT challenges the social work profession to push beyond becoming more culturally competent to understand how institutional and structural barriers impede services to clients "because of the centrality of race in U.S. society" (p. 176). As a profession, we fall short in advocating for change at the macro level to disrupt those barriers that have historically marginalized and oppressed racial and ethnic

minority groups (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

Diverse issues are integrated each week throughout course topics, with one culminating class lecture dedicated solely to culture, race, racism, White privilege, power, discrimination, and cultural competence. Addressing these issues is a gradual process and one in which students of all racial and ethnic groups experience discomfort. As the instructor of the course, I feel it is my responsibility to engage in discussions with my students about the reality of race/racism in America. Furthermore, I am intentional about creating an environment in which students feel that they can *speak their truth* about the topic at hand. Speaking truth about their own positionality provides an opportunity for all voices to be heard rather than one dominating voice taking over the discussion or reinforcing a narrative that relegates the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities to the margins. One pedagogical strategy that I employ to elicit truthful dialogue is to have students write a reflection about what they learned during our class period and how they felt. The following week during class, I pass out the reflections (student names are de-identified) and everyone has an opportunity to read their peers' reflections aloud until everyone's voice is heard. As a class, we process what this experience was like and what themes they heard in the reflections that we need to revisit as a class. Engaging in these discussions is never easy and students report feeling discomfort.

After teaching this course over the last six years, I have never had a student drop my course because of his or her discomfort. However, they will express their discomfort in one of the following ways: (1) use of silence to resist engaging in discussions about institutional and structural racism, (2) shift the dialogue to focus on other forms of oppression, (3) blatantly disregard the experiences that their peers, who identify as racial and ethnic minorities, share during class discussions, or (4) express their discontent in their evaluations of the course at the end of the semester. For instance, one student stated, *"This course was well done for the most part. The one exception was the divisive discussion about 'white privilege.' Such topics are important to talk about but the way that could have been presented could have been better."* Another student stated*, "This is NOT a race/ethnic studies or sociology class. Less talk about race. I felt singled out because i'm [*sic*] white, the professor/TA are not."*

Each of these examples not only illustrates each student's discomfort with discussions about race/racism and social justice/equity, but if these discussions must be had in class, they need to be presented in a way that is more palatable for White students to accept.

The second student's comment also illustrates a lack of understanding of how race/racism are deeply rooted in the social, historical, and political context of social work practice. One thing that I make clear at the start of every semester is that social work is an applied discipline, meaning that the field draws from areas such as education, psychology, and sociology, to name a few. Last, the student expressing feelings of being left out because they were not of the same race/ethnicity as the professor and teaching assistant may echo the sentiments many of their White peers who were unaccustomed to a Black instructor may share. In other words, they are uncomfortable with an instructor who does not center or privilege their racial/ethnic heritage but centers the voices of racial/ethnic minorities. Scholars of color talk about this cognitive dissonance that White students experience when they encounter a Black woman in a position of

authority and the difficulty they have in understanding who we are (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Randolph, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Referring to the previous women scholars of color, I use their scholarship to enhance my own pedagogical practices in the courses that I teach. It is also an opportunity to further elucidate the use of CRT in social work education.

Teaching this course requires that I must balance creating a safe space for my students of color to share their lived experience, while simultaneously trying to get my White students to openly discuss their thoughts about race and racism. My goal is not to shame or blame my White students for the atrocities that have happened historically to racial and ethnic minorities, but to get them to understand within the larger context that race and racism are here to stay, unless we can engage in critical and thoughtful discussions to disrupt the existing narratives about racial and ethnic minority groups. Another goal I have is to get my White students to acknowledge their privilege and to see how their privilege can be used to disrupt injustices that others encounter. For example, this was a comment from another student:

> *[Name of instructor omitted] is a great person. We do not see eye to eye on how social situations should be handled as I am a conservative and she is liberal. That being said, the world needs people like [name of instructor omitted]. She Brings [*sic*] about great things in the world and should be proud of her work.*

While some may read this comment as a compliment from a student, in unpacking this statement and taking a more critical look, the following themes are present. The first theme is my political affiliation. I never share with my students my political affiliation. However, I do share with students alternative ways to understand how policies are developed and how they impact us all. The second theme is complimenting the instructor by stating *"the world needs people like her."* Again, when looking more critically at this statement, it appears to imply that more racial/ethnic minorities should teach White people how to treat the other—in this case, racial/ethnic minorities. Furthermore, this perception of greatness suggests I have some special skill to translate the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities to White middle-class students, thus absolving them of any responsibility to understand what our experiences as racial/ethnic minorities have been in this country through a racialized lens (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) and what their role has been in maintaining these institutions. Additionally, Ortiz and Jani (2010) note, racial and ethnic minorities experience microaggressions in the form of "subtle racially based generalizations" (p. 179). This student might have intended his or her statement to be a compliment, but instead it underscores the sense that I am different from other Black people—Black women to be exact (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

The intent of sharing my narrative is to change how social workers practice with racial and ethnic minorities, to conduct research to address the needs of marginalized and oppressed groups, and to effect how policies are developed and implemented for and with minority groups. This is a huge undertaking, yet one which I feel is important if we really want to see significant change within the social work profession.

Teaching a Diversity Course While Black and Male

As the sole African American male, tenure-track faculty member who teaches within a BSW program at a small PWI, engagements in race-conscious dialogue with White students from majority privileged backgrounds can be epistemologically violent. Too often I am expected to filter my critical consciousness in a way that is palatable for their learning. My *realness* on racial matters, as made evident through both my lived and practice experiences, evokes incivility, thus leading to less constructive discourse. For example, when I initiate conversations about White privilege, a strong majority of White students become more defensive instead of becoming reflective. In recent years, my main challenge has been engendering respect from students who are unaccustomed to seeing a male faculty of color demand critical introspection as a part of the learning process (Hunn, Harley, Elliott, & Canfield, 2015; Toliver et al., 2015). This lack of critical introspection is evident when students disengage around scenarios aimed at strengthening their insight on the historical significance of structural and institutional barriers imposed on oppressed groups (Moore et al., 2018). Nonetheless, this fact has not affected my resolve to teach from a critical and unapologetic framework, which necessitates critical discourse from White social work students about the intersection of race and racism. Abrams and Moio (2009) suggest faculty of color, as well as junior faculty, were more inclined to address disagreements centered on diversity within a classroom setting than their White faculty counterparts. It is important to encourage reflexive dialogue during lectures where cultural conflicts are at the epicenter.

Black males' invisibility within the context of US society is clear; equally invisible is the presence of Black male social work professors teaching cultural diversity within undergraduate and graduate social work programs at PWIs. As a bilingual Xennial of African descent tasked with teaching cultural diversity to mostly White students, I knew that this was not going to be an easy undertaking. Additionally, Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, and Galindo (2009) suggest faculty of color often "[bring] unique perspectives from their personal and social histories to the academy" (p. 314), thus I frame my pedagogy through a critical race perspective. It is through this lens that White students can decolonize and decode the nuances of institutional and systemic racism inherent in our White supremacist society to closely examine its effects on historically marginalized groups. For students, especially White students, to effectively operate in their future helping roles, they must become cognizant of the traumatic effects of societal racism on oppressed groups. It should be noted that my cultural diversity course is cross-listed because it is a curriculum requirement for a strong majority of the social science disciplines at this institution. Consequently, upon my first year at my institution, the conspicuous lack of critical introspection on race-based suffrage on the part of the White social work students could not be ignored. Thus, it was imperative, as the instructor on record, to teach experientially and introduce "pedagogical strategies to assist white students to gain an understanding of the power of whiteness, white supremacy, and the historical legacy of racism" (Nylund, 2006, p. 34).

For instance, one pedagogical strategy I use is giving students a historical prompt, like *Brown v. Board of Education*, to write a reflection on how this event has impacted and affected our society. This mode of critical pedagogy has incurred positive affirmations as well as negative backlash through student evaluations. For example, one student stated in my course evaluations,

"This course could have been of such help to me with my future occupation, but all I learned is how certain populations are in the situations they are in because of other populations, and why that is still today."

Another student stated, *"This course could be improved by getting a professor who is not so biased."* As I reflect on this student's statement, Black voices are expected to be politically marginalized and never centered within White academe. My unapologetic prose regarding the historical suffrage of oppressed communities ignites, more often than not, feelings of shame among White students from privileged backgrounds. This fragility triggers a form of emotionality that is rooted in a need to shift uncomfortable realities back on the object of oppression, in this instance, the instructor on record.

As stated previously, the experiences of faculty of color outside the academy can be used to inform their critical pedagogy. However, it is imperative that the realities of oppression are presented constructively in order to induce meaningful introspection in the lives of those who are not accustomed to issues of social inequities from oppressed groups. It can be argued that every person has biases, yet unchecked biases within social work education and practice can be toxic, thus affecting how services are delivered. Challenging students to recognize the difference between the two biases (conscious and unconscious) often comes at a cost of being labeled a biased and unfair instructor. Additionally, the comment that truly exemplified the level of racist undertones I dealt with from a student stated, *"It's one thing to be professional one moment and another become [*sic*] to get* ***ghetto*** *[*emphasis added*] the next, my goodness."* While my teaching evaluations annually reflect high points as well as discernible improvements, they also reveal both implicit and explicit bias from the student population.

For instance, students have displayed acts of implicit bias through an unconscious need to question my authority regarding grading, which has prompted them to inform administration (e.g., department chair, dean) disproportionately in comparison to my White counterparts. Moreover, an explicit bias can be seen through their engrained cultural stereotypes of Black men to support their rationale in speaking to me as a peer instead of their instructor. These comments, as well as acts of bias, support what research has shown about how "other students used their formal student evaluations to vent extensive negative emotional reactions to the required nature of the courses, to diversity as a topic, and to particular groups" (Schueths, Gladney, Crawford, Bass, & Moore, 2013, p. 1267). In the sections that follow, we discuss how our respective experiences, interpretations, and pedagogical approaches motivate us to inspire students to meaningfully engage with oppressed groups through critical theoretical perspectives that encapsulate their experiences historically and contemporarily.

Meaningful Engagement with Oppressed Groups

Both of our experiences of teaching while Black expose the harsh reality of what it means to educate students on the reality of race/racism in this country. Rather than focusing on teaching students to be culturally competent, we are trying to disrupt the biases they have about racial and ethnic minorities and make them more aware of how their biases can impact services with minority client populations. According to Otuyelu, Graham, and Kennedy (2016), "We teach

how to be culturally competent when we should be teaching how to sit with bias, while discussing its detrimental effect in practice" (p. 431). Teaching our students to learn how to "sit with bias" has been an uphill battle for each of us as a result of two competing beliefs. One belief is that the United States operates under a banner of racial neutrality in which all citizens are treated fairly, regardless of race. Yet, the current state of our country does not reflect racial neutrality given that our nation is bombarded with news of *Make America Great Again, Build the Wall*, and acts of domestic terrorism. Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, and Bluemel (2013) hold the view that, "data on racial disparities underscore the point that we do not live in a racially egalitarian or ideal society" (p. 456). Given our current political, racial, and social climate, now more than ever, social work educators cannot afford to produce social work students who are willfully ignorant to the social issues existent among oppressed groups in this country and the world at large.

Therefore, it is important to realize that by not addressing the personal biases of social work students, we inadvertently give license to privileged perceptions that will have adverse effects on the field of social work practice and research. For this reason, meaningful engagement with oppressed groups must begin in spaces that facilitate honest discussions of how race and social inequities are situated within institutions and structures that reinforce White privilege (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Campbell (2015) argues that cultural competence espouses the idea of "congruent values and beliefs" (p. 10) to promote acknowledging and affirming diverse groups. Both of us often facilitate this cultural congruence within our respective courses by facilitating a safe and open dialogue where divergent conclusions in regard to oppressed groups can be critically discussed without negative condemnation or reprisal. This form of critically engaged dialogue is called "mutual vulnerability" (Berry, 2010, p. 20). Essentially, faculty and students speak openly and honestly about their lived experience within the context of the course material. In our experience, once we (faculty) share from our lived experience, students are more receptive to speaking openly about their lived experience. Engaging in mutual vulnerability is not always an easy task, but we are both committed to speaking openly and honestly about dismantling ideas, values, and beliefs that maintain a dominating narrative about minoritized groups.

Summary and Implications

We began this piece by critiquing how cultural competence in the field of social work is not the end game toward the promotion of culturally responsive practice. As two faculty of color teaching at PWIs, we are often confronted by our students' lack of understanding in working with diverse client populations. More importantly, how can we truly achieve cultural competence when there is an underlying belief that the social work practitioner is the expert and knows all there is to know about working with diverse client populations? As we have seen in the works of Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, and Utsey (2013), Ortega and Faller (2011), and Tervalon and Murray-García (1998), cultural humility is what we should strive for as social work practitioners—to be committed to life-long self-reflection and evaluation in relation to power dynamics that exist between worker and client. Although the previous authors focus on cultural humility of counselors, social workers, and so forth in relationship to clients served, we believe that it is also important to discuss what cultural humility looks like in the teacher-student

dynamic. It is our hope that by sharing our narrative reflections of our teaching experiences at PWIs, teaching mostly White students, we shed light on the challenges that faculty of color in academe experience—teaching while Black. Previous literature about cultural competence and cultural humility focuses primarily on the worker-client dynamic, yet there seems to be a gap in the literature as it relates to the teaching experiences of faculty and students. We posit there is a need for more research that explores how social work programs are preparing students at the baccalaureate and graduate levels to practice cultural humility.

In closing, the writing process is never an easy experience for any person of color in academe. We, collectively, attempt to capture our most authentic voices within the margins of every manuscript submitted for publication. Each of us recognizes on a historical level the strides our predecessors made in order for us to navigate White spaces, especially in academe. In writing this article, we tried to remain mindful of our audience while speaking truthfully about the encounters that we have had teaching. Similarly, in writing our personal narratives as social work educators within a White space, we evoked a form of racial turmoil few can genuinely comprehend, let alone appreciate. Therefore, throughout this writing process, a recurring thought we had was how we can speak truth to power without alienating our colleagues, peers, and allies in social work education.

Additionally, our unapologetic prose is not intended to placate, yet to speak to the immeasurable strength required by social work faculty of color. Routinely, if not daily, we have to exert this strength in the midst of White opposition that reinforces acts of White privilege and supremacy. A positive outcome of this collaborative authorship has revealed a pressing need for social work education to adopt a critical pedagogy that will teach social work students on all levels the effects of the interplay of historical and contemporary social inequities on the lives of oppressed communities. Moreover, social work programs also have a responsibility to help students understand the power they hold over the lives of their clients. In other words, how can we teach students the importance of valuing and respecting the lived experiences of their clients without abusing the power that has been bestowed upon them because of their degree? Respectively, we have discovered that it is one thing to be philosophically culturally competent and entirely another to demonstrate this in practice. In particular, there is a need for the development of strategies that challenge students' implicit and explicit biases of oppressed groups that will directly affect their capability to deliver culturally relevant social work practice upon their exit from the program and entry into the profession.

Too few social work colleagues are willing, or even have the capacity, to speak unapologetically of these psychosomatic triggers and oppressive privileged praxes in fear of reprisal and non-conformity to Eurocentric standards (Daniel, 2011; Diggs et al., 2009). As anti-Black racism intensifies across the country, PWIs must aggressively confront and challenge the institutional, structural, and pedagogical racism found in their social work programs, curriculum, and campuses as a whole. Challenging dominant structures, both within the classroom and outside of it, must be done in such a way that emboldens social work students to authentically advocate for oppressed communities. In doing so, PWIs should form collaborative relationships with existent faculty of color (Whittaker, Montgomery, & Acosta, 2015) to conceptualize a methodology that will stimulate critical thinking and deliverable modalities that reflect cultural humility in practice

from social work practitioners.

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My White Rootedness: A *Testimonio*

Julie Cooper Altman

Abstract: This manuscript was developed as a *testimonio* at the end of an intensive cooperative learning project that was held at the author's Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). For ten weeks, seven of the faculty at that institution met as a group to read literature on the power and possibilities of HSIs, to discuss what their experiences were at their institution and what those experiences meant to them, and to invest their interest in co-creating a framework that might elicit a vision for their institution for the future. A *testimonio* sometimes serves the purpose of promoting justice from the inside out as people work to (re)build community(ies) with personal narratives. Within the *testimonio* tradition, secret or guarded roles are shared in essays or stories, in which one is *safe* to self-reflect, to write about one's personal life, and to reflect on the future.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, testimonio, self-reflection

As I am sitting here this morning, contemplating what words to spread across the screen of my computer, I notice the bowl of paperwhite bulbs beside me that I planted just three days ago. The new shoots of green seem to be growing practically as I watch—every day gaining altitude toward the ultimate unfolding of the beautiful scented flowers I love. But today, as I struggle to write of who I am, where I come from, and where I am headed, I notice along the edges of the bowl that the roots have also been growing and can now be seen emerging along its outer edges. Who knows where they will go (biologically determined as they are to stay underground to survive) to serve as the anchor for what emerges above, but yearning to break free in their white rootedness and grow like the nubile shoots of green which rise above them.

Maybe it is my reluctance to put on paper what has been swirling around my mind and heart these past 10 weeks. As the culminating project of our intensive cooperative learning project, which focused on our identity as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), this *testimonio* was assigned to aid us in building our university's community with our own personal narrative. Within this tradition, secret or guarded roles are shared in essays or stories, where we are *safe* to self-reflect, to write about our personal life, and to reflect on the future.

For 10 weeks, seven of us faculty met as a learning co-op to read literature on the power and possibilities of HSIs, to discuss what our experiences at our institution were and what they mean to us, and to invest our interest in co-creating a framework that might elicit a vision for our institution for the future. So, as I stare into the emerging paperwhites, I work to articulate where I am on my journey toward growth. How does my white rootedness both ground and limit me in this walk? Let me begin to explore.

Decisions

The decision I made to leave all that was familiar and join the faculty of California State University at Monterey Bay recently was one of the most difficult decisions of my life, and one I still work to dissect, unpack, and make meaning of. While there is no doubt in my mind that it

was a good decision, there are many and competing narratives (depending on who is doing the telling) that could be spun about this choice. I prefer the central one that continues to emerge in my heart and mind which is this: As I become more aware of the limited time I have available to me as a productive academic, I am eager to find ways to inspire and facilitate a larger scope of influence in my work within social work education.

No, maybe it's more personal than that. As I become more aware of the limited time I have available to me as a human being on this earth, I am eager to find ways to inspire and facilitate my own self-growth and development. *To remind myself that I am still able to do this.* To feel the energy and excitement of engaging in a novel experience and the self-worth that comes with the accomplishment of a challenge.

As Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2009) so eloquently writes in her excellent book, *The Third Chapter*:

> In order to take on new life adventures you must be eager to develop new kinds of activities, new daily rhythms, new habits of conduct, and new sources of motivation and reward . . . going from a comfortable, settled life of layers and density to being an outsider—where you have no particular expectations, no particular history or identity, no networks, no reputation—able to reinvent yourself with the energy and excitement of a fresh start. (p. 63)

My decision to start this new chapter here at one of the smaller and newer campuses of the California State University system is the beginning of the path toward what I hope is my longed-for, renewed chance for both self-growth and development, and a larger scope of influence within social work education. These also happen to be related to the fundamental, intersecting elements of cultural humility, which include ongoing self-reflection, self-critique, lifelong learning, and a commitment to advocacy and institutional change (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). I committed, upon my hiring, to work hard at increasing my limited understanding of Latinx culture and my capacity to better serve in this HSI of higher education. This commitment is what led to my participation in this unique learning cooperative, one product of which is this *testimonio*.

The Personal Is Political

I want to write next about three separate unsettling interactions I experienced recently, which continue to poke and prod at me in my dreams, moments of insomnia, and reflective hours walking or driving. The first was a meeting I had with my dean about my pressing desire to hire a Latinx faculty member for our department, as our small MSW program has none, despite over 60 percent of our students identifying as Latinx, a similar proportion to the clients we serve as social workers in this region.

In (as I recall) my passionate plea for funds to either extend or adapt our search to better yield a Latinx faculty member, she said (as I recall) something to the effect that I should be mindful of

the significant influence a white, non-Latinx academic could have with this population—that I should not undervalue the experience I nor any new non-Latinx hire may have in benefiting this population. This, I should add, has certainly been her lived experience. But it had not been my lived experience, yet, as I struggled with having taken a position that in a socially just world should have gone to a Latinx or other under-represented minority candidate (had there been any).

While I know she was speaking from her heart, I could not assuage the lingering doubts and frustration I took away from this discussion. I *do* think it matters who is sitting around the table or teaching in the front of the classroom. I am unconvinced that we should settle for anything less than diversifying our all-too-homogeneous program faculty. So, while I struggled with trying to make this happen despite limited resources and a sluggish, traditional search process, I simultaneously struggle with trying to be true to her words—to work to serve the Latinx population of students and clients better, despite my white, non-Latinx rootedness.

The second experience was much more caustic. Before the beginning of a chamber music concert I attended recently—in what I perhaps erroneously stereotype as the politically right-leaning, rich-and-white-person-dominated nearby community—I began a discussion with an elderly woman seated on my left. When the conversation led to what I did and where I worked, she asked what I thought of our new university president, "Eduardo"—and I emphasize that she did not refer to him as "President _____." Already my radar was set for micro-aggression land. I replied that in my limited interaction, I found him quite lovely and very personable. She then replied (verbatim), "Well, I personally don't find him very impressive. On the radio you can hardly understand what he is saying. He needs to learn to enunciate properly." With my growing confidence, I retorted, "Did you know our university is an HSI, and that perhaps our president's accent is purposeful, to identify and demonstrate his community leadership as a Hispanic person?" She then added fuel to this now very ethnically tinged fire with something like, "Well, those people need to know that in this country you will never succeed without learning proper English." The discussion unraveled from there, with me suggesting that perhaps it is not our president's tongue that needs adjusting, but her ears, and adding some words (with the color in my face rising and my heart rate now increasing) about the value of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual society, before, blessedly, the music began. At intermission, I moved across the auditorium.

How I still struggle with this interchange! I have retold this now multiple times, perhaps in an attempt to better understand my place in it, perhaps in an attempt to understand it better by seeing how it bounces off those I tell, or perhaps to position myself socially as a loyal member of my new environment by expressing outrage and indignation at the insulting of a member of our university family, or politically, as a left-leaning liberal with a social justice heart. Yet I also wonder, am I one of those well-intentioned liberals who spread stories like this, which, perhaps, only serve to further cement these degradations as part of a hegemonic discourse?

Third story. I sit quietly (as I have multiple times now in some venue of my new community) in a large meeting of social service agency and county leaders—this time, the Children's Council of Monterey County. As an interested community member, I sit at the outer ring reserved for *the*

public. Around the table, honest, are 16 white, non-Latinx discussants and decision makers and one Latino, who was retiring after an illustrious career as our chief probation officer and who would no longer be participating as a member of the council. Around the outer ring, there were mostly women of color, many who may identify as Latinx.

How can this be, I think, in this county and in this venue—whose mission is to better serve the children of our low-income, agricultural county (who demographically are 75 percent Latinx)—that those whose voices and power matter come from a different population altogether? I do not understand. I do not understand, just as I do not understand the dearth of Latinx faculty in my program or across this HSI campus.

My Place and Time in a Liminal Space

As I contemplate this new chapter in my work life, which propelled me from the East Coast to the West Coast, from all that was familiar to the largely unfamiliar, from having been known to now being a stranger to all, I feel disoriented. I no longer hold the status I held in my previous context, unsure at this stage in my academic transition of all the identities I will hold in my new institution. I'm between here and there in my life and career, but also in my awareness and my development. Perhaps it's a good place to be, or at least it feels like it is. There's a certain comfort in this liminality.

Or maybe this liminal space is just a resting place—on my way to my emergence as being for or against something. Having hard edges. Making decisions that define me. Is it my safe refuge where I am exempt from accountability, at least for the time being—a sort of excuse from pushing myself to know enough to be one place or the other? Or is it, rather, a natural place, from where I can adopt a neutral observer stance more comfortably, the kind of place many mature academics find themselves after their years of brash and opinionated outspokenness?

Gloria Anzaldua (1987) wrote that no one is exempt from contributing to oppression in limited contexts. As such, self-reflexivity and seeing through the eyes of others becomes essential to gaining a deeper understanding than can be achieved by staying within one's social milieu. I take great comfort in her writing, though I admit with humiliation that I was unaware of her work until I made the decision to come here last spring. Her writing and that of many other Latinx writers and thinkers give me direction and strength to be courageous enough to propel myself and my thinking forward in new ways, and to take risks, perhaps like I did with the woman at the concert. Their writing, and the writing of others we read as part of this learning cooperative, inspires me to think about how my work can be built around the important parts of my own identity—the white rootedness curling around for a place of stability and resolve while the green shoots soar.

Dialogue, Cultural Humility, and Growth

Participation in this learning co-op, and preparation of this *testimonio*, has helped me to more closely examine my own beliefs as an academic who is a cisgender, white, heterosexual female of northern European heritage as well as a first-generation college graduate. Cultural humility is

a lifelong process of developmental self-reflection and self-critique, which are important to social work practice, and I am grateful for all the opportunities I have had to step back professionally and better understand my own assumptions, values, and biases. This co-op has given me the time and space to both develop and reflect on who I am in my new context, to grow more culturally humble. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (2009) writes:

> Learning happens best when we allow ourselves to be fully absorbed, to participate, to make mistakes. This kind of openness requires humility, the willingness to take risks, the capacity to look foolish, and, if we are lucky, a lightness of style and a well-developed sense of humor. (p. 158)

I am thankful for the commitment my university is making to help us all as academics in an HSI engage in situating ourselves more meaningfully in this community.

I have gained both vision and voice through my participation in this learning co-op. Through sharing stories, illuminating our values, and asking, always, both what meaning they serve and what future framework they may construct for our institution as an HSI, I have gained some new lenses. Just as I learned after the eye doctor prescribed my first pair of glasses recently, it's not that I couldn't see before. It's that now, when I put on my new glasses, everything in my gaze becomes that much sharper, with harder and clearer outlines and vivid color. I had always seen racism, microaggressions, and the impact of white supremacy. I had even begun to understand my own whiteness. But now, through my learning in this co-op, my seeing each has become sharper, their effects more clear, the reality of it all more indelible.

As my improved vision propels new demands for immediacy, I have found my voice growing stronger and my messages more urgent. The presence of supportive colleagues who have pushed me to express who I am in this community, who hold me accountable, and who provide both the canvas on which to express and the palette from which to choose how best to use our own colors—these have been priceless foundational elements to growing my capacity to have a more meaningful voice here in my academic community and beyond. I am now more confident in sharing my perspective in classroom teaching, discussions, and faculty meetings. I find I have a stronger appetite for experiences that push me to know myself better and to reflect upon that knowledge. I am eager to participate in action that helps me and others recognize the impact of white supremacy and begin to find ways to dismantle it structurally. I know that I have a long way to go, but with better vision and a clearer voice, I can negotiate the path forward more effectively.

I hope I can do what Lawrence-Lightfoot (2009) suggests is the constructive, integrative work that comes in our march toward new growth, where "we learn to use our voices, with new authority and courage, from the depths of our diaphragms, and unlearn the practiced silences and caution that kept us out of trouble in the past" (p. 227).

I have found the experience of participating in this learning cooperative incredibly valuable, and I want to thank my fellow explorers for their support of my journey toward being a better, more humble learner and citizen of the world and of this campus community. You provided a safe

place full of respect for me to express all my ill-communicated, half-formed ideas and recollections of experiences, make my awkward attempts to listen to the things inside my heart, and to find my place and my time to grow here in this last chapter of my academic story. I look forward to where my journey will lead.

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Cultural Humility: It's Not Just about the Hijab

Val Livingston

Abstract: As the project director of a workforce development program for individuals receiving SNAP benefits, I encountered students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. We served largely Black/African American, Caucasian, Asian, and Latino individuals, but also attracted a small population of Middle Eastern students. The participants ranged from 18 to 59 years of age, and all were seeking free job training in order to enhance their earning potential. As a social worker, I have provided training on cultural competence and prided myself on my skills and knowledge of culturally competent interactions. Despite my perceived proficiency, one of my Middle Eastern female students provided an opportunity for me to examine my cultural competency skills and an opportunity to learn and experience something more—cultural humility.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, cultural competence, self-reflection and critique, mindfulness

My duties as the director of a job training program for lower income individuals included recruiting participants, assessing student needs, providing supportive or wraparound services, and enrolling students into vocational trainings. Each week, I conducted information sessions for potential participants and explained the enrollment process. In addition to free job training, my project was able to assist current students with past due rent, past due utility bills, minor car repairs, minor dental services, uniforms, work tools, and transportation. Participation in the program was voluntary.

During one of the information sessions, a young Middle Eastern female was assigned to my project. It was my responsibility to meet with everyone assigned to the treatment group, discuss next steps, and provide transportation assistance. I also scheduled program orientations and enrollment into the community college. As I met with this young woman, she indicated that she had young children, she was married, and her primary language was Arabic. Miriam (not her real name) spoke English and was dressed in the traditional burka. She asked a number of questions about the training opportunities and the dates and times of the classes for the particular training that she wanted to pursue. As I explained the training dates, Miriam relayed her concern about her inability to attend classes during evening hours. I advised her that the schedules were set by the college based on the availability of instructors and classroom space. Failing to understand her reason for needing something other than the evening training, I took a very firm position and advised her in the same way that I advised other students who had conflicts with training dates and time. I advised Miriam that she would need to make the decision on whether to participate in the project or obtain training elsewhere.

Miriam continued to push forward her need for afternoon classes, and I continued to restate the college's position for scheduling classes. Miriam's concern increased as she explained to me that she could only take the training in the afternoon because she needed to train while her husband was at work and her children were in school. She added that she desperately wanted to get away from her husband but had no income and no special skills that would allow her to support herself

and her children. While I understood Miriam's desire to train without her husband's knowledge, I continued to explain that the schedules were set and could not be individualized for one student. Her desperation increased as she continued to advise me that she really needed to get away from her husband and could only do this if she obtained a job paying a livable wage. Miriam confided that sometimes her husband would not allow her to drive the family vehicle, but she advised me that she was willing to walk to the college, if necessary, to obtain the training. Miriam was adamant that her husband be unaware of her plans. After 20 minutes of discussion, Miriam agreed to attend the job readiness component of the training during the afternoon hours. I advised Miriam that if the need for her desired training increased, more classes might be added in the future but there was no guarantee.

Over the next two months, Miriam completed the 6-week job readiness component of the program. We met several times during that time period, and she gradually shared her story about the various methods of control that her husband exercised over her. She explained that the union was an arranged marriage devoid of love. On one occasion, Miriam requested assistance with her mortgage, but the house was listed in her husband's name and, therefore, we could not assist her. Several weeks later, she requested assistance with a utility bill. The utility bill was registered in Miriam's name and I advised her that I could assist with the utility bill but only if the mortgage was in both names. Somehow, she was able to get the mortgage listed in both names, and I advised her that I would submit her request for processing. Miriam was relieved because if we had been unable to assist with the bill, she would need to seek assistance from her brother. Miriam's husband was a small business owner, but he required her to get credit cards and the various utilities in her name. He allowed her to have a cell phone but would take it away when he chose to do so. Since she had no job, she would frequently need to borrow money from her brother or family members to pay the bills in her name or risk damaging her credit. Miriam explained to me that this was her husband's way of preventing her from obtaining an apartment or buying a house on her own. As I think back on this discussion, this was my first real opportunity—and second clue—to her status as a domestic violence victim. It did not occur to me to ask Miriam if she was interested in going to a domestic violence shelter or if she was in danger. She did not express any concern for physical violence, just unhappiness in a loveless marriage. I expected that she was accustomed to this controlling behavior based on what I had read about Middle Eastern customs and the status of Muslim women. In retrospect, this was an opportunity to obtain more information about her relationship with her husband and determine if there was more at stake than controlling behavior and a loveless marriage.

Over the next few weeks, while we waited to see if an afternoon class would materialize, Miriam confided in me about her lifestyle and her plans to leave her husband. I began to understand her desperation to get away and then began to view her insistence on afternoon classes as a human rights issue rather than a demand to accommodate her particular schedule. Initially, I did not want to question Miriam about her husband's dominance over her as I did not want to seem judgmental about her customs and traditions. From a cultural humility perspective, I was so focused on not judging her cultural traditions that I was blind to her desire to depart from the norms to which I assumed she was accustomed. I did not ask the clarifying questions. Fortunately, there were many questions that Miriam answered despite my reluctance to ask.

As time progressed, Miriam began to educate me about her customs and traditions. Miriam advised me of the reason she covered her hair and body in the presence of unmarried males. During one of our sessions, Miriam taught me how to wrap the hijab around my head. As I acquired more knowledge about Miriam and her customs, I wanted more and more to help her get away from this man who was exercising a considerable amount of control over her. I began to see her as I would any other woman who was not of Middle Eastern ethnicity. I began to see her as a victim of domestic violence, not of a physical nature but emotional and financial. I began to see her as a woman who wanted to live her life without someone else controlling her every movement. This perspective was "normal" for me since I was single and very independent. Prior to each meeting with Miriam, I continually reminded myself of the need to be aware of my personal feelings about independence and not impose them on someone from a different culture. As I became more familiar with Miriam, I began to admire her determination to start on a path that could be scary and confusing. Her desire to leave her traditional path was both surprising and understandable to me as I attempted to place myself in her shoes. My desire to help her grew with each new piece of information.

As the number of students desiring the same training as Miriam increased, I was able to schedule an afternoon class. The staff made several attempts to contact Miriam to enroll her in the training, but her phone was no longer in service. Several weeks passed with no contact. Miriam eventually contacted staff to let us know that her husband had turned off her phone but she was still interested in the training. We enrolled her in the upcoming class, but she never presented for the training. Miriam's career coach and I discussed the loss of contact and were somewhat concerned. We considered possible alternatives to reach her but did not want to jeopardize her status. We could not risk sending a letter to her home since she had previously requested that her enrollment be confidential. We considered that her phone may have been disconnected again. For several weeks, the career coach checked the obituaries, and we were thankful that her name was never listed. By the time the project ended four months later, Miriam had not re-established contact with the project staff.

I believe that I made several erroneous assumptions regarding Miriam and her needs. By attempting to be culturally competent, I did not ask certain questions for fear of offending or seeming judgmental. Asking questions is how we learn and adjust assumptions. Cultural competence is grounded in knowledge of other cultures and belief systems, but more was at stake (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). As I look back at my interactions with Miriam, she provided me with several opportunities to ask questions, clarify her needs and implement effective interventions. Miriam advised me from our first meeting that she wanted to get away from her husband and that it was important that he not be aware of her plans to leave. The control that her husband exercised over her was sufficient to assess her as a domestic violence victim. I did not offer shelter because I didn't think that would be appropriate at the time. Miriam was a very proud person, and I did not want to offer something that might be perceived as offensive. Had I asked the question, she could have accepted or declined the option.

Had I exercised more opportunities for mindfulness, I would not have been distracted by the hijab (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). Operating from a cultural humility perspective would have positioned me to question my assumptions and actions while allowing Miriam to teach me more

about her life, customs, and needs (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Cultural humility is a life-long process of self-reflection and critique and should be distinguished from cultural competency by educators and practitioners if we are to engage successfully in multicultural interactions (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016). Knowledge of another person's customs and belief systems provides only a small portion of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for culturally-informed interventions. The concept of cultural humility is relatively new to me, unlike cultural competence. In a discussion with several colleagues, I found that many confuse cultural competency with cultural humility. I believe there is an opportunity to educate more helping professionals on the difference as well as the need to continually question what we think we know about the diverse groups we encounter.

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Cultivating Lifelong Commitments to Cultural Humility in an Undergraduate Study Abroad Program

Mandy L. Kellums Baraka, Laura S. Meitzner Yoder, Alex H. Jones, and James G. Huff

Abstract: Cultural humility has become an important framework for engagement in a multi-disciplinary, undergraduate, six-month study abroad program at a Midwest Christian university. Students in the program intern with partner organizations that respond to social and environmental issues, including injustice, discrimination, marginalization, and bias at all system levels. In this brief narrative, the authors reflect upon why the program staff chose cultural humility as the preferred framework for learning and engagement with students and how that framework is implemented throughout the program. The authors begin with a short overview of the program, giving particular attention to the curricular elements. Then, the authors briefly acknowledge the selection of cultural humility over cultural competence in the training and mentorship of students. Finally, the authors conclude with a description of how cultural humility is applied as a posture of interaction with students, and they provide examples of how cultural humility fosters collaborative learning in the context of accompaniment in students' preparation for an international internship and for lifelong learning in a variety of settings and circumstances.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, study abroad, lifelong learning, intercultural education

Since 2016, the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program's mission statement has included the purpose of cultivating a "life-orienting commitment to . . . intercultural humility" (Wheaton College, n.d., para. 1). As faculty and staff of an undergraduate study abroad program, we understand that cultural humility applies to our own ongoing growth as we interact with students and international partners, as well as being a posture that we seek to practice in our interactions and teaching. We hope to foster cultural humility in student cohorts through their two years of intentional intercultural learning, both at their US college campus and while overseas for six months (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, Ousman, 2016; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013). We use this reflection to consider why we choose to use principles of cultural humility, rather than cultural competence, in our academic setting. The following narrative provides a glimpse into cultural humility as a framework for engagement in an undergraduate study abroad program.

Human Needs and Global Resources: Brief Program Overview

The HNGR program at Wheaton College in Illinois began in 1976 and continues today as "an academic certificate program that integrates multidisciplinary coursework, a six-month internship, and whole-person formation through experiential learning" (Wheaton College, n.d., para. 1). The heart of the program is a six-month international internship where students are placed with partner organizations according to their academic disciplines and interests. These organizations are small- to medium-scale and led by local staff in a low-income or

socio-politically marginalized community located in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The programs and initiatives that partner organizations implement address a broad range of human and environmental concerns: public health and wellness, microenterprise and economic development, political advocacy and legal support, peace and reconciliation work, education, sustainable agriculture, water resource management, and theological training, among other issues of power, social injustice, discrimination, marginalization, and bias at all system levels (Jones, Huff, Kellums Baraka, & Meitzner Yoder, 2019). A key opportunity in the HNGR program is for students to walk alongside and learn from local leaders about how organizations, churches, and communities respond to critical human needs in their midst (Scott, 2015).

The HNGR program, a multi-disciplinary program, is open to student applicants from across the undergraduate curriculum. The application process typically begins in the fall semester of students' second year, and they are notified of acceptance to the program late in the spring semester of that academic year. Approximately 22-30 students are accepted into the program annually; a new cohort officially begins the program at the end of the students' second year of studies at Wheaton College (Jones et al., 2019). Cohorts always include national, racial, and ethnolinguistic diversity and socio-economic backgrounds that span rural, suburban, and urban contexts. Additionally, our program commonly holds students with international and intercultural experiences. With a high representation of *third culture kids*, whose personal histories sometimes involve voluntary or forced high mobility across different countries and cultures, or contain portions of childhood in more isolated enclaves within non-passport countries (e.g., military, missionary, or corporate compounds), the diversity among our student population is always present, but always unique. The two-year curriculum is comprised of programmatic components that combine classroom-based learning (e.g., core HNGR courses), experiential learning, and field-based forms of learning (e.g., HNGR small groups and retreats, local volunteer work, international internship), all of which are designed to prepare the students for the accompaniment of others in different contexts and circumstances and for "[pursuing] justice, and [seeking] fullness of life" in the lives they build during and beyond their years at Wheaton College (Wheaton College, n.d., para. 1).

We recognize that the HNGR program requires considerable collaboration among our five faculty and staff members. As we seek to integrate diverse curricular elements, we actively must listen to and learn from one another. In doing so, we each draw from our different academic specializations (e.g., international and community development, political ecology, higher education, theology, sociology/anthropology, and psychology/counseling). We also use our professional expertise and experience (e.g., field-based and experiential learning courses, study abroad programming, mental health counseling, and wellness care to humanitarian workers) to develop and implement the two-year curriculum. Our students participate in small groups during the preparation stage, in individual mentoring, and in teaching English to recently-arrived refugees, and they attend retreats along with classroom components. Thus, we are mindful of the variety of ways that we also are privileged to learn from our students' engagement with others throughout the curriculum as well.

Choosing Cultural Humility

In our sector of study abroad within higher education, cultural competency is a dominant paradigm (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Earnest, Rosenbusch, Wallace-Williams, & Keim, 2015; Hermond, Vairez, & Tanner, 2018; Neito & Zoller Booth, 2010). The competency orientation dovetails with the overall achievement orientation of higher education, situating culture among the suite of skills and knowledge which can be mastered in, through, and for international educational experiences. Deliberate attention to cultural awareness is an important part of working with students preparing for study abroad, but the purpose of our particular program is to foster an enduring, lifelong posture of seeking to learn from people and institutions that are often relegated to social margins (Foronda et al., 2016; Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998; Wheaton College, n.d.). For this reason, the language and framework of mastery and competence runs counter to our program's larger purpose of challenging the human propensity to grasp power and its multiple manifestations that enable oppressive systems to coalesce and injustice to persist.

Cultural humility is an essential learning outcome for the HNGR program because the program's pedagogy is oriented toward learning through deliberate displacement of the human penchant to exert mastery and control over circumstances, other people, and the natural world. Undergraduate study programs list the various competencies (e.g., speech, language) students must acquire through coursework or demonstrate through testing, but cultural humility is a posture of never-ending learning through coming to know others. This learning is enacted in relationships where, unlike typical classroom assignments, there is no endpoint at which one might arrive and rest in the sense of completion. In relationships, the possibilities for learning are never-ending. Being placed in situations where one is clearly not able to control the situation interrupts many students' normal habitus of mastery and competence fostered through higher education. For many students, these circumstances profoundly challenge the *evaluative form* they are accustomed to carrying and applying all around them (Jennings, 2010). For example, in one instance, a student reflected on her journey of photographing a highly marginalized population in her host context, remarking that using a camera to capture the images of people who are vulnerable can realign commonly used forms of evaluation (i.e., still images that capture in time preconceived pictures of a particular group of individuals) and emphasize who has control within a context. By learning to pass the camera on to her photographic "subjects, " allowing them to also capture their own images, the student learned that the relieving of the artist's power is important in building relationships.

Our desire is that our students will increasingly become curious about their hosts' experiences as they see how their hosts address issues of power imbalance, social injustice, discrimination, and bias at all system levels in a particular context (Hook et al., 2013). We work toward helping students of all backgrounds make an enduring lasting commitment to not just the process of learning, but also to putting themselves in relationships, contexts, and situations with neighbors and community members where they are consistently encountering difference in various dimensions. We hope that their dispositions become such that they do not seek positions of control but recognize and challenge power imbalances for respectful engagement, and that they will seek to bridge differences, to know strangers, and to become the kinds of people who will

not isolate themselves in cultural enclaves. In our final capstone class with our students before graduation, we ask them three important questions that we hope they will contemplate for years to come: Where are you going to live? With whom will you live? Who goes with you? As students grapple with these questions, they develop an overall disposition of cultural humility and a desire to do the work of encountering difference and allowing intentional engagement to change them in an ongoing way personally and professionally. We want our students to choose and to be able to live well in diverse worlds.

How We Use Cultural Humility as a Framework

We see cultural humility as a disposition that is to be cultivated and developed in the course of learning from and interacting with others. It is not, then, in a strict sense a static outcome that one can achieve at a point in time. We repeatedly introduce students to cultural humility—while not always using that term explicitly—before, during, and after the six-month international internship component of the program. Our program faculty and staff are comprised of individuals with different professional experience and, thus, different roles within the program and in relation to students. While only one of our program staff members is a licensed mental health counselor, we collectively find that our approach aligns with many of the findings from Hook et al.'s (2013) study on cultural humility among counseling psychologists in relationship with clients. We seek to engage with our students with an attitude of curiosity and humility toward their background and its effect on shaping their responses, goals, and expectations. For example, in the internship placement process with our students, we intentionally ask questions and consider a student's life experiences, from birth to the present, in identifying placements. This is also important in helping students both understand and navigate the wide array of parental and family expectations they bring to the international internship and its future effects on their lives. For some, the experience is specifically expected to boost career prospects, while others receive messages about expanding personal horizons or (re)connecting with a family member's heritage. Other students face family suspicion or reluctance regarding their involvement with marginalized communities, sometimes because such communities are seen as *dangerous others* or because that experience is seen as reflecting the student's own family background from which parents or others seek distance (e.g., immigrants, low socioeconomic status, minority status, religious and cultural differences).

We strive to develop strong working alliances with our students individually and as a cohort to foster trust in the relationship, which is important to ongoing support during the internship. For example, when we recognize a student's internalized bias against learning from people of a different gender, we can provide a few initial invitations to unpack some of the hesitations through reading an article written by an author of that gender from an upcoming internship context. We can discuss the student's learnings and inquire about how listening to diverse voices could become a life-changing habit. Through retreats and extra-curricular and co-curricular experiences, such as preparing and eating meals together, we build the trust that allows us to introduce challenging topics and help students discover pathways to personal growth regarding intercultural and interpersonal understanding.

Since our program is a multi-disciplinary undergraduate program, different from helping

professions in which cultural humility is typically described and discussed, we believe in incorporating knowledge, values, and skills at appropriate development levels and maintain expectations of a humble learning posture (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Cultural humility plays an active role in how we and our students engage in social justice, particularly partnering with communities worldwide. The program curriculum incorporates a robust and interrelated set of learning practices that repeatedly provide us with the opportunity to come alongside our students as co-learners and provide our students with the opportunity to engage in observation and critical self-reflection.

Students who become accustomed to introspective awareness and consideration of their own cultures are better able to engage in intercultural learning with others (Harper, 2018). When speaking to students, for example, members of the HNGR staff might name their own positionality as indicators of our ongoing need to learn more about ourselves, such as our race, gender, class, marital status, and other socially defining categories. Other important habits to cultivate include regular (ideally, daily) writing of field notes that prompt students to interpret their responses and experiences to being guests in a new cultural context. Before departure for international locations, students participate in weekly in-home English tutoring of recently arrived refugees resettled near campus. Following each tutoring session, students record their activities to report to the sponsoring agency and respond in their field notebooks to a self-awareness prompt to note something they learned about their own responses to the intercultural interaction.

Within our program's framework, learning about self is normally paired with learning about others, and we try to explicitly link these processes in and out of the classroom. Assignments, experiential activities, small group meetings, and cohort-building events and interactions normally have tandem elements of self-reflection in a group context alongside the process of coming to learn to perceive and understand the cultural expressions of the people right around them. This can be the catalyst for students to remember to continue these practices throughout their internships and upon return to campus for their final semester. For example, alumni frequently write about their plans and experiences of entering any new space (e.g., graduate school, home in a changed context, new international placement) as a learner, seeking to understand the backgrounds and experiences of the people around them.

We have the opportunity to walk with our students inside and outside the classroom. In every interaction we seek to cultivate a collaborative proximity with the student participants in the program, including our own selves and our own life experiences in the educational process. Program staff often give examples from our own stories, past and present, modeling the openness of cultural humility as we relate not our own competence, but narrate real-life personal experiences of failure. We regularly acknowledge our own identities and the intersecting dimensions of diversity among us as a staff, within the cohort, with host partners, and beyond. We strive to continually be upfront about our societal placements and the limitations of our own perspectives, encouraging students to consider how their own identity and positionality may affect relationships in their new setting as well. Such discussions are woven throughout the program—in advising, the classroom, and mentoring—and we invite students to develop relationships with trusted others who can include space to voice questions and concerns as well.

Finally, experiential assignments and class materials also aim to demonstrate a humble approach even toward the content of our learning together. For example, on the opening day of class, we tell the students, "We don't know all the content that you will learn in this course." The reason we tell them that is because the material that we will work through in the class is largely drawn from the students' weekly field assignments, which include observation, interviews, curiosity, and participatory mapping. Ongoing opportunities for program alumni and partner organizations' personnel to attend class and speak to and field questions from students about their experiences provide a chance for us to emphasize learning and engagement with others. Given the high achievement orientation of most of our students, we find it necessary to explicitly release them from the pressure or expectation that they are "sent out as little experts" in the words of a Filipina supervisor, Dr. Melba Maggay (2016).

Conclusion

While cultural humility has largely been explored within the helping professions, we find that the principles of cultural humility have a prominent place in our program's history and future. We are committed to the practice of self-reflection, self-critique, and curiosity about people with life experiences different from one's own to promote among our students an ongoing life-orienting posture of humility and openness to learning from and with others. Our hope is that as we engage in cultural humility as much as possible with our students, our students will catch and continue the vision of the HNGR program, pursuing justice and fullness of life through a humble posture of learning and accompaniment in a variety of settings and circumstances.

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Exploring Cultural Humility and Online Programs: Mid-Career Academics and Changing Times

Wendy Elizabeth Sellers and Joshua Kirven

Abstract: This article will explore the evolution of two mid-career academics in their growth and understanding of online education. The perspectives are similar in that both contributors have over a decade of experience in academia. The authors explore the shared identity of mid-career academia while at the same time exploring the differences in this identity based on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. This reflection will trace the journey of two social work professors from their entry into higher education to the evolution of perspectives and letting go of preconceived biases and expectations regarding the future of social work education. Ultimately, the authors infuse the African tradition of *Sankofa* in exploring cultural humility and online learning. Through this lens, the authors affirm the importance of moving forward and looking back. The article provides fresh perspectives for other seasoned professors who are struggling to make meaning in an ever-changing world of technology.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, intersectionality, academia and change, online learning

The Genesis

We are two mid-career associate professors. We have a combined 40 years of social work practice and teaching experience. We were attracted to the profession because of our life journeys and the emphasis on equality, equity, diversity, and justice. We are both macro social workers who see social change as the core of who we are and what we do. *Unfaithful Angels* (Specht & Courtney, 1995), a work that challenges social workers to recommit to the mission of serving those most in need, is our doctrine. But there are differences. One of us is a white female from a privileged background in which both parents had graduate degrees and punishments came in the form of five-paragraph essays about whatever crime was committed and lessons learned. The other is a black male from a humble yet loving matriarchal upbringing in a small industrial city in the northeast region, where the population was diverse and people expressed tolerance if you worked hard and knew your place. We have come from different worlds, but we are united now in sharing our new journey in developing humility in a culture neither one of us was prepared for—the online learning culture and a new shift in social work education.

This is our story.

The Awakening

"You better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone / For the times they are a-changin'"
- Bob Dylan (1964)

My (first author) story began with parents who encouraged me to embrace diversity and challenge the rigid, biased values that surrounded me in the Deep South. Thus, while my

classmates went to Sunday school, took dance lessons, and vacationed at beach resorts, I played in ditches, cared for pet rats and frogs, and recited Bob Dylan. My parents would hold family meetings with the release of each new vinyl. We would sit around on the burnt-orange shag carpet of our wood-paneled den, listening to each new song and analyzing the lyrics as Dylan poured out his angst at an unjust world. The poetic words became ingrained in my persona from a very early age, and I lived by the calls for peace and social justice in his songs "Masters of War, " "Blowin' in the Wind, " and "Hurricane." But "The Times They Are A-Changin'" always held a special place in my soul. I lived by the mantras of questioning authority, respecting the youth, and embracing social change. The lyrics spoke to me in a way that inspired me to honor the brothers and sisters who had come before me and to carry that torch of social justice forward. I vowed never to let go of my inner childlike wonder of the world and to never become stuck in my ways.

Then I met online education. Two years ago, my university, like so many universities throughout this nation, "drank the Kool-Aid" and set sail on a new journey in developing online programs. Furthermore, our university's plan was to partner with a for-profit, corporate entity in undertaking this endeavor. To me, as a professor of social work for over 15 years, this felt like a betrayal of everything I stood for and everything I valued in teaching. Students needed to be in classrooms, I professed. Faculty needed to be in face-to-face communication with the future leaders of the world. A fundamental core value of our profession, I argued, was the importance of human relationships. We were giving in to "the man, " the evils of online education and corporate America.

It was a split vote. Those colleagues of mine who grew up in a world of card catalogs, manual pencil sharpeners, and *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* were adamant in their opposition to online anything. We stood firm in our chalk-dusted blazers and ink-stained hands. But the newer faculty saw the benefits of online education, most of them coming of age with the World Wide Web and password-protected phones. These faculty, the next generation of leaders in social work education, argued that there was a place for online learning, that it was not all evil, and that it was even a social justice issue.

A social justice issue. Never before had I felt so passionately opposed to something that was being questioned in terms of its own relevancy to social justice. Never. I bowed up, adamant that my stance was the right stance and that the real social justice issue was taking away from the quality of on-the-ground learning. My crusade, I believed, was the right path in terms of equality and respect. In the end, I lost.

Two years later, I found myself face to face with Annie, my third-party instructional designer. "Instructional designer" was not even a part of my vernacular. This complete stranger was going to show me, a veteran of over 15 years in the classroom, how to develop my course. I hated her. I hated her before she even walked in the door. Annie represented everything evil. Annie represented corporate America. Annie represented a partnership that I was vehemently opposed to. Annie represented "the man." I had fought against Annie my entire life and now she was sitting on my late grandmother's vintage loveseat in my southwestern-orange office with pictures of Obama, maps from my Peace Corps days, and a "No Parking" sign from Kennedy's

inauguration.

Annie told me that she loved the loveseat. She told me about her upcoming bike ride to raise money for cancer. She told me about her brother who had worked in Latin America. The more that Annie talked, the harder it became for me to hate her. And I really wanted to hate her. Instead, my first face-to-face meeting with Annie was filled mostly with chitchat about all sorts of shared interests and goals and life experiences. We were even of the same generation. Annie grew up on manual typewriters, also, and was now working for a major partner in online education. My world was spinning.

Over the next few months, I would meet with Annie, mostly virtually, on a weekly basis. "Virtually" for Annie meant a computer equipped with a webcam, headset, and all the bells and whistles of sophisticated technology. "Virtually" for me meant sitting in my living room, logging into my computer, hunting around for the volume control, and half-heartedly listening while at the same time playing fetch with my dog. Over time, however, I spent less time playing fetch and more time actually listening to what Annie had to say. I even learned that I had a built-in webcam on my laptop.

Annie helped me see that a course that I had taught several times—and that I thought I had taught well—had strayed far, far away from the course description. She helped me see that my assignments, taken from a litany of ideas I had used and reused dozens of times, were not measuring much of anything associated with the expected competencies. She taught me how to develop rubrics that were way clearer and more useful than anything I had used beforehand. She saw my syllabus from a fresh perspective and empowered me to reconsider the way I taught and delivered information. Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) define cultural humility as the process of moving away from adherence on knowledge and toward a paradigm of self-reflection and willingness to open one's self to other ways of being. My working relationship with Annie was a process of letting go of my own need to be right and to be the expert and to open myself up to the possibility of other models of classroom culture. She taught me cultural humility.

I liked Annie. I liked Annie so much that I began to look forward to our weekly meetings. I liked Annie so much that I was excited to see her when she came with a massive and elaborate crew for filming. I liked Annie so much that I looked forward to sharing a beer with her after hours and hours of filming. I even liked Annie so much that I suggested we submit a joint presentation about university partnerships and online learning.

So now I am nearing the midpoint of my first course in our online program. I am meeting with students virtually. I am learning about my students' backgrounds. I am observing my students engage with one another both formally in discussion board posts but also informally in the virtual "student lounge." I am finding that many of their discussions are at a level that is equal to, if not outweighs, the quality of discussions that I foster in my on-the-ground course. And I am using all the lessons that I am learning in ways to revise and improve my campus-based teaching.

I have come full circle. My like-minded colleagues who joined me in the fight against online

learning have since retired or moved on. In fact, I am currently the sole tenured faculty member in my department and only remaining naysayer from the "Operation No Online" era. My old compadres and I still keep in touch, and they ask me how I am surviving the descent into virtual learning. And I tell them the truth. I tell them that I have learned to practice what I teach. I tell them that there is more than one way to develop social work education. I tell them that my long-standing battle against online educational culture ended in a hard self-reflection on my need to embrace humility. And I tell them that, at the end of the day, "the times they are a-changin" (Dylan, 1964).

The Transformation

I (second author) also grew up in changing times, but my paradigm was shaped by *Sankofa*. *Sankofa*, a word rooted in Ghanaian culture, means that as we move forward, we must not lose sight of where we came from (Temple, 2010). As a black male, my life has been a constant push-pull between moving forward and looking back. My transformation as a black male in academia encompasses the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in a predominantly white world.

From my early years as a youth, I never felt oppressed because I chose to look at life from what I could become (with a little luck), to carry the right mindset, and to seize opportunities. The friends and associates of diverse ethnic enclaves served me well in my journey through adolescence. I learned from these mentors how to navigate the different shades of the community with both personality and posturing. The uniquely black experience was never my natural experience growing up until I was forced into harmful real-life situations that were exacerbated due to my skin color and gender. It was then that I faced the truth that being a black male is a risk factor, if not a safety issue, to American democracy. At 13 years old, did it hurt? Yes. Would it define me? No. I understood people and believed in the spirit of humanity. With arriving at this epiphany, I knew I would always be okay with whatever I became and wherever I landed.

Without my father present in my home, I struggled with abandonment and attachment issues. This led me to find guidance from coaches and older males in my community, both negative and positive. Research supports that children raised in households lacking a father experience psychosocial problems with greater frequency than children with a father in the home (Allen & Daly, 2007; Brockenbrough, 2018; Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019). However, I was driven to get out of my household and be something different. I learned early as an adolescent that I carried personable traits and was equipped to interact with all types of individuals regardless of their backgrounds. I believe I was strengths-based way before I knew I was. I knew upon high school graduation that my hoop dreams were nil due to injury, and I was looking at the end of a tunnel. And, although it was dark, I could see a light into my future. That's when I decided to not be a statistic and do what no one else in my family was able to do—go to college. Since this college expedition was new to me and my family tree, I knew I needed to share this vision proudly and loudly in order to receive the guidance of others. This help came in the form of teachers and coaches. I quickly realized the valuable lesson that if you show you want to be something in life, there are people willing to help you in all shades and colors. You just have to take the first steps.

As a first-generation college student, I arrived at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Virginia where I felt pride, empowerment, and a sense of community—something I never had. It was during this undergraduate experience that I knew acquiring this college degree was bigger than me. This degree was connected to my family, my community, my people, and my legacy. In addition, my HBCU experience taught me about the rich history of Black Americans and our fight for equality, education, and democracy. This epiphany of self-understanding about my history was pivotal in me wanting to go to graduate school and pursue my PhD.

A Different Type of World

Graduate school at a Primarily White Institution offered a much different learning culture than the HBCU. I believe this is a similar experience to students coming from a traditional face-to-face classroom setting into an online learning community. My graduate school days were filled with heartache, disappointment, resiliency, and victory. I would tell any graduate student of color to be prepared that higher education is a microcosm of society. The reality is that oppression, stereotypes, discrimination, and microaggressions are real and exist. My undergraduate experience didn't prepare me for that.

The experiences of my graduate programs over 20 years ago provided me with invaluable insights that may help current graduate students of color. For black male graduate students, I recommend you go in with your eyes open and know discrimination practices and microaggressions are normal in academia. This is often actualized with who and what gets funded, who and what gets published and where, who gets hired and tenured, who gets admitted, and who graduates. In an awkward way, it feels like you are in a double-bind dilemma as a black student or black scholar choosing between advancing your career or advancing your community. Although the feeling of "onlyness" may be burdensome at times, I knew I couldn't give up because this academic achievement was bigger than me. Knowing the adaptability of socialization is the process by which a PhD student comes to learn and understand the values, norms, rules, and rewards of academia, or in other words, the *rules of the game* (Austin, 2002; Patterson, 2016).

This dynamic may show some similarities between traditional in-seat students, who can just focus on school responsibilities, and online students, who are often working adult learners with full-time jobs and families pursuing an advanced degree. Whatever you do, remember that graduate school is a means to an end. It is not the rest of your life.

After earning a PhD, I knew I had accomplished something bigger than myself from the joy it brought to my immediate family to the pride it gave to my extended community. I was the first on many levels warranting an obligation to the past, present, and future. Simply put, this degree didn't just belong to me. It was connected to something greater that will never be erased.

Over the past 20 years since acquiring this doctorate, I have experienced many things about higher education. One is regularly being selective of the stands I take, the steps I make, and the words I say when adversity or a microaggression surfaces. Oftentimes, I make a choice to go

there or not. How I make these selections and cope with them can lead to lingering racial battle fatigue that can adversely impact physical and mental health.

I first thought that by getting a doctorate, I had *arrived* and would now be removed from the microaggressions, subtle and stunning racial slights, and insensitive critiques about being a black male faculty member in higher education. But I was quickly reminded that the academy, with all its democracy and freedoms, was still a microcosm of society, where I had to be mindful of my collective efforts as a teacher, scholar, colleague, and role model. My faculty commitment denotes that although the halls may change, the underpinnings remain the same: be authentically impactful, embrace the moment, and contribute in a manner which brings merit and value to the profession. One key affirmation in pressing forward toward perseverance and excellence is knowing that I am not alone. It seems magically felt and understood when I see a reflection of myself on my campus, in my profession, or at campuses and conferences across the country. It's a powerful feeling that can't be explained, operationalized, or measured, but it is real and resounding. I can only imagine that this is the same for other faculty of color or difference.

A New World

Now I face a new challenge. After earning a PhD and navigating the waters of academia, I am faced with a different kind of cultural humility—being effective and meaningful as an online teacher. The growing pains of reaching this goal for me include, for one, not seeing the attentiveness of the students and the climate of the physical classroom in gauging if I need to strengthen the velocity of content or throttle it back. My years of teaching in brick-and-mortar classrooms have helped me develop an acute sense in determining that. Now I must learn how to effectively convey not only teacher presence, but also cultural presence as an African American male advocating for sensitivity and awareness with diverse populations. In front of a classroom is not a problem, but behind a computer screen not so much. Lastly, I challenge myself as an online teacher to not overlook or underestimate the students, their lives, and what it took for them to arrive in my course. There is a reason they are getting their education online. Life just may be one variable of many. It will be my charge to keep that in front of my mind as I evolve as an online teacher.

Cultural Humility and *Sankofa*

In the spirit of *Sankofa*, we now return to the beginning. We see our evolution in navigating a new culture in online education as a representation of *Sankofa*—with feet forward but head circling back.

With feet forward we bravely enter into an online culture that is different from anything we experienced in school. Part of our charge as professors is to maintain a level of social presence in an online culture that is familiar to us. The intersection of cultural humility and social presence in online education refers to the level or degree of personal connectedness of students in the classes (Sung & Mayer, 2012). The dimensions of social presence are impacted by five factors. They are social respect, social sharing, open-mindedness, social identity, and intimacy (Soper & Ukot, 2016; Sung & Mayer, 2012). The more professors who create a culture in which students

have the ability to receive timely feedback, share information, share their own beliefs, express positive responses, have an identity, share personal experiences, and know their professor, the more effective the learning experience. This makes students feel socially secure and paves the way for an environment in which the students feel safe to express their ideas.

Part of our charge is this: how do we help our online students develop cultural humility in their interactions with other students? The removal of face-to-face interaction through an online platform does not mean that the intersectionality of issues such as race, class, gender, and age disappear. In fact, it may be that as instructors we have a heightened responsibility to encourage our students, including students of color and first-generation students, to reflect upon their own experiences in power, privilege, and oppression through the context of virtual learning. While we, as newcomers to online academia, do not have all the answers, we understand through *Sankofa* that there is an opportunity for significant growth while maintaining our own roots and values.

We come together, representing diverse backgrounds, but with a shared challenge of how to infuse our cultural presence into online learning. As a tool, we embrace the concept of *Sankofa* as a way for us to hold onto our roots while learning to fly. We would add to this an overarching element of cultural humility that informs our cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence. Cultural humility affirms our willingness to accept that we do not have all the answers. The letting go of the need to be experts guides our journey forward in online education. We want to model for our students the value of embracing our experiences while at the same time exhibiting an openness to learning more about our broader world.

Our new face is the face of *Sankofa* through the lens of cultural humility. We will continue to draw on our own unique backgrounds and find creative ways to infuse those into online learning. We recognize that adult learners, in particular, need to see reasons behind what they are being asked to do and how it aligns with their learning goals. We hope that by being mindful of our own cultural humility in online education, we will foster an environment in which students become empowered. These efforts will draw on lessons learned in this new virtual reality as, together, we evolve as both teachers and learners in a world so different from what is familiar. The reality is that we do not know it all. We never will. But perhaps our collective experience in navigating unfamiliar waters will help guide us to a better place in which we embody the wisdom of *Sankofa* by moving forward in changing times while holding onto the wisdom of those who came before us.

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Critical Literacy: Engaging Students to Enhance Cultural Humility in Study Abroad

Melody Loya and Katherine Peters

Abstract: Focusing on the intersection of study abroad, critical literacy, and cultural humility, this article establishes a framework for the development of study abroad programs that meet thoughtfully established educational objectives while not harming the communities that are visited. The authors contend that the emphasis of study abroad programs (in particular, short-term programs) should follow certain ethical guidelines and should focus on mutually beneficial relationships between the learning of the students and the good of the community. The face of study abroad has changed in recent years, shifting from students spending a semester abroad to much greater participation in short-term (eight weeks or less) programs. This article provides a context for developing short-term programs with concrete learning objectives and using critical literacy as a foundation to encourage students in the development of cultural humility. The authors share examples from their own experiences and discuss some best practices for developing respectful programs that do not cause harm to the communities or people that are visited by students.

***Keywords*:** study abroad, critical literacy, popular education, cultural humility, voluntourism

Focusing on the intersection of study abroad, critical literacy, and cultural humility, this article establishes a framework for the development of study abroad programs that meet thoughtfully established educational objectives while not harming the communities that are visited. The authors contend that the emphasis of study abroad programs (in particular, short-term programs) should follow certain ethical guidelines and should focus on mutually beneficial relationships between the goals of learning for the students and the good of the community. The framework outlined in this article intersects the principles of critical literacy and cultural humility.

The face of study abroad has changed tremendously, having shifted from participation in semester-long programs to more short-term, faculty-led programs. In 2016-2017, approximately 332, 000 students participated in a for-credit experience abroad, representing almost 11 percent of all undergraduate students and a 2.3 percent increase over 2015-2016 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018). Students from the social sciences represent 17.2 percent of all students studying abroad, an increase of 2.7 percent over the previous year (IIE, 2018). Growth in short-term programs (defined as summer term or eight weeks or less) is responsible for much of the increase; semester- or year-long program participation is declining (Redden, 2018). Programs to Europe continue to dominate the landscape, representing 54.7 percent of all students studying abroad (Redden, 2018).

A total of 332, 727 students studied abroad for credit in 2016-17 (IIE, 2018). In the Open Doors report, the IIE (2018) estimated that about 10.9 percent of all undergraduate students and 16 percent of those earning bachelor's degrees study abroad at some point in their undergraduate careers. Therefore, it is essential that programming emphasizes transformation, moving students

from a "view from the veranda" (Ogden, 2008) to a deeper understanding of the effects of globalization and the impact of US policies abroad. Another important component of ethically educating students about global issues is helping them understand their place in the world, while avoiding replicating colonialism in a new, updated version (neocolonialism) through "voluntourism" or service-oriented global partnerships.

The authors wish to situate themselves within the context of this work. The first author's (Loya) journey to embrace cultural humility occurred on both personal and professional levels. Growing up in the Midwest, exposure to others was limited. Her social work education occurred during a time when cultural competence was only beginning to be discussed and workshops simply reinforced stereotypes about others. Two events occurred in her life that set her on the path to a deeper understanding of difference. The first was marrying a man from Mexico and navigating differences in orientation to time, culinary likes and dislikes, and language barriers through differences in level of vocabulary. The professional event occurred upon her first study abroad program, which was assigned to her in the context of teaching a semester-long course; the two-week travel component was integrated into the learning. The program that had been developed for an interdisciplinary honors course was a learning experience for Loya. Service projects in rural communities in Costa Rica included painting a church and a clinic and digging ditches for a culvert. In and of themselves, these projects might be worthwhile; however, virtually no interaction with the local community took place. The projects did not occur alongside the community; rather, they were strictly *for* the community.

Additionally, on this program was one faculty leader (Loya), a second leader (a staff member in the Honors Program), the honors program coordinator and her eight-year-old son, and the study abroad coordinator (because she had never been to Costa Rica). These dynamics turned the program into much more of a tour than an academic endeavor, where most of the interactions with locals occurred in highly-touristed areas, and cultural excursions involved visiting tourist attractions. The faculty leader inherently felt that this approach was not comfortable for her and embarked upon a fact-finding visit to Costa Rica later that summer. She interviewed four agencies and chose the Institute for Central American Development and Studies (ICADS) as her future partner agency (primarily due to their emphasis on social justice) when developing a program for social work students the following year.

The second author (Peters) holds a master's degree in education and a master's degree in territorial rural development. She has spent close to a decade living in Central America, where she worked in study abroad programs and volunteered in communities of immigrants. She recently taught a course called Global Perspectives at Valparaiso University. Peters was the Assistant Director of ICADS (which hosts short-term and semester-long internship programs) during the development and first years of the social work study abroad program described above. The education provided to students at ICADS is based on the principles of popular education as outlined by Paulo Freire (2003). Program activities prioritize the following: exposure to real local people and natural environments, including home stays with lower-middle-class families; visits with farmers, workers, community organizations and marginalized groups; and an emphasis on critical analysis. Students are encouraged to be active in their own learning and to actively participate in sociodramas, sculpting, and other activities related to popular education

techniques (for more information on these and other popular education techniques, see Burke & Arnold, 1983). Peters incorporated personal cultural reflection into the programs at ICADS—work which was complemented by Peters' knowledge of the concept of cultural humility. At ICADS, the goal of learning is to come to a change in behavior based on authentic interactions with local people; this is not something that can be easily replicated from one semester or program to the next, but working on personal reflection and cultural humility helps students engage the local context in their own unique way during each program.

An effective program focuses on pre-travel, during-travel, and post-travel outcomes. When considering travel within the context of a developing country, the responsibility to "do no harm" takes on additional meaning. The standards for short-term programs, as developed by The Forum on Education Abroad (The Forum, 2015), help faculty leaders offer ethically based, educationally focused, learning-rich programs. The Forum's consideration for developing a quality program includes establishing clear goals and learning objectives, having an academic framework to guide the development of learning, engaging in fair and ethical recruitment and selection of students, providing adequate and ongoing preparation and support, articulating clear guidelines for student behavior (and the consequences for violations), and being oriented toward the safety and well-being of participants (making risk managers very happy). However, even within Standard Two in the Standards of Good Practice as established by The Forum (2015) is a questionable statement: "The organization's mission, goals, and operations prioritize *student learning and development* [emphasis added]" (p. 4). On the face of it, the focus on student learning makes sense. However, how often does student learning and development cause harm to a community? The authors contend that we should be asking the question about benefits to the community *first*, and then incorporating student learning. A mutually beneficial relationship between student learning and the community will be more likely to happen if the concepts of cultural humility and critical literacy are incorporated.

An example of this mutually beneficial relationship and prioritizing the community is how ICADS semester students conduct field research or carry out internships with community organizations. These research projects and internships must not be developed before the student has arrived in the country, as they must be determined based on current community needs. Students are expected to adapt their projects and expectations to the situation on the ground. For example, a student who is interested in learning about climate change can listen carefully to the argument of a coffee cooperative that climate change mitigation projects have cost them more money without significantly reducing their carbon footprint, and then adjust his or her research project to explore this challenge. For a short-term program such as the one described in this paper, program activities are developed with the communities. For example, if the program would like to visit a rural school, the visit will be conducted with a school already in partnership with ICADS, and the school will determine the content of the visit—like a dance presentation by the children—regardless of the ideal visit content as determined by the university. The faculty leader must be able to help students make connections and express learning about these experiences, which are not canned, but rather relational and sometimes spontaneous.

In order to achieve this, the program must include background information given through pre-departure meetings, orientation sessions, readings, discussions, and lectures that help the

students to contextualize their experiences. This highlights the importance of having a partner on the ground who understands the context and knows how to introduce this context to students.

Voluntourism and Service Learning

In 1968, Ivan Illich gave an impassioned speech to the Conference on Inter-American Student Projects (CIASP) titled, "To Hell with Good Intentions" (Illich, 1994). Illich's speech, even though delivered over 50 years ago, remains very relevant in today's context of service-focused study abroad programs as well as mission trips sponsored by religious bodies. Illich pointed out that the purpose of these programs is often to sell the American way of life (Illich, 1994). He stated that we, as United Statesians, are the "products of an American society of achievers and consumers . . . 'salesmen' for a delusive ballet in the ideals of democracy, equal opportunity and free enterprise among people who haven't the possibility of profiting from these" (Illich, 1994, p. 316). All too often, service-focused programs and mission trips do not require participants to think critically about the root causes of poverty, the United States' involvement in global politics, or the lasting effects of colonization.

Many short-term study abroad programs include a component of service. Baker-Boosamra, Guevara, and Balfour (2006) explored the possibility that service learning projects (as well-meaning as most are) can create and perpetuate dependency within communities. Service learning must include intentional mutuality and should emphasize critical reflection by participants about global issues, mutuality, power and privilege, and economic and global realities. Baker-Boosamra et al. (2006) believe that the process of deep critical reflection about power relationships is of critical importance. Any service learning project should be forged with a spirit of mutuality and collaboration, and with a critical view toward the short- and long-term impact. An example of unintended consequences was made clear to students on one program abroad. Within a squatter's community, where most houses were made of "found" materials, stood six very nice houses. These houses had been built by a well-meaning mission group that was sponsored by a United Statesian church. These houses created challenges within the community for those who benefitted from them. The community was ostracized and accused of converting to the denomination that built the houses, just to get a new house. In this highly Catholic context, many challenges arose for the recipients of the homes.

Freidus (2017) explored poverty and orphan tourism in Malawi and stated that "voluntourists frequently leave with superficial understandings of poverty and culture" (p. 1307). While volunteers went to Malawi with lofty goals, these were spurred on by the "imagery of a needy, poor third-world country needing intervention" (Freidus, 2017, p. 1307). It is often assumed that developing countries need what the United States has to offer. The economics of orphan tourism have actually created a ripple effect of negative consequences. Many of the children in Malawian orphanages have extended family networks, whether biological or fictive kin. These children may be placed in orphanages simply *because* of the influx of money that comes with voluntourism. Freidus (2017) also points out that simply seeing or visiting another culture does not equal knowing about another culture. In her qualitative study, voluntourists talked about how they had bonded with the children, even in the short time they were present. However, no mention was made regarding the impact on the children's development due to the coming and

going of multiple volunteers, who bond with them and then move on, never to be seen again. Freidus (2017) points out that "the desire to do good and actually doing good do not always align" (p. 1317). The concerns she raised were an increased racialized superiority, as "White Americans are deemed experts and able to lead Malawians to a better life" (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317). However, the context for the definition of "a better life is often defined by Western metrics" (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317). Voluntourists rarely explore colonial history, the consequences of decolonization, the impact of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the influence of structural adjustments and neoliberalism. Encouraging people living in poverty to pursue the "American dream" ignores "structural and political constraints" (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317), such as high unemployment rates that will preclude them finding a job that can help pull them out of poverty. Students and faculty must be aware of our own privilege, and as faculty, always keep at the forefront that "our challenge [is] to preserve our fundamental mission to engage students in intellectual and intercultural experiences without falling back on a colonial discourse that is concerned with elitism and consumption" (Freidus, 2017, p. 36).

During a recent study abroad program, a documentarian from the university's Communications Studies Department traveled with the group. He filmed the two-week program, and then the editing and creation of the documentary was a semester-long project for him and his students. During the actual filming, there were some issues with a microphone. Therefore, some of the students' comments were recreated once we were home. One student reflected on our trip up the Sixaola River, which forms the border between Panama and Costa Rica, to an indigenous reserve. In her comment, the student talked about the impact the trip had on her—facing her fear of being in a canoe in the middle of a river—but also about the way it made her explore her own privilege. The student is a self-identifying minority (Mexican-American), is a woman, and shared that she grew up in poverty. However, the trip to the indigenous reserve made her examine her own privilege; she stated that she had never felt that she had privilege, but this activity and the overall program helped her recognize her privilege and gave her a different context of analysis. Although the comments occurred several weeks after our return home, the student was obviously grappling with the concept of her own privilege. This type of insight would be impossible in a classroom.

Critical Literacy

The authors of this article see critical literacy, paired with cultural humility, as a potential response to the above-described ethical challenges. Critical literacy is a concept that goes beyond the idea of critical thinking; rather, according to Mitchell (2008), critical literacy challenges students to "examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their [programs] and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming these problems" (p. 54). In practice, this kind of critical literacy requires both reflection and action in the Freirean tradition of consciousness-raising (Freire, 2003).

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) describe four main principles of critical literacy: focusing on issues of power in order to transform them; recognizing and unpacking the complexity of a problem (problematizing); using dynamic and adaptable teaching techniques; and examining multiple perspectives. They provide examples of literally reading texts (hence critical *literacy*)

and asking questions about whose voices are not represented in those texts, analyzing the main purpose and power relationships behind a text, considering alternative ways to understand the information, and using techniques that are relevant in each context (rather than imposing learning techniques from other contexts). These principles can also be used to approach the reading of an experiential text, such as the experiences within a study abroad program.

In fact, critical literacy in study abroad takes on a new urgency and relevance, precisely because it is experiential education. Not only are students learning about how bananas are grown, for example, but they may be living in Costa Rica with a host family headed by a woman who was born on a banana plantation to a plantation worker. Or students may be texting their parents back home using a cell phone with a chip produced at the Intel plant in Costa Rica. However, this plant no longer provides thousands of jobs to Costa Ricans because it was moved in search of lower salaries for workers and greater profits for the company, even while maintaining relatively low consumer prices in the United States.

This relevance requires seeing the big picture and having one's awareness raised, a concept known in Latin America and popular education as "conscientization." In study abroad (and we would argue, in education in general), this means connecting one's own life to the topics being covered in the program in order to understand one's own place in the systemic issues relative to the program. For United Statesian students in programs abroad, this will often mean understanding US political, economic, and military power in the host country, particularly if it is a developing country. Paulo Freire (2003) makes a further connection between reflection and action that leads to transformation (*praxis*), which is echoed in the literature on critical literacy. As McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) point out, "Good intentions and awareness of an unjust situation will not transform it. We must act on our knowledge" (p. 53).

During one program, the time was split between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. These two countries represent vastly different paths of development. A learning moment occurred when we were held at the border for several hours. The ICADS facilitator was working with the officials to get us into the country; we had flown into Costa Rica but were flying out of Nicaragua, so there appeared to be some concern on the part of the Nicaraguan immigration officers about our motives. We were brought into the building (after having been told to wait in the bus) and were told to line up against a wall until our passports were validated. Although there was never any danger, students felt vulnerable and exposed and voiced concerns over having their passports out of their possession. Students were able to draw connections to the stories of Nicaraguan migrants that we had heard the previous week. One woman had shared that she chooses not to go through the port, even though she has documentation, because of the cost (all persons pay migration processing fees, and some may need to purchase a tourist card). Costa Rica also assesses a departure tax, so someone living in poverty would have difficulty crossing legally simply because of the monetary ramifications. The students understood much better their own privilege of being able to come and go to many countries in ways that are barred for much of the world's population. While for any program it is important to do as much as possible to guarantee student safety, experiences that challenge students' comfort zones must not be avoided and can, in fact, lead to deep learning.

Cultural Humility and Critical Literacy

Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) introduced the concept of cultural humility as related to multicultural education when training physicians. Their concept has expanded to multiple professions and incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique; redressing inherent power imbalances; and developing mutually beneficial and nonpaternalistic clinical and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p. 117).

These guiding principles fit well with the core tenets of critical literacy. A larger discussion of the principles of critical literacy (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004) was outlined in the previous section; this discussion focuses on the intersection of Tervalon and Murray-García's (1998) construct of cultural humility with the concept of critical literacy. According to McLaughlin and DeVoogd, critical literacy involves focusing on issues of power through reflection, which translates into transformation and action; looking deeply at the complexity of problems; finding adaptable and dynamic techniques to teach critical literacy; and helping participants examine multiple perspectives.

If a study abroad program, whether short- or long-term, is meant to facilitate the transformation of participants, then a thoughtful approach incorporating the precepts of critical literacy should lead to movement toward cultural humility. Kortegast and Kupo (2017) stated that, without programs engaging in critical reflection and challenges to worldview, "short-term study abroad becomes reduced to cultural tourism masked as an academic experience" (p. 168). Avoiding programs becoming no more than a tour with a syllabus (Slimbach, 2010) requires thoughtful planning, an investment by faculty leaders, and ample opportunity for critical reflection. Cultural humility requires self-evaluation and self-critique, which can be uncomfortable as the layers of power and privilege are dismantled. Critical literacy explores issues of power, which can be facilitated by reflectivity or self-critique. Participation in a study abroad program is, in and of itself, an exercise of privilege. The vast majority of students studying abroad are White (70.8 percent), although participation by minority students has increased in recent years from 18.1 percent in 2006 to 2007 to 29.2 percent in 2016 to 2017 (IIE, 2018).

The question then becomes, how do we move students along this continuum of knowledge and self-awareness, benefiting their personal and academic growth, while also engaging in mutually beneficial contacts with communities? When building a program that encourages reflection at multiple levels (personal privilege, institutional oppression and privilege, the impact of policies abroad), it is important to avoid what Andreotti (2006) termed "sanctioned ignorance (constitutive disavowal) of the role of colonialism in the creation . . . of what is called the 'First World'" (p. 44). In a later article, Andreotti (2011) discussed the privileging of European and Western epistemologies. When dealing with constructs such as notions of time, definitions of progress, and unequal relationships, we should not be allowed to engage in geopolitical amnesia (Andreotti, 2011), and we should be aware of the hegemonic effects of *colonialization* and the inherent power imbalances born of the focus on race, social class, space needs, and the needs of capital for White European colonizers (Escobar, 2004).

Andreotti's (2006) concept of critical global citizenship education blends the concepts of cultural humility and critical literacy. Extrapolating her assumptions and implications and relating them to study abroad is not a huge leap. Andreotti (2006) states that critical global citizenship education does the following: focuses on inequality and injustice and should help students better understand the unequal power relationships that exist around the world (often related to the history of colonization and current policies creating neocolonialism); avoids "imposing [our] own assumptions as universal" (p. 47); creates opportunities for equal dialogue, engaging in "reflexivity [and] dialogue" (p. 48); and helps students "reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures" (p. 48). The potential benefits to this process include "independent/critical thinking and more informed, responsible, and ethical action" (Andreotti, 2006, p. 48), which encompasses both critical literacy and cultural humility.

Using the concepts of popular education, as well as the application of critical literacy techniques, can help students explore (and hopefully deconstruct) their worldview. Faculty, as well as students, need to participate fully and be open-minded to change. The first author, Loya, experienced a shift in her social work worldview during a site visit to *la Universidad de Costa Rica* (UCR), when the US students visited a Costa Rican social work class. During the visit, the UCR students said (somewhat disdainfully) that they do not like the verb "help" (*ayudar*) as it implies a passive relationship, but rather they prefer the term "accompany" (*acompañar*) as an indication of a joint process. This philosophical shift may seem minor, but it is something that is now shared with all her students because of how the semantics resonated with her. That simple exchange facilitated a new perspective of the client/worker relationship, challenging her own worldview of social work as a helping profession.

Group processing is an integral component of a program that leads to personal growth. During these programs, students rotate guiding the reflection at the end of the day, with help as needed from faculty and facilitators. During one program, a social worker in the criminal justice system in Costa Rica presented a *charla* over women in prison. Most often, women are convicted of crimes related to drugs, and frequently there is a relationship with a dominant male that led them down this path. In Costa Rica, women are allowed to have their children with them in prison until the children are three years old. During this processing session, students began trying to fix what they saw as a practice that was detrimental to the child, since the child would have to leave their mother's side when they turned three. The processing was redirected by the ICADS facilitator (the second author, Peters) to the strengths of having the child with the mother, thus being able to support their bonds even if it meant separation when the child reached the age of three. Student participants were able to reframe their original conversation and saw the circumstances from a different perspective.

A closing activity also helps students, faculty, and the facilitator bring home the learning that has occurred during the two-week program. The facilitator begins with a ball of string, tosses it to someone, and gives the instructions of having to share one thing that we wish to take with us and one thing that we wish to leave behind. The ball is then tossed to the next person, and so on. The answer requires critical reflection and is the person's individual spoken truth about what he or she has gained from the experience. Students most frequently focus on materialism, living with less, relationships, and their newfound understanding of a global society, our place in the world,

and that the United Statesian way may not always be the best way. This exercise is frequently emotional for all of the participants, as we struggle to begin the transition back to home even after only two short weeks in the country. We draw connections to the web that has been created by the crisscrossing of the yarn; we are now connected because of our shared experiences, and we are changed because of them. When cutting the web, each person leaves with a bit of yarn to remind them of their experiences and the relationships they built during their time abroad.

Best Practices

After working with students and communities in Costa Rica for nine years, the second author (Peters) and her colleagues at ICADS have identified the following best practices for ethical study abroad programs:

1. develop program/course objectives, and match program activities with those objectives,
2. in pre-departure seminars, study the local context from a social justice perspective,
3. include logistical information and check participant expectations with reality on the ground in a pre-departure seminar,
4. plan activities with local and/or ecotourism companies (Honey, 1999),
5. be intentional about methodology, and discuss program activity methodology before entering each activity,
6. learn about ethical behavior in the local context (dress, informed consent, punctuality, the role of the community organization, cultural considerations, etc.),
7. debrief each activity,
8. discuss what changes in behavior the program will inspire in participants, and
9. share learning with people in the local context (they don't often have access to scholarly work written about their home).

The following two examples are from activities that ICADS and its students identified as having the potential to be ethical or unethical, depending on the approach used. The first is an activity in which students interview informal vendors in the streets of San José to learn more about the informal economy. The second is a visit to a community in Costa Rica largely made up of immigrants from Nicaragua. Unprepared students might feel uncomfortable performing these activities due to a lack of understanding of the social situation they are entering, which indeed poses an ethical dilemma.

The first activity, interviewing informal street vendors in San José, is chosen because it aligns with the following course objective: "Explore options for employment in the current development model of Costa Rica." Program faculty provide students with literature, discussion, and lectures on economic development models, and they also provide information on Costa Rican economic indicators such as poverty, rural-to-urban migration, and so forth. Before the students carry out the activity, the methodology of the interview is discussed. This includes how to do the interview, as well as theoretical information about interviews, informed consent, and IRB ethical standards. ICADS directs students to interview participants, based on ICADS' experience in the field, and helps students to practice an intentionally designed methodology

before going out into the field. Part of the orientation includes a discussion on appropriate behavior (such as how to approach people, how to ask for permission to carry out the interview, what to do in different situations, how to dress, etc.).

After the activity, there is a debrief session for students to share what happened, what they think they learned, how they felt about the activity, and so forth. Attached to the activity is an assignment in which students are required to make connections with the literature and discuss how this activity might change their future attitudes or behavior. As much as possible, it is important to return this information to the activity participants. As a faculty-led program activity, the faculty member should be participating in all aspects of the activity as outlined here in order to best be present with the students in their learning and reflections.

Another example that helps to flesh out the intersection between cultural humility and critical literacy is a visit to a community of Nicaraguan refugees and immigrants in Costa Rica that took place during the program jointly coordinated by the authors. The learning objectives of the visit fit with the overall learning objectives of the program, including to better understand and engage with women and migrants in order to problematize issues of gender and migration both in Costa Rica and the United States. The visit itself was planned in coordination with a local organization that uses a community organizing stance to support women migrants in building their own support networks for addressing domestic violence. This coordination included plans for compensation to the community for their time spent with students, as well as background information on immigration to Costa Rica and the challenges women face, and instructions on how to approach the community. Prior to travel, students were assigned scholarly readings that focused on immigration challenges in Costa Rica, along with the marginalization of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica. During travel, students were received as guests to the community, ate food prepared by the local women (who were compensated), and listened to their stories of immigrating to Costa Rica and becoming part of the support network. The students had the opportunity to ask questions and share thoughts before being shown the efforts of the community to secure legal right to their land and government funding for more adequate housing.

This visit provided a myriad of ways for students and the community to learn about and address power relationships and consider multiple perspectives. First, in the context of anti-immigrant rhetoric in Costa Rica and attempts to ignore or cover up issues of inequality and violence in the country, students were exposed to the perspectives of a community struggling with the Costa Rican dream. They were also exposed to international issues of cause-and-effect realities of migration, realities which may very well be true in the United States, as well. They were invited to a community with terms set by the community members. They learned about complex issues without easy answers (such as land titling and squatters' rights in Costa Rica). They were also exposed to multiple and surprising perspectives.

One such example came when a student asked one of the Nicaraguan women if it was more difficult for her to leave her abusive husband while living in Costa Rica, where she did not have access to her regular support network, making the assumption that of course it would be more difficult. The woman answered that it was actually easier because she was not tied to the expectations of her family, neighborhood, and church. This unexpected answer opened the way

to consider many issues pertinent to social work, as well as allowed for learning and reflection by both parties about being open to new perspectives.

Finally, the visit itself was followed by a debriefing reflection session, facilitated by a student and supervised by the faculty member and facilitator/translator. This is a necessary step that must also be designed and executed with care, as "learning [must be] discussed and articulated" (Kortegast & Kupo, 2017, p. 162). The action of the visit must be accompanied by reflection, which will, in turn, lead to further action to address injustices and achieve transformation. In the case of this visit, students may or may not have the opportunity to address an injustice discovered in Costa Rica. However, the choice of migration as a topic allows them to address injustices in migration issues in their home contexts, based on what they learned in Costa Rica. They may have also discovered that some of the people living as refugees in Costa Rica were displaced from Nicaragua due to the effects of US foreign policy in Nicaragua during the Contra War, and this provides the students with an opportunity for informed action as voters in the US political system.

Conclusion

Finally, hooks (1994) outlined how teachers should enter the sacred space of learning with their students, "shar[ing] in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (p. 13). Faculty leaders should be willing to use engaged pedagogy (embodied in the techniques of popular education) in order to promote critical awareness in both teacher and learner. This engagement, presence, and accompaniment by the faculty leaders are essential, as the faculty leaders (and study abroad professionals) themselves will learn and change, and they will better be able to reflect with and guide students.

We hope this treatise has given some new context for incorporating cultural humility, through critical literacy, into study abroad programs, especially those focused on service learning. We would like to end with another quote from Illich (1994), which communicates our message quite profoundly. He states:

> If you insist on working with the poor, if this is your vocation, then at least work among the poor who can tell you to go to hell . . . And it is profoundly damaging to yourselves when you define something you want to do as "good, " a "sacrifice" and "help." . . . I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the "good" which you intended to do. I am here to entreat you to use your money, your status and your education to travel to Latin America. Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help. (p. 320)

The authors would add: Come to learn.

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“I Need to Learn from You”: Reflections on Cultural Humility through Study Abroad

“I Need to Learn from You” is a quote from Quinn, a study abroad student.

Michele Belliveau

Abstract: As cultural competency standards in social work education increasingly emphasize the importance of humility, social work programs must create opportunities for students to practice it. Study abroad has been an effective way for social work students to develop global awareness and an implied cultural humility. This article provides the author’s own reflection, which is interspersed with the reflections of five social work graduates who she interviewed about their experiences living, studying, and working in a “Majority World” context (Alam, 2007, p. 1). Study abroad provides unique opportunities for prolonged discomfort and disorientation, which helped each of the participants to solidify their place as learners in relation to those they help, to interrogate power imbalances in systems and relationships, and to develop greater empathy and respect for practices other than their own.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, study abroad, social work education

Opening Reflection

In an opening scene of *Narcos*, the sensationalized Netflix series about the rise and fall of the infamous *narcotraficante* Pablo Escobar, the camera pans a sprawling city in a valley surrounded by beautiful mountains with the caption, “Bogotá, 1989" (Brancato, Bernard, Miro, & Padilha, 2015). In the summer of 1989, I was a 20-year-old college student in Bogotá, Colombia, living with a host family and studying Spanish and Latin American politics. While I did not have the language to describe it at the time, the experience of living in Colombia in 1989 as a white, middle-class, North American student helped lay the foundation for the development of my cultural humility. Continual reflection on that experience informed the way I later practiced as a social worker and the way I practice today as a social work educator.

Nearly 30 years later, with IRB approval from my university, I sought the reflections of five graduates of our social work program who had studied abroad—sometime between 2006 and 2017, during and/or after college—on their experiences with cultural humility. During the course of the interviews, the graduates chose their own pseudonyms, which are used in this reflection.

I wanted to understand how undergraduate social work students’ experiences with humility may have shaped their approach to social work practice with diverse individuals, families, and communities. The process of interviewing graduates and having them reflect on their experiences, which spurred a reflection on my own experiences, showed the utility of qualitative interviews to the ongoing project of culturally humble practice. What follows are the reflections of those students, interspersed with my own, on how work and study abroad in a developing world context, or “Majority World” as termed by the activist Shahidul Alam (as cited in

Gonzalez, 2018), were integral to their growth as culturally humble social work practitioners.

Cultural Humility

Social work educational and professional standards for culturally relevant practice have moved away from the earlier and more static concept of cultural competence and toward a more fluid concept of cultural humility (Fisher-Borne, Montana Cain, & Martin, 2015). As social work educators, we expect our graduates to understand power and privilege, use the theoretical lens of intersectionality, and engage clients as experts in their own experiences (Council on Social Work Education, 2015; National Association of Social Workers, 2015). Integral to the concept of cultural humility is the idea that there is no "endpoint" (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015, p. 171). As social workers, we are continually in a state of learning from our clients, reflecting critically on our own culturally nuanced assumptions about the world, and engaging in ongoing self-assessment.

Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) originally described the concept of cultural humility as a continual process of self-reflection and critique of one's own cultural assumptions. As further elaborated by Fisher-Borne et al. (2015), cultural humility acknowledges power differentials between provider and client. According to this concept, any cultural misunderstandings that arise between practitioners and clients are not due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the practitioner but are due to the attitudes of the practitioner. To be culturally humble practitioners, social workers must engage in continual self-reflection, hold individuals and institutions accountable, and work to correct systemic power imbalances, including their own in relation to the people they serve (Fisher-Born et al., 2015). It is not enough to be aware of one's biases; one must take steps to correct them.

Hook, Owen, Davis, Worthington, and Utsey (2013) looked at cultural humility in therapists as perceived by their clients and found that humility was important to clients when addressing their worldview. The authors concluded that better training of practitioners was needed to help them develop a humble stance and that openness rather than superiority led to the development of a trusting alliance. These findings resonate with the values and ethics of social work education and practice and highlight the need for experiences that make students uncomfortable (Schaub, 2009), allow for the emergence of "disorienting dilemmas" (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013, p. 55), and foster the critical reflection necessary to help them grow into culturally humble practitioners.

Disorienting Dilemmas

In 1989, I was a student in a small liberal arts college in the Midwest which had a robust study abroad program and was affiliated with a consortium of colleges that had programming in faraway places. The consortium believed that countries in the developing world received the same bad press as communities of color in the United States and that countries and communities should not be defined by these narratives. This standpoint helped explain why the consortium offered a study abroad program in Colombia during a time when people in the United States associated the country either with drug violence or the affable commercial coffee icon Juan

Valdez, neither of which offered anything close to an understanding of the country and its people.

At the end of my sophomore year, I packed my bags, flew to Miami to connect with students from other universities, and then flew to Bogotá, Colombia, where we were greeted late at night by our host families. I can still see my host mother and aunt happily craning their necks from the front seat of the car, talking a mile a minute while I sat between my host siblings in the dark of the back seat, catching maybe every fifth word (from my semester of Spanish language class), and thought, "Um, what have I done?" Fortunately, this was before cell phones or the internet, so there was no way to call for help. I was there to stay.

Humility through Lived Experience

I knew very little about Colombian society when I set out. In fact, I was colossally uninformed. My education started the moment I entered my host family's apartment and met Leidy, an indigenous woman my age, who slept in a small room off of the galley kitchen, spoke Spanish as a second language, and was domestic help to my divorced host mother who was raising two teenagers while working as a secretary for city government. I expected none of these things. The stereotyped and romanticized narratives I held of Latin American family life, which persist today in some social work texts, were disrupted by the reality of divorce, a female-headed household, and domestic help for a large, urban, middle-class family. With the exception of domestic help, this mirrored my own family structure back home. This experience set the stage for the healthy skepticism of static categories that I currently infuse in teaching about social work practice. This reflection on my initial ignorance and miseducation resonated with that of Montana, who had studied abroad in Mexico as a college student in 2006 and several years later worked in Africa on sustainable agriculture projects:

> With Africa, I went over there saying, "I'm going to change these people's lives. I'm going there and they are going to benefit so much from me being there." You know, like ego. I had no idea what I was doing. That was the farthest thing from the truth . . . No, I was the one who was changed by being over there . . . It's humbling and it's necessary to experience because as Americans we are so superior in our thought . . . We sometimes need a wake-up call, and I am grateful for those wake-up calls I've had.

As Gammonley, Rotabi, and Gamble (2007) wrote, "When students open themselves to lessons from people they might have considered less sophisticated, less resourced, and less literate than themselves, they begin to see how much we have to learn from social work practice in the developing world" (p. 116). In 2019, social work students and new social workers still struggle to take what Pitner and Sakamoto (2005) call a "one-down" position (p. 689), whereby they suspend judgments and assumptions based on their own cultural worldviews and see that clients are experts on their own experience. As the student body of social work programs becomes more diverse, this may shift, which is something we have seen at our satellite campus, where the majority of students are older, working full-time, raising families, and share some of the struggles of their clients with racism, poverty, and addiction. Still, they are learning their social work history, philosophy, values orientation, knowledge, skills for planned change, and

practicum experience in a US context.

Jasmine, a heritage Spanish speaker who studied abroad in Mexico in 2017, credited the experience of living and helping on a farm in an indigenous community with her culturally humble approach to social work practice with Latino farmworkers in the United States. A short rural homestay had been an important component of her study abroad program:

> You're like, "What does farming have to do with social work?" Whereas I'm able to connect that with [my agency], where a majority of the people that walk in work on the mushroom farms. If I hadn't seen how hard everyone worked out in the fields, there's no way I would understand how hard they work. When they come in, I try to get everything done in that one session because I understand that they don't want to come back again. They're tired. It's physically demanding. It's long hours. It's hard work. I don't think that if I hadn't seen and done that [harvested corn] in Mexico that I would understand.

The first morning in Bogotá, a Saturday, my host mother took me grocery shopping, which marked the last day I lived as a vegetarian. Having checked the vegetarian box on my application, I had not realized how expensive it was to eat as a vegetarian in Colombia. My face flushed when I saw the prices and my host mother trying to do the math to accommodate my privileged diet. I told her that I'd mistakenly checked the box, which initiated me into a world of meats I'd never explored, such as beef liver. When my host mother placed Nescafé instant coffee in our cart, I also learned Colombians could not necessarily afford to consume their popular exports. This reflection on my initial shame and ignorance later helped me to resist the temptation to draw conclusions about clients based on my limited perception of their experiences.

Quinn, who spent two years (from 2013 to 2015) as a Peace Corps volunteer in Peru, described her own experiences with shame, discomfort, and bias. Quinn described the complicated emotional effects of the *machismo* she witnessed, particularly as it impacted the women in her family. Living with her host family for two years, Quinn said she grew to respect her host father's place in the home, as well as the purpose *machismo* served, despite how it challenged her personal and professional beliefs.

> I really had to pick my battles because there were so many things I didn't agree with, and it almost became funny like, "Oh, what's Quinn going to say now?" But certain things like *machismo*—they knew where I stood—and I would've never ever said anything to my host dad because that would just be completely disrespectful, and I wouldn't want to disrespect him in any way, and he was really good to me. But I don't agree with the way he treated my host mom, and the same with my host brothers. With my host brothers, I could leverage with them a little bit and joke around with them . . . because they weren't the head of the household.

In addition to living under different cultural norms, Quinn described the impact of living with fewer resources. In her reflection, Quinn felt that living with fewer resources made her more flexible and humble as a social worker in a US context, where the majority of clients were living

in substandard housing with limited resources. As an MSW student, Quinn understood that the humility she had developed through study abroad helped her make more unbiased assessments of her clients' living conditions.

> After living in Peru, if I walked into a home that the average social worker wouldn't necessarily deem sanitary, to me I would be like [it's not that bad] . . . In that sense, I feel like less phases me and I'm a little more flexible . . . Yesterday we took a quiz [in the MSW child welfare course], and it was talking about home visits and unsanitary conditions and how a skilled social worker would know that just because a house is unsanitary doesn't mean the child is necessarily being neglected, whereas an entry-level social worker, someone that isn't necessarily a social worker but working in child welfare may be like, "A kid can't live in this."

Like Quinn, I grew very close to my family during the four months I lived in Bogotá. We spent a good deal of time at night watching Colombian TV on a small landing between the bedrooms where everyone piled in to watch, including my host sister and her boyfriend, who watched casually between make-out sessions. Or strumming the guitar and singing songs of peaceful change like Mercedes Sosa's "Todo Cambia." These two were very moved by the violence happening in their country, but mostly by one another. One popular sitcom we watched had a character from the United States who was always botching his Spanish. To the delight of us all and the canned laugh track, his favorite refrain was "*¡Es mucho más mejor!*" which is akin to saying, "It's much more better!" It was the first time I'd seen a white, North American male character on screen, goofily disoriented by another culture and language.

Humility through Learning a Language and Other Cultural Practices

Several graduates described how learning the language of their clients (Spanish) created a more personal connection than using an interpreter. Jasmine felt that she was able to connect with her clients and build trust by speaking their language: "If the interpreter is talking, it makes it a little awkward. I think it shows a willingness to speak their language so it's not just like, 'Okay, you need to speak mine.'" Quinn echoed this disruption of the power differential manifest in language with her description of how speaking Spanish levels the playing field and helps workers take the "one-down" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 689) approach:

> I say, "My Spanish is not perfect, I need to learn from you. There are probably some words that I might need you to help me with." I would always start off like that, so then people would feel okay correcting me or like, "Ah, what's that word?"—and I would describe it . . . I feel like it brings us to the same level in a way, but not only that, it's comforting for some of my clients to know I speak Spanish.

Learning another language was integral to cultural humility as described by Amanda, who had studied in Mexico in 2006 as a college student and then returned there in 2008 for her MSW, staying on for six years to work. Amanda, a bilingual caseworker in the United States, credited her Spanish fluency with the ability to see clients "a little bit more through their eyes instead of [her] eyes." She believed that one could not separate language from culture, so speaking her

clients' first language was integral to culturally humble practice:

> I think that's what a lot of people may miss . . . even if we just think about how our culture affects the way we speak in English. For me, it's really not something you can dissect. They're completely intersected, so by learning language, I think it opened up a door which was a new way of thinking, because those cultural nuances are embedded in the language . . . For me, it's given me a different lens in the way I see American culture and in the way I see the world.

When I was homesick one night and tiring from translating language and the world around me, I started tearing up at the dinner table. As was my cultural custom in response to public displays of sadness, I excused myself to go to my room. Within minutes there was a knock at my bedroom door where the family had assembled to coax me out. They explained that in their culture, when someone is crying, they need to be with other people—and preferably be distracted from their woes. They took me down to the living room and invited the neighbors to come in, turning up the stereo and breaking out the Aguardiente, Colombia's powerful anise-flavored liqueur. That was the night I learned how to shed my stiff *gringa* skin and, among other things, move the lower half of my torso to the rhythm of salsa. This moment that felt so emotionally risky to me allowed not only for greater connection with my host family, but the ability years later in social work practice to navigate a much broader range of emotional distance and closeness that the diverse families I worked with possessed.

Both Quinn and Amanda spoke of intervening with other professionals they worked with who did not understand a client's practices. Quinn's description conveyed a knowledge stance, but also a stance of "not knowing for sure":

> I had a student two weeks ago. He just left, but he was Mexican—parents from Mexico—and he would constantly wear a sweatshirt [in summertime] . . . All of the people I work with are like, "How can his mother send him to school like this? He's going to get sick." And I'm like, "Well, guys, honestly it could be cultural. I know in Peru—well it's South America but close—unless it's 100 degrees, kids are in sweatshirts and hats and gloves, and it's just this belief if you're cold, you're going to get a fever."

Amanda touched on the need to intervene with co-workers who might not be tuned into cultural differences and were instead "coming from an Anglo perspective . . . very well-intentioned, but you don't know what you don't know." She described the more subtle, negative interactions she picked up between other providers and their diverse clients as "nuances, " but nonetheless powerful.

> An example that comes to mind—I was interpreting for an IEP meeting. This parent was terribly overwhelmed, completely confused in this process, and the school psychologist, instead of saying, "I'm starting with some strengths, and look, little Susie is this, this and this, but we're concerned in this area. What do you think about that? Are you seeing that at home?" It was just like, "Well, your kid's got this problem." I don't think most parents would like to hear that accusatory tone, because for that Latino parent it's, "You're the

> authority, you're the teacher, you're the professional, so you're here and I'm down here." So the parent just felt really small and didn't contribute, and that's a nuance . . . that psychologist didn't realize how small that parent was in that moment, and it was something as simple as, "You know, your kid's got this problem, " but those are the nuanced pieces that I'm talking about.

For Jasmine, whose parents were from Colombia and had raised their children in the United States, having Spanish professors who were Mexican was a validating component of her study abroad education. Growing up in suburban southeastern Pennsylvania, Jasmine had never encountered teachers who looked like her. In school she learned Spanish from teachers who had learned it as a second language and inadvertently shamed students like Jasmine who spoke Spanish at home.

> I never saw anyone who was Latino in—I don't want to say a place of power, but a place like as an educator or as a principal. All I saw around me was "The Latinos are the cleaning people" . . . sophomore year I was always fighting with my teacher because she studied in Spain. She thought that was, like, the way to speak. I was like, "No. Mm-mm." Then I would get all the markings right, all my papers right. I would get As. But I would say a word that was Colombian slang or something. She would just be like, "No. No, to you." What do you mean, "No?"

Humility through Experiencing Alternative Sociopolitical Systems

For each of the graduates I interviewed, studying abroad exposed them to the value of practices at the mezzo and macro levels that were different from (and often stigmatized) practices in the United States. For some, these stemmed from decolonizing pedagogy and practice (Crampton, 2015), which was a conscious effort to reclaim indigenous practices and resist the destructive beliefs and practices that came with the colonization of countries in Latin America and Africa. For Sydney, studying abroad in a German university known for its global focus piqued her interest in *Buen vivir*, a social philosophy in South America based on environmentalism, self-determination, and the cultural rights of indigenous people (Merino, 2016). Sydney hoped to study this as part of her field experience and planned to use her Spanish-speaking skills to do so. Sydney also linked her interest in *Buen vivir* to understanding how to develop supportive, sustainable communities. She offered her nascent understanding of the concept:

> *Buen vivir* is a kind of *going back to* for these particular countries because they were colonized at one point—they're going back to ancestral practices of connecting more with the earth. They actually—I think it's either in Ecuador or Bolivia—they've given Mother Nature a voice in the constitution . . . trees are considered an entity, like human beings.

In the classroom of a school nestled on a hill in a middle-class neighborhood of Bogotá, my own education in cultural nuances continued. Our Latin American history professor was a proud Colombian and Marxist who explained the challenges to a government that did not have the weapons to fight the drug cartels and how income inequality had helped set the stage for the cartel and paramilitary insurgency. While the majority of my professors in the United States had

been left-leaning, I had never been taught by a self-identified Marxist or from the perspective of someone whose history did not at some base level valorize US capitalism. Our Spanish professor was a smart, attractive Colombian woman in her late 30s who wore tight pencil skirts and stiletto heels, and explained to us how much she loved herself and the male catcalls she would get on the street, an image that challenged my steady diet of 1970s and '80s feminism. This representation of female strength broadened my culturally determined lens and challenged the notion that there were scripts for how strong, smart women professionals *should* look, act, and feel.

For both the graduates interviewed and for me, the act of learning from experts who were not from our own cultural, social, or political contexts was a key component of developing cultural humility. This process prepared us as social workers to defer to the expertise of people who were often disenfranchised as members of racial and ethnic minority communities in the United States.

Promoting Culturally Humble Practice and Study Abroad

According to the Institute of International Education (2017), the number of US students studying abroad has more than tripled in the past two decades. The literature on study abroad is nearly unanimous in its assertion of the positive effect international study has on social work students' professional identity development, global awareness, critical self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, commitment to social work values, and multicultural counseling competency (Boateng & Mercy Thompson, 2013; Gammonley et al., 2007; Greenfield, Davis, & Fodor, 2012; Kim, 2015; Lindsey, 2005; Moorhead, Boetto, & Bell, 2014; Ross, 2010; Voss et al., 2017). Implicit in the literature is the assumption that these outcomes are good and necessary for effective, culturally humble, and emancipatory social work practice.

When social work practitioners and academics forefront the *cultural* in cultural humility, we may inadvertently downplay global economics as a contributor to *cultural superiority* for social workers in the United States and much of the developed world. That the survival strategies of poor families are stigmatized by society is a well-documented phenomenon (Hansen, Bourgois, & Drucker, 2014; Hirschl, Rank, & Kousi-Appouh, 2012), and many social welfare texts incorporate critical thinking about class to address it (e.g. Chapin, 2017). However, much of this content is at the cognitive versus affective level, which can inadvertently limit students' ability to transcend their biases (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005). Experiences that put developed-world students as guests into developing-world contexts offer them an otherwise inaccessible experience as outsider-learners. When Amanda described the difference between "recognizing" struggles and "empathizing" with struggles, I believe she was reflecting on this very experience:

> I feel like maybe the piece that was missing [from the social work curriculum] was the ability to empathize as part of cultural competence. I think that sometimes we look at it as recognizing how to sit, how to talk, how our interactions might look different, how our language might look different based on being culturally competent, but aside from recognizing, I think there's a degree of empathizing that gets overlooked. Recognizing is different from empathizing with how a family could or could not be struggling, and I

> think when I was able to truly empathize with those differences, that was where I felt an elevated richness to my understanding of cultural competence.

The reflections in this narrative reveal the potential of study abroad experiences to serve as a springboard for culturally humble practice. My first job in social services was as a housing advocate in a homeless family shelter in East Boston. My clients came from Mexico, Chile, Guatemala, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the many neighborhoods of Boston. Living under one roof and sharing a kitchen gave plenty of opportunity for conflict that often broke down along cultural or racial lines. From my experience in Colombia (which preceded my social work degree), I felt open to the many ways of living and knowing that my clients brought to shelter life. In one incident, residents were put off by a Mexican family's week-long use of the kitchen counter to make homemade cheese. In my role, which was to find residents permanent housing, I worked hard to translate between cultures and systems, helping residents consider the value of practices that differed from their own. I continued this translation when residents moved into local housing units and landlords were not accustomed to having tenants who had government subsidies, lived in multi-generational households, and/or did not speak English.

As an MSW-level social worker, I continued to work with diverse families, many of whom were Spanish-speaking and adjusting to the laws and systems of the United States. My experience as an outsider-learner in Colombia prepared me to meet clients where they were and not where I expected them to be. It also helped me extend beyond professional boundaries that discouraged the acceptance of food or hospitality from families, especially on home visits, a practice that helped build trust and reciprocity in my relationships with clients.

As an educator of undergraduate social work students, I try to teach the value of discomfort and discomforting experiences. Whether counseling students to study abroad or to take an improvisation class to fulfill their art requirement, I consistently reflect on the value of that discomfort to my own social work practice. As a faculty member at a large public university, many of our students cannot afford to study abroad. I have tried to promote and develop affordable opportunities, even if they are to study abroad *at home*, by immersing students in the diverse immigrant communities of our region. Finally, I seek opportunities to model cultural humility as a lifelong process.

Reflections of graduates who have studied abroad offer social work educators guideposts to build educational environments that nurture a student's desire to connect meaningfully with diverse clients. Study abroad enables students, once they are practitioners, to *join with* clients and address the power differential in the helping relationship, to envision and practice alternatives to US social work practice, and to have greater empathy. Reflections also suggest that experiencing the discomfort of being a cultural and linguistic minority helps set people on a path of lifelong self-reflection, another hallmark of cultural humility.

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Connection through Cultural Humility: Reflections on Counseling in the Criminal Justice System

Camila Tirado and Alexander J. Hilert

Abstract: Cultural humility is an emerging construct in multicultural counseling literature. This paper summarizes the authors' experiences of cultural humility while leading groups for women in the criminal justice system, where the authors learned the value of the cultural humility framework. Ultimately, the authors demonstrate how cultural humility can lead to empowering and mutually beneficial counselor-client relationships across differences in power and privilege.

***Keywords*:** cultural humility, addiction counseling, multicultural counseling, counseling women, criminal justice system

Multiculturalism is an essential component of ethical counseling (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counselors need the awareness, knowledge, and skills to work across various dimensions of culture (including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation) in order to provide competent counseling (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015; Sue & Sue, 2013). Cultural humility goes beyond multicultural competence by speaking to our need to undergo a "lifelong-commitment to self-evaluation and critique" in order to address power imbalances in practitioner-client relationships and by developing "non-paternalistic" partnerships with marginalized communities (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p. 123). For the counselor, cultural humility may manifest in attitudes of openness, self-awareness, and an "other-oriented" (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013, p. 354) orientation, as well as counseling relationships characterized as empowering and mutually beneficial (Mosher et al., 2017). Such an approach can increase the working alliance and client outcomes, and it can counteract microaggressions, defined as racially/culturally motivated slights or acts of aggression (Davis et al., 2018; Hook et al., 2016).

Cultural humility defines our (authors') professional orientation as counselors. Nowhere has this been more present than in our volunteer work in the criminal justice system, a setting where individuals are stripped of their rights and face extreme marginalization (Alexander, 2010; Kerrison, 2018). This paper will discuss our experiences as counselors leading psychoeducational groups with women experiencing incarceration, many of whom have histories of trauma and addiction. We will share how this experience has helped us develop cultural humility and how this framework ultimately allowed us to build meaningful, growth-promoting relationships with our clients. Implications will also be discussed.

To begin with, we will discuss our cultural backgrounds and connections to the topic. The first author identifies as a Latina woman who came from a low-socioeconomic background. I (first author) also have a family history of incarceration and addiction and have personally experienced early childhood traumas as well as interpersonal violence, which echo experiences of many of the women in our group. These aspects of my identity have helped me relate to the women in the group and, as they expressed, have helped me be an inspiration to them in

overcoming adversity. The second author identifies as a cisgender White Jewish man who comes from an upper-middle-class background. I (second author) recognize the privilege I hold not only as a White male, but also someone who holds privilege due to my socioeconomic status (SES) and educational background, and due to the fact that I have not experienced childhood traumas. Because of our differing backgrounds, we have found ways to balance each other as co-leaders and in developing cultural humility through our dialogues and reflection.

Going into this work, the first author had a sense of familiarity because of her previous life experiences. I (first author) felt like I knew the women in the jail and that I could have easily been one of the women if things had worked out differently. This gave me the desire to help out of a sense of compassion for the struggles I knew many of these women faced. The second author has largely been removed from knowing people who are incarcerated but felt a deep calling for this work after volunteering previously in correctional settings. I (second author) came to this work also from a place of compassion for the suffering brought on by institutions of incarceration and because of my feelings of empathy for those who struggle with mental health problems and addiction, who make up nearly 60 percent of the prison population (Fazel, Yoon, & Hayes, 2017; James & Glaze, 2006). For both authors, there was an awareness of racial and class-based disparities in the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2010; The Sentencing Project, 2018) as well as an awareness of how women, People of Color, and people with mental health problems are mistreated while incarcerated (Kerrison, 2018; Roth, 2018).

When we first entered the jail to lead class together, the first author felt anxious. This was her first time going to jail while not visiting a family member or friend, and she felt unsure about what the women in the group were going to think about her. I (first author) wanted them to know I was there for the right reasons, only to help. I also felt depressed knowing so many of the women there were incarcerated for non-violent crimes or were just there awaiting trial (Kajstura, 2017). We both felt the dehumanizing architecture and atmosphere of the jail as we walked in. It felt bare, cold, and empty. The prison environment, including experiences it engenders, such as social stress, isolation, and abuse, has been shown to exacerbate and/or induce mental health problems for jail residents (Schnittker, Massoglia, & Uggen, 2012; Zwieg, Yahner, Visher, & Lattimore, 2015). The second author had specific reservations about working across genders with the women in the group. I (second author) wondered if I would have the sensitivity needed to build trusting relationships with the women in the jail and whether they would feel comfortable opening up to me. Both authors acknowledged these feelings and sought to minimize their influence by focusing on attitudes of cultural humility, such as openness, selflessness, and relationship-building (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016).

The first class we taught was on grief and loss (a subject that had been requested by many women). We introduced ourselves and tried to set norms by saying this was a safe space and there would be no judgement. We then opened the group for discussion by asking the women why they signed up for this group, expecting this to be a quick introduction before moving on to more topics. Unexpectedly, many of the women opened up in great depth about the traumatic losses they've endured and feelings of grief, as well as how they've attempted to cope with them. Many tears were shed, and this led to other women opening up as well, many for the first time. The emotions were heavy as everyone experienced each other's grief, and we were moved

to a place of humility, whereby we could only seek to nurture and validate their pain. We thanked the women for their openness and honesty before the class came to an end. This experience took time for us (authors) to process. We supported one another in coping with the emotions and reflected on ways we could be helpful and empowering in future classes. For both authors, the experience was a vivid depiction of the trauma and grief many women experience and how that can often lead to coping through drugs and alcohol, thus leading to incarceration (Fuentes, 2013; Green et al., 2016).

We spent the next several weeks of the class focusing on psychoeducation surrounding grief and trauma in order to promote self-care. We provided information on how trauma affects the body and brain (van der Kolk, 2014) and how it can lead to attempts to cope through drugs or alcohol (Fuentes, 2013). We watched as women began putting together pieces of education with their own life experiences. For some participants, it was realizing how their lives had changed by witnessing or experiencing traumatic acts or losses and how they could move forward by honoring their losses and finding new sources of purpose and meaning. It was inspiring to witness journeys of growth in our groups together as women found ways of supporting one another and coming to new realizations. However, it was heartbreaking leaving each session knowing that we got to leave and they didn't. We also witnessed firsthand the stress that family separation and incarceration had on the women with whom we worked. Oftentimes, it felt like there was little we could do to help in many situations (such as separation from children), yet we could offer a compassionate, open, and safe space for them. By the time our groups ended, the majority of the women were calmer and more hopeful. For these reasons, both we and the participants came to look forward to our groups together.

The longer that we worked with the women in the jail, the more we learned about their personal backgrounds and the more we shared ours. These relationships developed out of a great sense of cultural humility, which allowed us to step out of the expert role and be down-to-earth and authentic with participants (Foronda et al., 2016; Hook et al., 2013). This was incredibly important considering the oppression and marginalization incarcerated women typically face in treatment settings (Blakey & Grocher, 2017; Kerrison, 2018). For the first author, this meant sharing how previous acts of abuse, conditioning, and culture had shaped her life and development, and how she was able to overcome obstacles and develop greater resiliency and fulfillment in life. For the second author, this meant openly disclosing how he could not personally relate to many of their experiences, but that he was honored by their willingness to share and awed by their strength and resilience.

While we knew we could not solve many of their issues, we did our best to explore topics of value, like resilience and self-care. We emphasized healthy coping skills for trauma and addiction (Najavits, 2009) and mindfulness and self-compassion (Germer & Neff, 2013), all the while being open to their creative insights, ideas to cope effectively, and goals for their recovery. We purposely avoided imposing any of our beliefs and acknowledged that recovery and healing will look different for everyone (DiClemente, 2013). Many of the women shared stories of interpersonal violence and/or traumatic grief. While we offered psychoeducation on the healing process, we acknowledged that everyone comes to terms with what happens in different ways. We maintained an openness and other-oriented orientation central to cultural humility (Mosher

et al., 2017) to help the women feel valued and to feel like equal participants in the counseling process.

We also sought to take advantage of cultural opportunities when issues directly related to family, race, class, or gender emerged (Davis et al., 2018). For example, when an African American woman discussed feeling like a judge had been biased and unfair to her, we affirmed her reality and acknowledged the racism and bias in the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2010). We encouraged her to be resilient, seek support, and advocate for herself, which she was able to do successfully. We also discussed with clients their individual family cultures, which for many individuals involved cycles of addiction. In these cases, we listened openly without judgment while also exploring with clients their goals for themselves and how they wanted to break the cycle. Further, if anyone did not feel comfortable self-disclosing or participating in an activity, we did not pressure them to do so. We strove to offer several different opportunities for activities that allowed group members to participate in varying ways (e.g., journaling, role-plays, group discussions, art, and meditation).

Throughout our work with the women, we also strove to maintain awareness of our cultural biases, a concept key to cultural humility (Foronda et al., 2016). We have been purposeful about not using potentially stigmatizing terms like *addict*, *inmate*, or *disorder* (Ashford, Brown, & Curtis, 2018). We also tried to connect our themes and content to our clients' personal beliefs, such as their spirituality and religion. When clients shared the importance of their religious beliefs and spiritual practices, such as prayer, we affirmed the importance of these values and practices. Through cultural humility, we attempted to utilize the language of clients to affirm their role as an expert in their personal spiritual lives, which can be important to enhancing recovery (DiClemente, 2013) and personal growth (Cashwell & Young, 2011).

A major component of our cultural humility was also recognizing our limitations while also striving to be supportive of our clients in every way possible (Foronda et al., 2016; Mosher et al., 2017). There was little we could do as volunteers in many instances to change certain issues within the jail and criminal justice system at large. When possible, we tried to help by writing letters of support for the clients, providing clients with certificates for participating in the class, or reporting issues to our supervisors. But more than anything, we listened to the hardships the women endured every day in the jail while affirming their successes with recovery and growth. In the aftermath of leading the group, we found it important to process with each other our sense of anger and sadness regarding the difficulties the women face and the injustice they so often experience. Part of the continuing journey with cultural humility has entailed learning more about social justice issues in the criminal justice system and finding ways to be advocates for these issues through outside organizations.

The more we worked with this group of women, the humbler we grew. Our reflections brought us to the realization that these women had already been through so much and were extremely resilient. It was clear that this approach of humility was noticed and appreciated by the women. They expressed on multiple occasions that they perceived us as genuine and were learning and growing from the group experience. This experience was mutually beneficial, as it had been truly rewarding for us as well. One of our proudest moments was attending a graduation

ceremony for women in our class who had completed their substance abuse treatment program. It was amazing to see the participants who had come so far being celebrated for their hard work.

Reflecting on our experience as counselors in the jail, it is clear to us that cultural humility played a fundamental role in our ability to build trusting relationships in our group. For us, cultural humility entailed the attitudes of empathy, respect, self-awareness, authenticity, and non-judgement. By maintaining these attitudes, trust can emerge between us and our clients (Foronda et al., 2016; Hook et al., 2013). If we had taken an approach of cultural arrogance, the women in our group would not have been as open or trusting and may have perceived microaggressions (Hook et al., 2016). Only by taking an authentic, down-to-earth perspective were we able to build trust and lead groups effectively. Our experience aligns with research that women experience the most growth and healing when they perceive their counselors as authentic and empowering and when they feel listened to and cared for (Blakey & Grocher, 2017). Cultural humility offers a vehicle for truly listening to and valuing our clients across differences of privilege and oppression (Hook et al., 2013; Mosher et al., 2017).

We believe there are many implications for professional helpers, especially those working with mandated and/or systemically marginalized populations. First, cultural humility is more than a concept; it is a way of life (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Professional helpers who seek to embody cultural humility must devote their personal and professional lives toward uncovering hidden biases, becoming more aware of social issues, and adopting attitudes of openness, authenticity, and humbleness. Another major implication is the importance of building relationships when working with mandated/marginalized populations. Relationship-building factors, such as empathy and working alliance, contribute significantly to successful therapeutic outcomes (Norcross & Wampold, 2011), and we believe they may be even more important with individuals who have experienced marginalization and oppression. In the criminal justice system, issues of race, class, identity, mental health, trauma, and addiction often intersect (Kerrison, 2018; Roth, 2018), meaning counselors must strive to attend to these issues with empathy and understanding in order to provide counseling that is perceived as empowering (Blakey & Grocher, 2017). Cultural humility offers a relationship-based framework for attending to differences in power and privilege (Mosher et al., 2017), which we have found to result in meaningful connection despite differences in identity and social location.

In sum, we believe that cultural humility offers a credible framework for building empowering relationships across differences in identity through the demonstration of openness, authenticity, and non-judgement and through the practice of self-reflection and awareness. These ideas echo the growing literature on cultural humility, which demonstrates its efficacy as a framework for multicultural counseling relationships (Davis et al., 2018; Hook et al., 2016). As counselors, we must acknowledge that we all have different experiences of culture, power, and privilege, and we must make it part of our professional identity to be aware of our own social location and how it impacts counseling relationships. Most importantly, we must be able to authentically relate to clients despite our differences. In our counseling practice, we believe cultural humility has allowed us to be open and caring in a way that is perceived as authentic, empowering, and growth-promoting by our clients.

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Understanding Cultural Humility Through the Lens of a Military Culture

Margaret Lane

Abstract: The author's background for over the past 20 years has been working with the military veteran population and active duty military members in the Veterans Administration (VA). Her practice has comprised many components of VA health care, including medical and behavioral health. Regardless of which facet of care her practice has led her to, one element has always been the driving focus for her to convey to those who do not primarily work with veterans—the understanding and recognition of veterans and military members as a separate cultural identity. This narrative seeks to create a space for exploration and understanding of the differences between civilian cultures and military cultures by utilizing a cultural humility framework. The author's overall aim is to inform and recognize military cultural differences through the lens of a shared, collectivistic, and militaristic cultural enmeshment, thus increasing present cultural competency and linguistic knowledge beyond categorical denotations and moving toward continued cultural learning and true expression that lead to deeper implications. Providers' perceptions of their own cultural humility play a vital role in understanding and treating military members. It is in the understanding of military structure, language, commitment to their unit, service to their country, and how military members embrace honor and service, that true cultural humility begins to form (Tschaepe, 2018). The author believes it is vital that the military populations are recognized not only for their specialized services in protecting their country, but also for their unique and distinct culture that comprises the United States military community.

***Keywords*:** military culture, cultural humility, civilian culture, cultural identity

My background for over the past 20 years has been working with our military veteran population and active duty military members in the Veterans Administration (VA). My practice has comprised many components of VA health care, including medical and behavioral health. Regardless of which facet of care my practice has led me to, one element has always been the driving focus for me to convey to those who do not primarily work with veterans the understanding and recognition of veterans and military members as a separate cultural identity.

Early in my career, I found the military philosophy to be markedly separate and distinct from its civilian counterpart and comprised of multiple factors and values that define how military members live their lives as part of the United States military (Cunha & Curran, 2013). Military values define how military members live their lives and include both written and unwritten principles (Cunha & Curran, 2013). These principles include concepts such as unit cohesion through the success of the unit, the desire to never break trust among fellow members, the promise to never leave a man on the battlefield (this extends to all walks of life, such as never leaving your buddy at a bar), and control over emotions (Cunha & Curran, 2013). I was faced with the tenacity of military protocol, which promotes strong character, morale, and welfare of the military unit. This tenacity transcends military language through the use of terminology that

protects the military member's psyche, but to those outside of this military culture, language can easily be taken out of context (Cunha & Curran, 2013). From my experiences, I found there needs to be a narrative that utilizes a cultural humility framework to create a space for exploration and understanding of the differences between civilian cultures and military cultures. My overall aim is to inform and recognize military cultural differences through the lens of a shared, collectivistic, and militaristic cultural enmeshment, thus increasing present cultural competency and linguistic knowledge beyond categorical denotations and moving toward continued cultural learning and true expression that lead to deeper implications.

A brief understanding of VA medical and health care policies from which the VA operates is critical to understanding military populations and receipt of health care services. I quickly learned the military community is much different from civilian communities regarding how they provide care for discharged military personnel harmed either physically or mentally while fulfilling active duty requirements. When military personnel transition from active duty to inactive duty, members may become eligible for benefits that civilian populations may not necessarily understand, which can inadvertently create areas of marginalization. In his discussion of a strengths-based approach to health care, Saleebey (2002) indicated that "it is becoming increasingly clear that emotions have a profound effect on wellness and health" (p. 15).

Disability ratings and service connections are two terms that help define the medical and behavioral health care that military members and veterans are given throughout their mission and upon mission completion (Budahn, 2011). Service connection is a rating that determines the percentage of monies or services given to the veteran, which is evaluated by and based on the veteran's disability or health impairments (Budahn, 2011). Service connection is a classification rating system in which compensation and benefits are determined. Each tier and class bring with them the definition and types of services and needs for which veterans will be eligible and treated within the VA health care system (Budahn, 2011). A Class IV rating is considered one of the highest eligibility and reimbursed categories a veteran can receive from injuries and disabilities incurred through service to the United States (Budahn, 2011).

Any physical or mental complications incurred while the soldier was serving a military tour potentiates the need for a disability rating. Disability allotments to the discharged veteran can occur through a monthly compensation check and can be as minimum as 0% service connection (health care eligibility but no monthly check) to 100% service connection, which can pay a disabled veteran a monthly tax-free salary (Budahn, 2011). Along with a monthly income, veterans become eligible for medical care and prescriptions with zero co-pays, eye exams, dental benefits (for some), and housing reimbursements for handicap accessibility, along with many other eligibilities (Budahn, 2011).

I was proud to be a part of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), one of the largest integrated health care systems that serves over nine million veterans enrolled in their system (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). However, not all military populations are treated at VHA facilities (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). For many health care providers who, like me, are civilians without any prior experience with military service members, immersion in

this culture adds a layer of complexity in a population very different from a civilian population (Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007). Military populations comprise approximately seven percent of the total population, with close to 93 percent of the military population being part of a multigenerational military family (Atuel & Castro, 2018). Although there is recognition and appreciation for the job military members perform, I find there is a gap between civilian populations and military populations, which creates a lack of cultural awareness about military members as a distinct minority and culture (Atuel & Castro, 2018). For example, when active duty military members or veterans seek any type of health care service, the military member will test the trustworthiness of the provider (Atuel & Castro, 2018). Service members will ask questions relating to trust through questions such as, "Have you served?" or "Are you a veteran?" (Atuel & Castro, 2018, p. 75). Cultural humility within the military health care field recognizes power imbalances and the need for reflection (Foronda et al., 2018). If I, as a health care provider, am not culturally aware of military culture, the dialogue of understanding disintegrates, ending any possibility of a therapeutic alignment with the member (Tschaepe, 2018).

Military culture can be defined as an active process of constructing shared meaning and is represented through shared ideas, beliefs, attitudes, teamwork, trust, uniformity, anonymity, and an environment that acknowledges that the unit's goals are always placed ahead of an individual member's goals (Foronda et al., 2018). My experience found that the military culture and collectivistic framework was entrenched in each member as part of a cohesive whole. Within military communities, military life provides a structured lifestyle through rules, guidelines, and expectations that frame members' adherence to core values determined via the branch of service (Cunha & Curran, 2013). In comparison, my civilian culture is more individualistic with codes of conduct set by Western standards. Cunha & Curran (2013) describe the differences between civilian and military cultures using a job frame of reference. In military communities, a military member's job becomes their identity among their peers, their units, and their military branch—it is who they are. In civilian cultures, jobs are what people do to earn money and are not necessarily attached to their identity. Missions within military cultures in comparison to civilian cultures come with expectations of high performance and dependency on the unit for survival, and any absence from your job could endanger your unit's safety or have far deeper implications (Blazer, 2007; Koenig, 2007; Peteet, 2007).

With my behavioral health background, and from working with the returning veterans, I see military members often viewing society differently upon returning home. This view can manifest and create personal conflict for the veteran as well as his or her family, friends, and caregivers. I find behavioral health providers, as well as medical providers, need to be aware of these views by using cultural humility to benefit both the military members and their families. Cultural competency/awareness are terms that are frequently used in the health care field and encompass definitions that include concepts such as minority group knowledge and self-awareness of our own attitudes and feelings (Foronda et al., 2018).

Cultural humility is a lifelong immersion in a bi-directional commitment to self-reflection and self-critique focused on the process of mutually re-addressing and re-defining imbalances of power dynamics when interacting cross-culturally (Foronda et al., 2018). American culture

constructs fit this definition through a popular cultural lens that binds masses of diverse people in an amalgamated identity—viewing conglomerates of people through a lens of similar customs, beliefs, and social norms (McAdams, 2014). However, it is erroneous to amalgamate military service members and veterans into the construct of American culture (McAdams, 2014). I can attest that the attention to cultural awareness and diversity without the inclusion of cultural humility when working with military personnel brings into question common understandings of social constructs and clinical terminology used in civilian populations and the relatability of that terminology to military personnel (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011; Oztürk, Bozkurt, Durmus, Deveci, & Sengezer, 2006).

In a military cultural setting, military personnel reflect the social constructs and governing bodies that define and make up a militaristic hierarchy and the creed of a Warriors Ethos (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011; Oztürk et al., 2006). Lack of military cultural knowledge can lead to viewing variables about military culture as superordinate, leading to interpretation of cultural-, racial-, or ethnic-group variances as minority-group deficits or majority-group strengths independent of embedded social, organizational, and pedagogical processes which negate the institutional context and function of cultural and historical circumstance (Brannan, Esler, & Anders Strindberg, 2001; Merlan, 2005). I find that the lack of military cultural humility and awareness creates areas of miscommunication when using common terminology to describe behavioral characteristics of military members, affecting understanding for both the military member and the provider with the potential to miss critical or necessary information (Goff et al., 2007; Hoge, Auchterlonie, & Milliken, 2006; Knox, 2017).

Examining a cultural humility framework within military populations extends understanding of culture when compared to cultural competence. Cultural humility incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critical reflection of our knowledge and to recognizing power imbalances (Foronda et al., 2018). Cultural humility commits to continual learning in a world that has power imbalances (Foronda et al., 2018). For example, from my experience working with veterans, the sustained presence of American military personnel over the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan has created an atmosphere of persistent high risk, increased potential for mental health challenges, and increased exposure to missed communication encounters due to not understanding military culture (Currie, Day, & Kelloway, 2011).

In some ways, modern war can be considered a condition of captivity, as military service members describe their experiences of active duty as being *always on* and the recognition that they are not free to quit and return home (Adler, Huffman, Bliese, & Castro, 2005; Hutchinson & Banks-Williams, 2006; Reeves, Parker, & Konkle-Parker, 2005). Their mission requires a continued presence of military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is a 24-hour continuous danger zone with no front line that separates troops from the enemy (Hoge et al., 2006). Warfare tactics have shifted and become more ambiguous and intangible. Blurred boundaries between war and safety make it impossible to separate innocent civilians and enemies (Hoge et al., 2006). These blurred boundaries shift the conventional way of conceptualizing war from the perspective of the location of the enemy or targets in a latitudinal and longitudinal perspective, but this shift doesn't always equate and match with how the provider views war (Ettlinger & Bosco, 2004). Loss of a clear demarcated front line, terrorist networks, and the expansion of the war challenge

military perceptions of sense of place and sense of time during military missions, thus increasing reliance and adherence to strict military protocols within military culture (Currie et al., 2011; Ettlinger & Bosco, 2004). Military culture and training design protect military members from, mitigate, and lessen the effects of war by fostering interdependence, teamwork, a greater bond, and greater trust with fellow military members (King, King, Gudanowski, & Vreven, 1995). By using a cultural humility framework in recognizing this culture, I am constantly aware of an ever-evolving and ever-changing lens through which I provide care.

I have learned that military culture, when viewed through its own cultural humility lens, can assist in the greater understanding of primary factors, many of which are based in military experience that aids practitioners in having real conversations with military members (Helmer et al., 2007; Resnik, Gray, & Borgia, 2011). Military philosophy differs from civilian philosophy in relation to how service members make decisions, whether in combat or not; how they overcome adversity and challenges; and how they conduct themselves (Cunha & Curran, 2013). What must not be forgotten when working toward a cultural humility framework in understanding military populations—one that I continually strive for—is the notion that behaviors, attitudes, emotions, and actions of military personnel all serve within a symbiotic relationship to protect military units (Hoge & Castro, 2012). We as practitioners and civilian providers must recognize our responsibility and therapeutic obligation to meet military members where they are within their military culture.

Unit cohesion, considered necessary for survival during military conflicts, is a cultural element not frequently embedded in a civilian provider when considering military members' challenges (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). Traumatic events and circumstances experienced by military units serve to bind and tie military service members together (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). These bonds created among fellow military members and units are defined by military members as surrogate families; these cultural bonds develop during war or adversity and can increase transitional stress on a military member's reintegration process into civilian life (Chappelle & Lumley, 2006; Figley, 2005; Hoge, Terhakopian, Castro, Messer, & Engel, 2007; Solomon & Mikulincer, 2006; Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, & Proctor, 2008). I have come to learn and understand that at discharge from being an active military member, demobilization serves as a prelude to a break-up of the military member's family, ultimately ending the camaraderie and intimacy of shared war experiences (Atuel & Castro, 2018; Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011).

I continually examine militaristic phenomena through a cultural humility framework, which includes associating culture within military structure development and involves the exploration of many domains (such as ethnicity, occupation, gender role, spirituality, and social and peer negotiations) through the lens of military collective processes of individual and group categorization and re-categorization of group membership (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Military members' cultural identity process begins with their military branch, rank, job title, and duty. Race, ethnicity, or other parameters traditionally used to separate and define civilian populations are not at the core of a military troop and unit (Oyserman et al., 2002). Understanding military culture and the therapeutic processes when working within this culture when military cultural humility has not been taken into consideration can compromise services and impede the therapeutic relationship (Bowling & Sherman, 2008; Goff et al., 2007). For

example, when I work with military members, it is important to understand military organizational structure and hierarchies of power (Hoge & Castro, 2012). Military culture in comparison to civilian cultures lies within power structures according to rank and job title (Hoge & Castro, 2012). Military members follow a hierarchy of authority with the military command recognized as the decision makers. In military culture, the commanding officer of the service member stays involved in their lives on and off duty (Cunha & Curran, 2013). Medication choices, treatment choices, and intervention modalities must be cleared and understood through the member's chain of command. Military members are never off duty. They can be called to action at a moment's notice with the expectation of continual mission readiness (Atuel & Castro, 2018). It is imperative that I always recognize the cultural organizational frame in which the military member functions. Without military cultural awareness, I can unknowingly create areas of misperception when using common civilian terminology to describe behavioral characteristics, such as mission readiness, and I could jeopardize the military member's ability to serve if treatment modalities do not follow military protocols (Goff et al., 2007; Hoge et al., 2006; Knox, Conwell, & Caine, 2004). This misperception in terminology can potentiate critical outcomes, especially if mission readiness is viewed as less important by the provider (Goff et al., 2007; Knox et al., 2004; Spelman, Hunt, Seal, & Burgo-Black, 2012).

Mission readiness is a military cultural norm that continuously ties service members to a military identity, thus usurping other cultural constructs, such as race, religion, or gender (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Conformity to the military structure and an organizational cultural group, plus a military identity embedded within the military organizational culture and a military chain of command, are the cultural cornerstones for military members (Atuel & Castro, 2018).

My practice of including military culture and the multidimensional aspects of formal and informal processes must include a cultural humility framework for conceptualization when working with military members (Fugas, Meliá, & Silva, 2011; Hard, Recchia, & Tversky, 2011; Hoge et al., 2006; Miller, 1999; Tschaepe, 2018). Health care providers consider normative behavior and the understanding of social norms as one of the critical aspects in the navigation of the social world (Hard et al., 2011). The construct identified and used in measuring the social world and acceptable behavior is termed social norms (Fugas et al., 2011). In a civilian world, popular culture creates the social norm. In military culture, the mental and physical health of a military member is dependent on group and normative factors of cultural safety (military social norms) (Hoge et al., 2006; Tschaepe, 2018). These factors are defined within the military context and, thus, represent a set of descriptive and injunctive values that follow military cultural norms (Fugas et al., 2011; Hoge et al., 2006). Military protective instincts designed to mitigate danger flow through a continuum of diminishing and intensifying reactions to perceived threats as the military member transitions into a civilian culture; they are not cognizant of everyday factors considered normal in a civilian world but present real threats to a military member's perception (King et al., 1995).

As an example, an active duty military member is gearing up for his fourth deployment. He comes in to see his mental health care provider or physician before meeting up with his unit and with his wife. Immediately, the health care provider starts to notice behaviors that are both subtle and elusive. The health care provider observes the simple everyday process of the military

member choosing a chair. The military member enters the examination room, immediately surveys his surroundings, and checks for exits from the room and the position of all the furniture. The significance of this illustration is paramount; the military member chooses the chair facing the door closest to the exit (Carlsten & Hunt, 2007). When the health care provider questions the military member as to why he chose that chair, he responds that it was because he could observe the door (Carlsten & Hunt, 2007). In military culture and from within a cultural humility framework, choice of chair is a protective process brought about by survival mechanisms ingrained while in a military culture (Carlsten & Hunt, 2007; Hutcheson & Adams, 2007). Conceptualization of chair choice as a protective instinct in the civilian world is irrelevant. In a military environment, failure to recognize potential threats may endanger one's life and the life of one's unit (Carlsten & Hunt, 2007; Hoge et al., 2006; Hutcheson & Adams, 2007).

Additionally, utilizing a cultural humility framework and a military cultural understanding allows the provider and the member's spouse to understand the connection of driving a vehicle in terms of a survival mechanism that is instilled during military training. I have found that in counseling military members and their partners, bringing them to a mutual understanding of how each other feels and reacts in situations such as driving a vehicle can bring greater healing within the relationship. Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) are another example of something that can trigger culturally ingrained protective instincts—and the perceived and real threat they bring to troops' lives—and this must be recognized through a cultural humility framework (Hoge et al., 2006). My example briefly illuminates the need for recognizing and defining hypervigilance through the act of driving a vehicle. A military member is driving down the street with his spouse and family. Suddenly, without warning, he is driving down the center of the road at the top speed. His spouse, who is sitting beside him, does not understand the moment and what is happening and perceives the moment from a different perspective—a civilian one. The military member's spouse immediately becomes anxious and shouts and pleads for him to pull over or slow the vehicle and go back into their lane. Her fear is coming from the perspective of an accident. The military member's fear is coming from the perspective of fear as well, but his fear is due to hypervigilance and a triggered experienced while driving. When the provider questions the service member regarding this incident, the service member reports seeing a white plastic bag float across the road (any item that appears in the visual driving field can become a life or death moment) (Atuel & Castro, 2018; Hoge et al., 2006; Hoge et al., 2007). The very mechanism that keeps the military member and his unit safe during a war is the same one that, in a civilian world, can put the military member and his family in danger.

Empowerment and recognition of power imbalances are more likely to occur when utilizing a cultural humility framework. The provider's perceptions and processing of their own cultural humility play a vital role in understanding and treating military members. True cultural humility begins to form only when the practitioner understands the following: military structure and language, service members' commitment to their unit and service to their country, and how military members embrace honor and service (Tschaepe, 2018). I believe it is vital that we recognize military populations not only for their specialized services in protecting our country, but also for the unique and distinct culture that comprises the United States military community. It is in the recognition and centralization of a cultural humility framework when working with military cultures that a positive cultural understanding can begin.

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