

Teaching to Transform: Multicultural Competence and Classroom Practice

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The Division of Counseling and Psychology at Lesley University, U.S., recognizes the importance of training culturally competent counselors. To this end, it engages in ongoing transformation of its curriculum on behalf of a classroom experience that understands the individual within a sociopolitical context. Our pedagogical approach emphasizes the importance of examining students' identity and position in relation to others in the U.S. and the world. As a result, multicultural, feminist and liberation pedagogy and concerns for social justice have been integrated into the curriculum. Our pedagogical approach encourages awareness, understanding and the development of culturally relevant counseling skills. Safety in the classroom, critical thinking, theoretical exploration, and related activities are central to the development and implementation of our culturally sensitive methods. In teaching to transform, we ask counseling psychology educators and students to look beyond their boundaries and borders in order to develop a more global understanding of counseling philosophy and training.

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

— Audre Lorde (1984)

There is increasing global demand for culturally competent counselors who can engage effectively with diverse groups of people. To meet the demand, counseling psychology programs have become concerned with the development and implementation of pedagogical approaches that effectively teach the foundations of cultural competence. In the Division of Counseling and Psychology at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S., the faculty considers it a priority to understand and address these concerns in training culturally competent counselors. We hope that our efforts in our particular local context will have relevance for counseling psychology training in the wider national and global contexts.

To first identify the contextual factors surrounding counseling psychology training and counselor education in the U.S., we acknowledge the overarching societal issues influencing professional training in the field of counseling. The U.S. has become increasingly diverse in its demographics but the majority of counselors in the U.S. remain White (Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003). The dominant frames supporting the field of psychology are filtered through this Eurocentric White lens and remain centered on mainstream notions of practice that can pose obstacles to training for cultural competence. Critical reconsideration of established educational modalities suggests attention to these sociopolitical factors.

Classroom discourse that incorporates multiculturalism necessitates the active participation of students in a reflective process that includes: (a) an examination of issues of power, privilege, and oppression; and (b) a focus on the experience of people from oppressed groups. This includes those with cultural and language differences, those with

limited economic means, women, gays and lesbians, and the differently abled and other underserved groups in the U.S. Among them are disenfranchised immigrant groups whose experience needs to be examined by addressing the sociopolitical issues influencing their lives. An exploration of the prevailing social treatment and attitudes toward immigrants and a critical inquiry regarding transnationalism (the interconnectivity of people all over the world) is essential in understanding the complexity of their experience. By emphasizing these premises, the classroom discourse helps students understand their relationship to the rest of the world and to multiple diverse groups within U.S. society.

Counselor education students in the U.S. represent a slice of the larger society. They are embedded in a culture of individuality divorced from political and social contexts. This can make difficult the discussion of society's structures of power and privilege. Multicultural education is supposed to provide an alternative to these dominant models as its definition has been shaped and changed by the country's evolving demographics. However, educators have yet to agree on a common understanding of the meaning of multiculturalism in both theory and practice. Some educators view multicultural education as the inclusion of diverse curriculum and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented groups. Others teach multicultural education by merely changing the environment of their classrooms and teaching styles so that all racial and cultural groups feel included. We subscribe to the belief that for meaningful multicultural education to occur, personal transformation is necessary (Hoshmand, 2004).

Teaching to Transform

Transformative education approaches are strongly influenced by Freire (2000) and by feminist teachers and scholars such as Hooks (1994), Lewis (1993), Warren and Rheingold (1993), and Maher and

Tetreault (1994), who propose that individuals can be transformed through a process of critical reflection. Critical reflection has the potential of changing the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute meaning schemes. The transformative approach suggests that, because meaning schemes are socially constructed and culturally appropriated, they can be unlearned. Transformative education is also focused on the idea of social justice. It encourages critical examination of the status quo, of social inequities, and of other systemic issues that prevent change within institutional settings. Through critical reflection — a process that involves not only learning but also unlearning — counseling psychology students examine their own relationship to their own power as well as to that of others.

Multicultural education and transformative teaching go beyond Eurocentric lenses and the mere accumulation of knowledge. They focus on the integration of newly acquired knowledge and alternative worldviews. They examine issues related to social context, critical life experiences, and their impact on identity and perception. Their emphasis on universal accountability and social responsibility are integral to the students' learning and emphasize a deep and conscious shift in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

There are significant elements that need to be considered in the classroom when teaching from transformative and multicultural premises. An essential one is the significance of racial identity in cross-cultural interactions. It is critical to engage students in the examination of their own experience as racial beings undergoing a process of racial definition (Gushue & Carter, 2000). Such introspective work is challenging because the classroom is not devoid of the tensions of its host society.

In the U.S., these tensions and challenges are located within the “racist paradigms” that inform the institutionalized oppression of people

of color. They are also related to the absence of an exploration of Caucasian white-skin privilege in white homes and communities. The resulting segregation and its consequent impact on education have been considered a form of apartheid by scholars such as Kozol (2005). This societal segregation — with its legacy of tensions and divisions — has continued to adversely influence classroom dynamics. Teaching cultural competence to counseling students requires the acknowledgment and examination of the consequences of this divisive legacy.

This type of examination is often absent from most conventional classrooms and, in recent years, has been increasingly included in counseling psychology training programs. These programs attend to the importance of the influences of race and culture on the counseling relationship (Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). They also extend their focus to other layers of oppression in society such as class, gender, disabilities, and sexual orientation. As a result, training programs have emphasized the integration of three important areas of multicultural competence: (a) an awareness of personal assumptions, values, and biases; (b) an understanding of the worldview of the client; and (c) an emphasis on the development of counseling skills suitable for working with culturally different clients.

In our program, the integration of these three multicultural competences is considered throughout the curriculum. In our classrooms, we create opportunities for students to understand the importance of power, privilege, and oppression as related to their own lives and identities. An important goal of the teaching is to discuss the social construction of these factors and to address how the client and counselor's perceptions influence their values, behaviors, and relationships. The role of one's own racial identity, as it impacts the classroom experience, and its relationship to the objective of understanding multiple perspectives is deemed essential to the training. In addition to exploring one's own

identity, its binary understanding within societal paradigms characterized by “us vs. them” or “othering vs. belonging” is emphasized. This requires the close examination of monolithic and apolitical understandings of the “other.” Without such an examination, the discourse becomes simplistic or erroneous by perpetuating the assumption that political injustice can be resolved via simple awareness of differences. Thus, an important goal of the teaching is to examine the multiple factors influencing identity and shaping the perceptions that guide their values, behaviors, and relationships. The identity of the teacher and students include the perceived identity attributed to diverse members of the society. This leads to the opportunity of exploring the position of becoming “native informants” for one’s culture or being the “allies” from the dominant culture. It also extends to issues of positionality (or one’s relationship and access to the center of power in a society) and its relevance to the counseling practice with diverse populations.

When we consider positionality, differences inside and outside the classroom become more visible. The classroom becomes a microcosm of society where teachers join students in an exploration of their mutual identities and their consequent societal positions. Teachers and students engage in a parallel experience which poses challenges and possibilities for transformation and growth. In their respective roles, they become involved in a process where the power of the teacher cannot be ignored and where the influence of the societal context of oppression is a reality for both. This parallel process which contributes to the co-creation of knowledge through increased awareness and enhanced understanding requires a degree of equality facilitated by openness and engagement (Florence, 1998). The creation of openness and engagement within the classroom offers transformative and liberating possibilities. It also nurtures prospects for classroom environments where many voices can be heard and where differences are not silenced or ignored.

Critical Multicultural Pedagogy

Education ... becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

— Paulo Freire (2000)

Given the complexity of bringing into practice the teachings of multicultural, feminist and liberation pedagogy, the following summarizes some of our classroom experience in training culturally competent counselors. In general, we encourage students to explore and reflect on their own beliefs, values, and prejudices. This sets the stage for critically examining their position within oppressive social structures allowing those with power and privilege to maintain an advantaged status.

Our objective is to focus on the three areas of multicultural competence (*awareness, knowledge, and skills*) defined as essential to counselor education training (Sue & Sue, 2008). Our approach addresses these areas within the context of identity and its relationship to social justice. This is an academically and personally demanding task that requires the consideration of several factors, among them, a safe learning environment, theoretical exploration, critical thinking skills, and activities that provide opportunities for the examination and creation of knowledge.

In teaching about issues of identity and their relationship to social justice in counselor education, there are several factors to consider: the consideration of safety in the classroom, the impartation of critical thinking, theoretical exploration, and activities that provide students with opportunities to experience the knowledge created in the classroom.

Creating Safety

Creating safety in the classroom begins with the question: creating safety for whom? Ludlow (2004) addresses this question by exploring the reasons why so many white people are unable to address differences in identity. Ludlow points out that the dominant discourse concerning identity is shaped by shame and denial. The difficulty of those from the privileged ranks of the dominant culture to address these issues within the classroom is connected with the fact that the course topics are about acknowledging and decentering privilege and its consequences. In addition, it can also be a result of the inability to see oneself as the privileged or prejudiced due to the invisibility of privilege to those benefiting from it. Therefore, while the concept of working with a specific minority group is emphasized within counseling settings, one's own identity as a member of privileged group is often ignored as is its relationship to power. This involves a discourse that is not centered in the values and assumptions of the dominant culture which can be silencing to subjugated members of the culture. In addition, the impact of using the dominant culture's values as the "norm" results in variations being defined as "pathological."

Rather than creating "safety," Hooks (1989) addresses the impossibility of safety, but the possibility of creating an atmosphere where students can examine their fears and find the voice to take risks. Rich (1986) suggests that there are two connotations for safety. The first is the place where one can rest from attack, and the other is the safety of the closed door. The difference between the two is privilege. The challenge to the instructor is to create a place where students are free to express themselves and explore ideas as well as a place where students are free from the assumptions of closed minds and hurtful notions. By identifying the role privilege plays in whether or not one has taken risks or addressed in public spaces the taboo topics in American society,

students are able to begin developing a framework for understanding the relationship between safety and voice. It is important to illustrate to future counselors the parallels of this power differential and need for creating safety as a cornerstone of counseling relationships.

In many classrooms, ground rules are established in the interest of creating a place where all voices can be heard and the commitments to dignity and respect are primary. Responsibility rests with everyone to engage in respectful discourse, thoughtful questioning, and the owning of opinions and beliefs. Students are asked to discuss the implementation of ground rules and the behaviors that can be expected of all participants including the teacher.

Critical Thinking

Russell (1960) suggests that the habits of critical thinking are more important than the transfer of knowledge. He presents critical thinking as the awareness of one's attitudes, being able to question without judging, and making connections to the subject matter (Russell, 1960). Critical psychologists makes the connection between psychology and the politics of power (Prilleltensky, 2008) by attending to the influence of power in all that people do and the impact of power in their relationships as well as the commitment to social justice (Prilleltensky, Dokecki, Frieden, & Ota Wang, 2007). To engage in critical thinking is to explore assumptions in theory, research, and the application of psychological principles to counseling relationships.

Prilleltensky et al. (2007) articulate a framework for approaching power and privilege within the interaction of personal, relational, and collective realms of social experience. They emphasize the importance of power and the capacity and opportunity to create the conditions for achieving well-being. Their perspective is reflected in recent advances that indicate a shared brain pathway sensitive to physical pain and

social rejection supporting the hypothesis of social prejudice and rejection activating the same pathways as physical pain (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004). The associated negative impact on one's mental and physical health provides support for addressing the relationship of wellness to social justice. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing one's mental health should include a complex analysis of current geopolitical realities, the role of global power structures, and their contribution to the systematic oppression of marginalized groups. Students in our classrooms are encouraged to be critical of the deeply rooted myths of meritocracy and equality that pervade the general discourse and rationalize different oppressive structures that pose obstacles to personal, relational, and collective wellness.

The inclusion of this framework in the multicultural classrooms furthers critical examination and exploration of the relationship between mental, physical, and societal well-being. This provides the opportunity to explore co-created knowledge as well as the culture-specific frames guiding critical thinking within psychology. Students examine the sources of their personal beliefs, ask questions of each other, and make important connections between the premises of the knowledge examined and its relationship to counseling practice.

Theoretical Explorations

Major sources of theoretical material for the study of cultural competence include an exploration of worldview and an examination of identity development models. Sue and Sue (2003) have adapted the values orientation model of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). This model examines the dimensions of time, activity, social relations, and the people/nature relationship. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck address the ways different ethnic groups emphasize the past, present and future along these dimensions. Students are given the opportunity to explore their relationship to these dimensions and to share their responses with

each other. Students work with case examples that support their understanding of the therapeutic impact of these values on clients from a range of racial ethnic groups. In support of this effort, identity development models (Cross, 1978; DuBois & Ruiz, 1990; Helms, 1990; Merrell, 2002) are explored to help students understand the sociopolitical nature of the aspects of identity.

Most models of identity development do not take into consideration the factors of age, gender, social environment, social class, and sexual orientation. By examining these models, students have the opportunity to assess their relevance. Through case studies, critical inquiry and self-examination, students become more aware of the multiplicities of identity that shape an individual. Along with critique of the limitations of the models, a critique of the language used within the field is also emphasized to understand the importance of dismantling and deconstructing biases and limitations.

All individuals have heritages that are mixed with liberatory and oppressive histories. Understanding these histories is key to uncovering the inherited biases and stereotypes that influence people's beliefs about self and others. Three significant goals of exploring identity development models are for students to use the models to better understand their identities, to grasp the impact of the sociopolitical environment on individual and groups, and to explore the application of these concepts to the counseling relationship.

Classroom Activities

Classroom activities model the perspective addressed by Prilleltensky et al. (2007) by creating activities that elicit the personal, relational, and collective experiences of the students. On the personal level, students submit weekly journals so they can explore and share with the instructor their reactions to the classroom experience, the readings, and their

thoughts and feelings about the subject matter. Also, in many classes, students are encouraged to engage in “free write” reflective exercises that may be shared in small groups with classmates. Students are encouraged to consider the elements of giving and receiving feedback so that when they do interact with each other, the feedback they offer is cogent, constructive, and sensitive to the other person.

To reinforce the concept of multiple identities, students engage with each other in small groups examining the various aspects of their identities and the impact these aspects have on their sense of self and presentation of self to the relational and collective worlds they live in. Students work with identity development models by exploring case examples of clients in different phases of development. Their task is not only to identify the placement of individuals but also to connect it to the client’s environment and to their presenting issues in counseling. This is a very “hands on” activity that allows students to apply what they are learning. Students work together to create a project that is presented to the rest of the class. They have to explore the functioning of an agency or school servicing a particular community that is defined as oppressed in the course. They present together and also they critique their participation as group members.

Class exercises are also designed to aid students in figuring out what their positions are in relation to topics and to aspects of identity. One exercise, “take a stand,” involves students physically taking a position on a continuum regarding a controversial issue in counseling (e.g., suicide, abortion), which reflects values and beliefs. When they see where they stand in relation to their peers, they can develop a context for understanding their position as it relates to the norm. They are able to hear from each other why they chose where they positioned themselves. Another exercise involves having students answer questions that reflect class privilege. A “yes” answer involves a step forward from a line in

which all are holding hands. A “no” answer requires a step backwards. This power line exercise gives students the physical experience of letting go, being let go, and perceiving their class status in relation to their peers in the classroom.

These exercises reflect the belief that learning involves doing on all three levels (the personal, relational, and collective), and that creation of a sense of community is connected to how we learn to trust, respect, and value each person’s contribution.

Global Implications

White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.

— Charles W. Mills (1999)

The multicultural framework presented here is primarily located within the context of U.S. society. Thus, it may differ from that used with similar intent in other parts of the world. However, global mobility and interconnectedness in today’s world leads to greater social, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural diversity. Teachers need to educate themselves about the complexities of global issues as they impact the lives of individuals and communities. It is our belief that this education involves an understanding of the relationship between social justice and identity development within a sociopolitical context.

While cultural and pedagogical differences may exist across the world, the basic struggles for wellness and survival are intricately linked. Understanding the relationship between the current geopolitical realities, global power dynamics, and their role in maintaining oppressive structures is essential in finding common ground. This is imperative to the training of culturally and socially sensitive counselors.

An important aspect of training culturally competent counselors is to increase awareness of the harm of reducing identities in ways that render differences invisible. Counseling educators need to initiate discussions that address the dangers of minimizing or demonizing identities. We need to challenge hegemonic thinking emerging from conscious or unconscious imperialist political agenda. Given the centrality of race relations and of socioeconomic status, the globally responsible counseling professional needs to be well-versed in their understanding of international structures of power and privilege. Culturally sensitive pedagogy requires counseling psychology educators to look beyond their boundaries and borders in order to contribute to a more global understanding of people's lives in context.

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以轉化為本的教學：培育多元文化能力與課堂實踐

美國萊斯利大學（Lesley University）輔導與心理學部正視培養具備多元文化素養輔導員的重要性。為此，該學部不斷改善其課程取向，使學生在課堂上能夠理解社會政治脈絡對個人的影響。教學進路引領學員從美國本土和國際視角探索個人身分和位置。同時，多元文化、女性主義和解放的教育，以及對社會公義的關注，都融入課程之內。教學上重視認知、理解和配合多元文化背景的輔導技巧。為了使學員建立多元文化的觸覺，課堂必須要是個安全的環境，促使學員進行批判思考和理論探索，並參與課內活動。在促進學生轉化方面，我們要求輔導心理老師和學生超越自己的界限和藩籬，以便能對輔導的哲學和訓練有更廣闊的視野和全面的理解。