The Quest for Inclusive Cultural Competence in Social Work Education

Retchenda George-Bettisworth
St. Catherine University

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The Quest for Inclusive Cultural Competence
In Social Work Education
By
Retchenda George-Bettisworth

A Banded Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Social Work

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The Quest for Inclusive Cultural Competence

In Social Work Education

*Keywords:* cultural competence, EPAS, critical race theory, NASW, education
Abstract

The focus of this banded dissertation is to gain a better understanding of how undergraduate social work programs are guided to provide culturally competent practice across the curriculum. Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs this scholarship.

For the first section, the author completed a content analysis of the historical EPAS to determine how CSWE guides programs in culturally competent practice. The study finds that concepts of culturally competent practice are throughout the editions of EPAS in the language, and in both the implicit and explicit curricula. However, findings suggest CSWE needs to reframe the concept of cultural competence as a multi-dimensional, developmental, and dynamic construct, changing over time in relation to continuous learning, and explicitly connecting EPAS to culturally competent practice.

The second section discusses the need to integrate culturally competent social work practice throughout the undergraduate curriculum. It further articulates the use of the 2015 National Association of Social Workers Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a guide to integration.

Finally, the last section provides an overview of Cultural Competence across Distance Education. This presentation highlights current practices in distance education and how to utilize technology to enhance culturally competent practice within a distance format, and was presented at the 41st National Institute Conference on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas on July 8, 2016, in El Paso, Texas.

This banded dissertation asserts that social work programs need to intentionally integrate concepts of cultural competence throughout the foundation curriculum. It poses the challenge to CSWE to be more explicit in its language to connect cultural competence within the EPAS to
better guide social work programs. It also encourages the use of the NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a framework to integrate cultural competence across the foundation curriculum.
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As this journey ends, I will forever be grateful for the friendships that I have made as part of Cohort 1. From the first summer of no air-conditioning and 1970s dorm rooms to shared family style meals, piñatas, and baby showers, the memories we have all made together will forever hold a place in my heart. I especially want to thank my DSW BFF, Dr. Will Wong. What brought us together could be our shared dedication to CPS, or our inability to tolerate BS, or the West Coast thing, or the Asian thing, but whatever it was, I will forever be grateful that I have gained a true friend and brother. BFF Forever!!!

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The Quest for Inclusive Cultural Competence in Social Work Education

Introduction

Undergraduate social work programs are tasked with ensuring students are prepared for culturally competent practice. Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). The social work profession is “…sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity…” as stated in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics, Preamble (2008). This recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity is additionally clarified in the 2015 update of NASW Standards and Indicators of Cultural Competency for Social Work Practice, which provides 10 professional standards of behavior to engage in culturally competent practice. Cultural competence as defined by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice:

…refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professions to work effectively in cross-sectional situations. (2015, p.13)

However, the Council on Accreditation (COA) of the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) that guide social work program and curriculum development does not provide a framework for culturally competent or multicultural competent practice (Daniel, 2011, Lee & Green, 2004). The mandated standard by EPAS 2015 has been in providing diversity content (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). Diversity is understood by the 2015 EPAS as “the
intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status” (CSWE, 2015 p.7).

There is a vast array of literature around cultural competence and social work education. Much of the literature has been in three main areas: identifying culturally competent teaching models (Kolie et al, 2010; Drabble, Sen, & Oppenheimer, 2012; Hall & Theriot, 2007), measuring student’s preparedness for culturally competent practice (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008; Walls, 2009, Loya, 2011), and difficulties in integrating multicultural content within the curriculum (Daniel, 2011; Mildred & Zungia, 2004). However, only limited research has specifically looked at how EPAS is guiding culturally competent practice across the undergraduate curriculum. Research has focused on diversity content or cultural competence in a single identified foundation course, such as Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) (Drabble et al, 2012; Hall & Theriot, 2007). To ensure a solid foundation of culturally competent practice, it is important to understand how social work programs are being guided to provide culturally competent practice throughout their curriculum.

**Conceptual Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the guiding framework for this banded dissertation. Current social work literature has already identified Critical Race Theory as an appropriate framework for teaching cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009), a multicultural approach (Constance-Huggins, 2012), and diversity (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). CRT is an appropriate framework for teaching about culture and diversity due to its major assumptions, key concepts, and propositions.
Three major assumptions of CRT are (1) endemic racism, (2) race as a social construct, and (3) differential racialization (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Endemic racism is the idea that racism is normal and thus so deeply ingrained in our social systems and practices that we are unaware of how it impacts our way of thinking, often making it invisible (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012). Race as a social construct is an important assumption. It recognizes that race is a system designed to categorize people by observable physical traits and has no genetic or biological basis. Differential racialization suggests that dominant groups in society can manipulate and recreate racial groups in different ways at different times to determine who is “in” or “out” of the dominant group (Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

Key concepts of CRT are power, privilege, institutional racism, oppression, and racism. Major propositions are:

- Power and privilege are the foundations for institutional racism
- Institutional racism is a form of oppression
- Oppression of those of another race is key ways to maintain power for the dominant group.

When looking at the major assumptions of critical race theories, and at how they apply to the person, the environment, and their relationship, some ideas come forth. In the the context of the person, racism is the everyday experience of most people of color; therefore, privilege and power may not be easily recognized by those who have them (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). In the context of the environment; racism is engrained in society enabling the macro level systems we interact with to be inherently racist (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).
the relationship between a person and environment one concept clearly comes through: change comes from recognizing racism, power, and privilege within ourselves and our environment. This relationship between person and environment is one of the main reasons CRT is especially relevant to cultural competency practice in social work education.

**Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

The focus of this banded dissertation is to gain a better understanding of how undergraduate social work programs are guided to provide culturally competent practice across the curriculum. This is broken down into three sections. In the first, a content analysis of the historical EPAS examines how CSWE guides programs in culturally competent practice. The second section discusses the need to integrate culturally competent social work practice throughout the undergraduate curriculum, and further articulates the use of the 2015 National Association of Social Workers Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a guide to integration. The last section provides an overview of *Cultural Competence across Distance Education* a presentation highlighting current practices in distance education and the use of technology to enhance culturally competent practice within a distance format.

**Discussion**

The changing demographics of the U.S. population require that social work practitioners are sensitive to the growing diversity of the populous. It is estimated that, by 2044, more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group, and by 2060 the population will have increased to 417 million, with one in five individuals being foreign born (Colby & Ortman, 2015). It is also estimated that, with the declining fertility rates and aging of the baby boomer generation, there will be a higher proportion of the population who are age 65 and older (Colby & Ortman, 2015). With 53.9% of baccalaureate graduates identifying as white non-Hispanic, and
51.6% identifying as under age 25 (CSWE, 2014), it is even more pertinent that bachelor-level social work programs are graduating students knowledgeable of culturally competent practice.

“Cultural competence” as a construct is criticized due to concern that it is static and prescriptive, lacks empirical evidence, and promotes an obsolete view of culture (Jani et al., 2011; Pon, 2009). Due to this concern, researchers have over time suggested alternative constructs to describe the concepts of cultural competent practice, such as cultural humility, intercultural competence, culturally commensurate practice, cultural intelligence, transcultural competence, and culturally responsive practice, to name a few. The different terms we use to describe cultural competence create a barrier in guiding educators on how to integrate the teaching of cultural competent practice into the social work curriculum.

Social work professionals have two main organizations to identify and guide best practice. The Council on Accreditation (COA) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) provides accreditation standards and guidance for curriculum and program development within social work programs, through the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the professional organization, provides practice guidelines in all areas of social work practice. These two organizations should be consistent in how they guide the social work profession in cultural competent practice. Unfortunately, they are not.

Though EPAS demonstrates the integration of critical components of cultural competence within the implicit and explicit curricula, it never identifies or defines cultural competence as a term. Cultural competence became a foundational value in social work practice by the 1990s, and is seen throughout the literature. In the content and language of EPAS, the lack
of explicit connection to cultural competence poses a challenge for social work programs to integrate cultural competence throughout the curriculum.

When comparing the NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice (2015) with the most current EPAS, Competency 2, the comparative NASW standards are self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural skills. The EPAS only explicitly guide programs in meeting three of the ten NASW standards. The disconnect between academia and practice is clearly seen in the understanding and integration of cultural competence within the profession between these two organizations.

It is time to recognize that cultural competence similar to the definition of competence-based education is “…multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies” (CSWE, 2015), and should be seen as “…developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning.” (CSWE, 2015). CSWE needs to use language to explicitly connect cultural competence within the EPAS in order to better guide bachelor-level social work programs in graduating students who are knowledgeable of culturally competent practice. Additionally, the comprehensive and action-oriented NASW Standards and Indicators CCSWP provide a clear framework for culturally competent practice. Social work undergraduate programs can utilize this in order to integrate measurable culturally competent practice behaviors throughout the BSW foundation curriculum.

Even as social work programs struggle to incorporate effective cultural competent education in a traditional classroom environment, we now have the challenge of trying to do the same on the distance-based platform. A way to start doing this is by reviewing the 2015 NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice and determining what programs already do in meeting these 10 Standards. The first two standards are (S1) Ethics and
Values, and (S2) Self-awareness. These two standards of cultural competence are core components to the social work profession, and are incorporated into a variety of courses across the foundation curriculum. Within a distance-based classroom, creating opportunities for critical self-reflection and dialogue are key to gaining knowledge of ethics and values, and of self-awareness.

**Implications for Social Work Education**

This banded dissertation asserts that social work programs need to be intentional in integrating concepts of cultural competence throughout the foundation curriculum. It adds to the current literature on cultural competence and social work education and provides a new perspective on how EPAS has guided program and curriculum development in the area of cultural competent practice. It poses the challenge to CSWE to be more explicit in its language to connect cultural competence within the EPAS to better guide social work programs. It also encourages the use of the NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a framework to integrate cultural competence across the foundation curriculum. The comprehensive standards and indicators can be infused across the foundation curriculum, into courses that include, among others, Practice (S1: Ethics and Values, S2: Self-awareness), Human Behaviors in the Social Environment (S10: Leadership to Advance Cultural Competence), Social Welfare History (S3: Cross-cultural knowledge), and Social Policy (S6: Empowerment and Advocacy). Additionally as distance education continues to grow, schools will need to be especially cognizant of how to teach and measure cultural competence in the distance platform—whether hybrid or strictly asynchronous.
Implications for Future Research

This author contends that social work programs are already implicitly integrating the concepts of cultural competence through the foundation curriculum. However, programs are unable to articulate the connections to culturally competent practice due to the long practice of teaching it as either a stand-alone diversity course or a section of a foundational course such as HBSE. To find out how programs have conceptualized cultural competence in both the explicit and implicit curriculum, it would be important to hear the voices of the faculty and the students in the baccalaureate social work programs. For future research, a study that includes an analysis of the program policies and syllabi, along with interviews with the faculty and students, could provide more insight into how programs integrate concepts of cultural competence.

Another area of research could be in piloting the integration of the NASW Standards and Indicators throughout one program’s foundation curriculum. This would be in an effort to determine if students graduate with an increased knowledge and demonstration of culturally competent practice, as this author proposes. There is also a need to understand how to deliver culturally competent practice within a distance platform. Currently there is a dearth in the literature around cultural competence and distance education.

The changing demographics of the U.S. population requires that social work practitioners are sensitive to the growing diversity of the populous. This banded dissertation asserts that, in order to ensure this sensitivity, social work programs need to be intentionally integrating concepts of cultural competence throughout the foundation curriculum. It challenges CSWE to be more explicit in its language to connect cultural competence within the EPAS to better guide social work programs. It also encourages the use of the NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a framework to integrate cultural competence.
across the foundation curriculum. With the integration of the NASW Standards and Indicators for CCSWP, this would bridge the connection between academia and practice. Additionally, with the growth of distance education, it is important to be cognizant of how programs teach and measure cultural competence in this new format.
Comprehensive Reference List


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A Critical Analysis on How CSWE EPAS has Guided Cultural Competence Education in Baccalaureate Programs
Abstract

Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the guiding force in program and curriculum development through its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). In order to understand how EPAS guides culturally competent practice in the program and curriculum development, a content analysis on the historical EPAS is completed. This study goes beyond the EPAS diversity standard, which in the literature addresses how cultural competence is interpreted by social work programs, and utilizes the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The study finds that, while concepts of culturally competent practice can be seen throughout the editions of EPAS in the language and in both the implicit and explicit curricula, it still needs to be more explicitly connected to cultural competence. CSWE needs to reframe the concept of cultural competence as a multi-dimensional, developmental, and dynamic construct, changing over time in relation to continuous learning.

Keywords: EPAS, CRT, cultural competence, accreditation
A Critical Analysis on How CSWE EPAS has Guided Cultural Competence Education in Baccalaureate Programs

Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). As stated in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics, Preamble (2008, p.1), the social work profession is “…sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strives to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.” With the changing demographics of the U.S. population, social work practitioners need to be especially sensitive to this growing diversity. It is estimated that, by 2044, more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group, and by 2060 the population will have increased to 417, million with one in five individuals being foreign born (Colby & Ortman, 2015). It is also estimated that, with both declining fertility rates and the aging of the baby boomer generation, a higher proportion of the population will be age 65 and older (Colby & Ortman, 2015). With 53.9% of baccalaureate graduates identifying as white non-Hispanic and 51.6% identifying as age 25 and under (CSWE, 2014), it is even more pertinent that bachelor-level social work programs are graduating students who are knowledgeable of culturally competent practice.

The accreditation process ensures that institutions are meeting the highest standards of performance, integrity, and quality of education. The Council on Accreditation (COA) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is tasked with “formulating, promulgating, and implanting the accreditation standards” (CSWE, 2015 p.4) for baccalaureate degree programs and “confirming that accredited social work programs meet the standards” (p. 4). It is the guiding force for curriculum and program development within accredited social work programs, and thus responsible for how schools have integrated cultural competency within their implicit and explicit curricula.
There is a vast array of literature around cultural competence and social work education. However, there has been minimal specific research done on how the CSWE Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) has guided cultural competency in social work programs. The closest research being done examines the inclusion of diversity content within social work curriculum (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015; Drabble, Sen & Oppenheimer, 2012) and analysis of the EPAS diversity standard (Jani, Ortiz, Pierce, & Sowbel, 2011; Roberts & Smith, 2008). Other relevant studies measure student preparedness for culturally competent practice (Guy-Walls, 2007; Wall, 2009; Block, Rossi, Allen, Alschuler, & Wilson, 2016).

Though diversity content and students’ perception of preparedness are critical components to culturally competent practice, to date there has been no systematic study of how the CSWE EPAS has expressly guided the baccalaureate social work programs in the incorporation of culturally competent practice. This study attempts to address this gap in the research by conducting a content analysis of the historical CSWE EPAS from 1974 to the most current 2015 EPAS, examining how it has guided the integration of cultural competence in the implicit and explicit curricula.

**Literature Review**

**History of BSW Accreditation**

Since its inception in 1952, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has been responsible for accrediting social work programs. Its primary focus was initially on graduate programs, but an increased demand for professional case managers in the public social services opened a discussion about the need for baccalaureate programs (Janie et al., 2011; Gibbs, 1995). After continued delineation of the differences between the role and responsibilities of masters and baccalaureate social work practitioners in the late 60s and early 70s, in 1971 the CSWE
Board of Directors took steps to set standards for undergraduate programs (Gibbs, 1995, Jani et al., 2011). The standards for accrediting undergraduate programs were adopted in 1973 and took effect on July 1, 1974 (CSWE, 1973; Gibbs, 1995). The number of accredited baccalaureate programs expanded rapidly, to 275 by 1980 (Kolevzon & Biggerstaff, 1983) and 524 today (CSWE, 2016). The objective of the baccalaureate degree program is to prepare students for beginning or entry-level professional social work practice (CSWE, 1973; Jani et al., 2011).

**Historical Structure of Accreditation**

The structure of the CSWE accreditation standards has changed over time. From 1974 until 1988, CSWE only provided Evaluative Standards for Baccalaureate of Social Work (BSW) programs, establishing specific requirements for accreditation with CSWE. The focus was mainly on the purpose, structure, and governance of the program, with only a small portion of the standards covering specific curriculum expectations. During this period, undergraduate programs were expected to use the same Curriculum Policy Statement (CPS) developed in 1969 for graduate programs. In 1988, for the first time, the Baccalaureate Curriculum Policy Statement was developed to guide curriculum development at the undergraduate level (CSWE, 1988).

By 1994, the structure of accreditation for BSW programs contained both the Evaluative Standards, which discuss the purpose, structure, and governance of the program, and the baccalaureate CPS, which provides a lengthier and clearer guide to curriculum development. Starting in 2001, CSWE changed the title of the guidelines to its current iteration: Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The EPAS structure remains similar to that of the 1994 edition, though the Evaluative Standards are now identified as the Accreditation Standards, and the CPS is called the Educational Policy.
From 1988 through 2001, the focus of the CPS, or Educational Policy (ES), is on specific content requirements such as Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE), Populations-at-Risk, and promotion of Social and Economic Justice, and on assessment as an evaluation of program objectives (Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010, 2010a). Though we start seeing the integration of practice behaviors in 1994, the shift to the assessment of educational outcomes and student achievement of practice competencies is not seen until 2008 (Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010, 2010a).

The EPAS 2008 saw a significant shift from content-based to competency-based education, with ten identified Core Competencies and 41 operationalized practice behaviors. It also included a major structural change. Previously there was a clear distinction of the educational policy vs. the accreditation standards. The 2008 EPAS moved to an integrated curriculum design of (1) program mission and goals, (2) explicit curriculum, (3) implicit curriculum, and (4) assessment. This integrated design “conceptually linked” the educational policy and accreditation standards. “Educational Policy describes each curriculum feature. Accreditation Standards (in italics) are derived from the Educational Policy and specify the requirements used to develop and maintain an accredited social work programs at the baccalaureate (B) or master’s (M) level” (CSWE, 2008 p.1).

The most current 2015 EPAS provides a stronger emphasis on competency-based education, with nine identified competencies and 31 operationalized practice behaviors. The following is how CSWE (2015) describes competency-based education:

Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being. EPAS recognizes a holistic view of competence; that is, the demonstration of competence is informed by knowledge,
values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include the social worker’s
critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique
practice situations. Overall professional competence is a multi-dimensional and
composed of interrelated competencies. An individual social worker’s competence is seen
as developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning.

(p. 6)

**Cultural Competence in Social Work**

The concept of cultural competence is first seen within social work literature in the early
80s (Gallegos, Tindall, & Gallegos, 2008), with one of its most recognized development
frameworks of cultural competence being by Cross in 1988. Since then a plethora of culturally
competent frameworks have been developed (Lum, 2011; Lee & Green, 1999; Lee & Green,
2003; George & Tsang, 1999). An even larger amount of literature has focused on cultural
competence and social work education (Kohli, Huber & Faul, 2010; Drabble et al., 2012; Hall &

The most relevant literature for this study focuses on student preparedness on cultural or
multicultural competence at the undergraduate level (Guy-Walls, 2007; Walls, 2009; Block et al.,
2016). Walls (2007, 2009) studied BSW level student preparedness on multicultural competence,
recruiting 150 undergraduate students from two universities who were a mix of senior level BSW
students, non-BSW students, and entry-level BSW students. The senior level BSW and non-
BSW students had each taken one diversity course. Walls administered the Multicultural
Awareness-Knowledge- Skills Scale (MAKSS), and found that senior-level BSW students were
more multi-culturally aware than their non-BSW counterparts or the entry-level BSW students.
In another study, Block and colleagues (2016) evaluated the BSW student’s self-reported cultural
competence before and after taking a course about diversity and cultural competence in social work practice. They conducted a pre- and post-test utilizing the California Brief Multicultural Competence Scales (CBMCS). Findings showed that social work students’ cultural competence scores significantly improved after taking the course.

Both studies emphasize the positive use of a single dedicated course on diversity and cultural competence to improve students’ self-reported level of cultural competence. Even though it is clear that their knowledge of cultural competence increased, it may not clearly translate to culturally competent practice (Guy-Walls, 2007; Walls, 2009; Sumpter & Carthon, 2011).

**EPAS and Cultural Competence Education**

Many studies show that cultural competence education is being interpreted through EPAS as the mandate of including diversity content within the curriculum and diversity within the faculty and student populations (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015; Drabble et al., 2012; Jani et al., 2011; Roberts & Smith, 2008). With a goal of better understanding program adherence to EPAS diversity objectives, Teasley and Archuleta (2015) examined 174 course syllabi to measure the extent to which components of diversity and social justice content are integrated. The authors state that “Evaluating diversity courses in this manner will allow instructors to determine whether students have developed skills for culturally competent social work practice” (p. 610). They found that variability in diversity and social justice can be seen throughout the syllabi and that there is no particular method for connecting EPAS to existing course objectives. This variability and lack of guidance can impact levels of students understanding of diversity and cultural competence, resulting in a lack of self-awareness of biases (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015).
Another study examines the historical development of approaches to teaching diversity in social work education as they relate to various EPAS editions, focusing particularly on the environmental context impacting teaching methods, and on how the emergence of cultural competence has influenced teaching diversity (Jani et al., 2011). The authors state that the positivist foundations of cultural competence “inevitably produce static and essentialist perspectives about culture and fail to recognize its complex and fluid nature” (p. 296). Additionally, they contend that programs attempt to satisfy the 2008 EPAS requirement to “engage diversity and difference in practice” (p. 4) by demonstrating that students have acquired cultural competence through a prescribed curriculum, and suggest that programs need to go beyond the concept of cultural competence.

Diversity can be defined as:

…more than race and ethnicity, includes the sociocultural experiences of people inclusive of, but not limited to, national origin, color, social class, religion and spiritual beliefs, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, and physical or mental disability. (NASW, 2015 p. 9)

Solely including diversity content within the curriculum seems to imply that, in and of itself, diversity equals cultural competence, while this research argues that diversity only a component of culturally competent practice. Additionally, it is clear that interpretation of the EPAS diversity standard and how it guides programs on culturally competent practice can differ. This study attempts to go beyond the diversity standard to critically examine, how EPAS has guided the integration of cultural competency in both the implicit and explicit curricula.

This article uses the cultural competence definition by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice:
…refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professions to work effectively in cross-sectional situations. (2015, p.13)

**Conceptual Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs this scholarship. Current social work literature has already identified CRT as an appropriate framework for teaching cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009), multicultural approach (Constance-Huggins, 2012), and diversity (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). CRT is an appropriate framework for teaching about culture and diversity due to its major assumptions, key concepts, and propositions.

Three major assumptions of CRT are (1) endemic racism, (2) race as a social construct, and (3) differential racialization (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Endemic racism is the idea that racism is normal and thus so deeply ingrained in our social systems and practices that we are unaware of how it impacts our way of thinking, making it often invisible (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012). Race as a social construct recognizes that race is a system designed to categorize people by observable physical traits and has no genetic or biological basis. Differential racialization suggests that dominant groups in society can manipulate and recreate racial groups in different ways at different times to determine who is “in” or “out” of the dominant group (Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).
Key concepts of CRT are power, privilege, institutional racism, oppression, and racism.

Major propositions are:

- Power and privilege are the foundations for institutional racism
- Institutional racism is a form of oppression
- Oppression of those of another race is key ways to maintain power for the dominant group.

When looking at the major assumptions of critical race theory and at how they apply to the person, the environment, and their relationship, some ideas come forth. In the context of the person, racism is the everyday experience of most people of color; therefore, privilege and power may not be easily recognized by those who have them (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In the context of the environment, racism is engrained in society, enabling the macro level systems we interact with to be inherently racist (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). When looking at the relationship between a person and environment, one concept clearly comes through: change comes from recognizing racism, power, and privilege within our environment and ourselves. This relationship between person and environment is one of the main reasons CRT is especially relevant to cultural competency practice in social work education.

**Methods**

This study examined the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for baccalaureate social work programs from 1974 to 2015 (seven editions). It is important to note that the term “cultural competency” did not exist in social work literature until the early 80s (Gallegos, Tindall, & Gallegos, 2008). An analysis of how the emergence of the concept may or may not have influenced EPAS is also important.
Research Questions

The research questions considered in the study are as follows:

1. What kinds of language related to cultural competence is used and in what contexts?

2. How is EPAS guiding programs in developing cultural competency within accreditation standards?

3. How is EPAS guiding programs in providing cultural competency within its education policy?

4. How are concepts of critical race theory (CRT) seen within the EPAS?

Data Collection and Analysis

The collection of data is framed through the lens of CRT and consists of a careful reading of each edition of the CSWE EPAS. I first highlighted language and phrases related to cultural competence, noting the context in which they are used within the implicit or explicit curricula and the subheading. I recorded the phrases on a Word document by edition, along with the various categories of diversity identified. Then, rereading each edition in light of the research questions outlined above, I conducted a deductive content analysis of the CSWE EPAS editions from 1974, 1981, 1988, 1994, 2001, 2008, and 2015.

Limitations

The EPAS 1988 edition is incomplete; it is the 1988 document the curriculum policy statement in the Appendix of what can be assumed to be the Handbook of Accreditation. The 1994 report is a section of the Accreditation and Self-Study guides, or the Handbook of Accreditation. Along with the baccalaureate evaluative (accreditation) standards and curriculum policy statement, it includes the interpretive guidelines and self-study guide. This additional
information is not taken into account when collecting data. These differences in the researcher’s 
EPAS documents can provide limitations to the findings and should be considered when viewing 
results.

Results

Language and cultural competence

For Research Question One, language relating to the NASW definition of cultural 
competence was identified and analyzed. The seven editions of EPAS consistently demonstrate 
language related to culturally competent practice. From 1974 to 1994, phrases such as 
“understanding and appreciation for…” and “respect and acceptance of..” diversity can be found 
either in the nondiscrimination policies or in the content requirements. Another example of 
language related to cultural competence appears in the 1988 edition, with the recognition of 
“discrimination and oppression” and its impact on “ethnic minorities of color and women;” this 
continues in 1994 with a focus on “self-awareness” and an “understanding of one's own culture.” 
In 1994, the recognition that the curriculum “must include content about differential assessment 
and intervention skills” that will serve a “diverse population,” along with the use of 
“communication skills differentially with a variety” of populations was added. This focus 
becomes more explicit in 2001, with expectations that programs “integrate content… that 
ensures that social services meet the needs of groups served and are culturally relevant, 
innovative, and implement strategies for effective practice with persons from diverse 
backgrounds” (CSWE, 2001, p.9).

The major organizational shift in the 2008 EPAS provides a more expansive 
understanding of diversity, which can be considered “as the intersectionality of multiple factors 
including age, class, color, culture…etc.” (p. 4). It also includes many facets of culturally
competent practice such as “recognizing the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power” and to “gain self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal bias and values in working with diverse groups.” Another major component of culturally competent practice is the inclusion of cultural humility, identified as an operational definition for the diversity standard, and stating that social workers will “view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants” (p. 5).

Cultural competence in the Implicit Curriculum

For Research Question Two, the analysis focused on the implicit curriculum. The implicit curriculum is “composed of the following elements: the program’s commitment to diversity; admissions policies and procedures; advisement, retention, and termination policies; student participation in governance; faculty; administrative structure; and resources” (EPAS, 2008 p.10). In analyzing the data and reading through historical documents, three standards were clear: non-discrimination, racial and ethnic diversity, and, starting in 2008, diversity. The following speaks to each of these criteria.

Standard on nondiscrimination. The CSWE first “adopted a policy against discrimination of minority groups” in 1961; this evolved into an “absolute standard for accreditation” for graduate social work programs by 1965 (CSWE, 1965). The statement of the standard is as follows:

A school must conduct its programs without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, and ethnic origin. This principle applies to the selection of students, faculty, field instructors and other staff, and to all aspects of the organization and program of the school. (p. 2)
Once the BSW programs were included in CSWE accreditation in 1974, a separate and explicit non-discrimination standard is found in each edition through 2001. Until 1994, the non-discrimination standard saw little change from the original language emphasizing that programs “shall be conducted without discrimination….” At that point, the 1994 BSW evaluative standards (ES) on nondiscrimination expanded from one short statement to a three-part standard. The original statement (ES 3.0) was expanded to include “specific, continuous efforts to ensure equity to faculty and staff in the recruitment, retention, promotion…” (ES 3.1), followed by a description of how “…the program’s policy, [is] carried out in relation to all groups included in federal and state policies….” It also specifies, for the first and only time, that “faculty, administrative personnel, and students must be fully informed of all institutional and program policies, procedures, and mechanisms regarding…non-discrimination, and sexual harassment” (ES 3.2). The expanded non-discrimination standard continued into EPAS 2001, the last time it was explicitly required.

**Standard on racial and ethnic diversity.** After the implementation of the “absolute standard on non-discrimination” in 1965, a standard on racial and culture diversity was adopted in 1969 “to complement” and “provide for positive action in achieving the values inherent therein” (Reichert, 1970). The standard is as follows: “A school is expected to demonstrate the specific efforts it is making to enrich its program by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty and staff” (Reichert, 1970).

This standard is clearly seen in the first 1974 evaluative standards for BSW programs, which focus on recruiting, retaining, and supporting a “racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse” faculty and student population. “Special efforts” were emphasized to increase the enrollment of “minority students” (CSWE, 1973). The explicit requirement to make “specific, continuous
efforts to assure equity” to recruit, retain, and support “racial and ethnic minority groups” and “women” among faculty and students continued in the 1981 edition. However, by 1994, particular attention to recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse faculty and student population was no longer an explicit requirement. Instead, the emphasis became one of providing “…specific and continuous efforts to ensure equity to faculty and staff” (CSWE, 1994 p.84).

There was no more emphasis on diversifying the population. The standard also moved under the expanded non-discrimination policy (ES. 3.1) rather than being found as a stand-alone policy or included within the Faculty or Student subsections.

**Standard on diversity.** The emphasis on diversity starts from the beginning of undergraduate accreditation, both in the non-discrimination policy and in standards on racial and ethnic diversity, which again emphasized a diverse faculty and student population. A single stand-alone standard on diversity was adopted in the 1994 Curriculum Policy Statement, but it did not become a single independent policy specific to the Accreditation Standards until 2008.

Starting in 2001, a move began towards a more holistic view of diversity within the structure of social work programs. The focus turned to being able to demonstrate “respect” and “understanding” of diversity within its “learning context.” As described, the “learning context” includes the composition of faculty, staff, and students, along with the field agencies and their clients, resource allocation, program leadership, seminars, etc. (CSWE, 2001). In the 2001 edition, this is found under the Nondiscrimination and Human Diversity Accreditation Standard (AS) 6. In 2008, when EPAS shifted to the four components of an integrated curriculum design, the “learning context” becomes the “learning environment.” The “learning environment” is the foundation for the Implicit Curriculum. Within the 2008 EPAS, the Diversity standard (EP 3.0; AS 3.1) becomes a separate and distinct standard under the Implicit Curriculum. AS 3.1.1 states
that the “program describes the specific and continuous efforts it makes to provide a learning environment in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity and difference are practiced” (p. 11). It then includes, in AS 3.1.2, a description of how programs “model affirmation and respect for diversity and difference,” and in AS 3.1.3, “discuss specific plans to improve the learning environment to affirm and support persons with diverse identities” (p. 11). This standard continues in the 2015 edition.

**Cultural Competence in the Explicit Curriculum**

The early versions of the evaluative standards for the BSW programs did not include a formal curriculum policy statement (CPS), or what is currently known as the Education Policy. In 1974 and 1981, schools were expected to utilize the 1969 CPS initially developed for master level programs (CSWE, 1988). However, minor guidance regarding curriculum expectations is given. Under the section entitled “The Educational Program,” the 1974 edition states “In the dissemination of knowledge and development of skills there should be, throughout the curriculum, an emphasis on diverse ethnic, racial and cultural patterns as well as on the profession as both a science and an art” (p. 2-3). It also states:

> Preparation for effective social work practice requires curriculum content that develops in the student an understanding of and appreciation for ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in a pluralistic society. Program faculty has the responsibility to incorporate into social work knowledge and practice an understanding of the characteristics of the ethnic, racial and cultural groups in the configuration of American Society, their commonalities, and differences, and the complexity of the social problems generated thereby. (p. 3)

The 1981 edition had even less guidance. In Evaluative Standard (ES) 12, it states:
The program shall make specific, continuous efforts to assure enrichment by the provision of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in all categories of persons related to the program and throughout the curriculum. (p. 5)

This edition, however, adds a new section specific to women—Evaluative Standard 13. ES 13.3 states that “The program shall provide clear course objectives, outlines, and content on the role and status of women through the curriculum” (p. 5). It is the first and only time we see the role and status of women identified as a particular content focus.

The BSW Curriculum Policy Statement (CPS) was first published in 1988. Its stated purpose is to specify “…certain content areas to be covered and that they logically relate to each other…,” and that “The content areas on which all programs of social work education are required to build their curricula are intended to provide social work students with a professional foundation….” (CSWE, 1988 p.105). CSWE starts to focus on social works historical purpose to promote “social, economic justice” and protection of “opportunities for people to live with dignity and freedom” (p. 106). This edition has a new emphasis on “oppression,” highlighted in a “Special Populations” content focus. It mandates in CPS 7.4 that programs “provide content related to oppression and the experiences, needs, and response of people who have been subject to institutionalized forms of oppression...must give explicit attention to the patterns and consequences of discrimination and oppression…” (p. 111). In CPS 7.5 it requires curriculum content on “ethnic minorities of color and women.” It recognizes that schools should include “content on other special population groups relevant to the program's mission or location,” then specifically requires content on “groups that have been consistently affected by social, economic, and legal bias and oppression. Such groups include, but are not limited to...age, religion, disablement, sexual orientation and culture” (p. 111).
In the 1994 edition the definition and understanding of diversity are expanded. In its stated purpose of a BSW education this edition emphasizes “preparing graduates to practice with diverse populations,” and “practice within the values and ethics of the social work profession and with an understanding of and respect for the positive value of diversity” (CSWE, 1994 p.98). CSWE starts to highlight the importance of communication—that social workers “use communication skills differentially with a variety of client populations, colleagues, and members of the community” (p. 98). It also recognizes the importance of self-awareness, stating that “A liberal arts perspective provides an understanding of one's cultural heritage in the context of other cultures…” (p. 99). It requires that the field education experience “must provide the students with opportunities for the… development of an awareness of self in the process of intervention” (p. 104). This 1994 edition is also the first edition to include content focus on diversity. In CPS B6.4 it states:

Professional social work education is committed to preparing students to understand and appreciate human diversity. Program must provide curriculum content about differences and similarities in the experiences, needs, and beliefs of people. The curriculum must include content about differential assessments and intervention skills that will enable practitioners to serve diverse populations. (p. 101)

Additionally, the inclusion of content on “Populations-at-Risk” is mandated. CPS B6.6 requires programs to “present theoretical and practice content about patterns, dynamics, and consequences of discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression.” It specifically requires content about “people of color, women and gay and lesbian people” and other populations-at-risk groups that are “relevant to the mission” of the program; “such groups include, but are not
limited to those distinguished by age, ethnicity, culture, class, and religion, physical and mental ability” (p. 101).

In 2001, the mandates on diversity continued to be seen throughout the EPAS. However, the specific content requirements on categorical population groups (e.g. people of color, women) were removed. The dropping of particular groups within the content could be due to the recognition of the complex nature of diversity—as seen in diversity standard EP 4.1, which requires content emphasizing the “interlocking and complex nature of culture and personal identity” and the need to “educate students to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention and research” (CSWE, 2001 p.9). Even within standard EP4.2 for populations-at-risk and social and economic justice, definitions of those populations-at-risk have broadened to include an evaluation of which “factors contribute to and constitute being at risk” and of “how group membership influences access to resources and present content on the dynamics of such risk factors…” (p. 9). The move towards not requiring specific categorical content is a precursor to the major shift in the EPAS from a content-based curriculum to a competency-based one.

In the 2008 and current 2015 EPAS, the focus is on a new integrated curriculum design and a competency-based educational framework. The diversity standard has become Educational Policy 2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice, which provides operational definitions to achieve the competency standard. For EP 2.1.4, this is obtained by the ability to:

- Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
- Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
- Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and
- View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants. (CSWE, 2008 p.5).

The 2008 EPAS also brings an even broader view of diversity, stating the need to “understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical in the formation of identity,” and emphasizing that the “dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors…” (p. 4). It also emphasizes an appreciation that “as consequences of difference, a person’s life experiences may include, oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (p. 5).

**Critical Race Theory and EPAS**

The major propositions of CRT are within CSWE and its various editions of EPAS. It may not be explicitly clear, as little is said directly to race or racism. However, when looking at power, privilege, and oppression, there are direct correlates to CSWE. CSWE is the national organizing body that provides accreditation for all master and baccalaureate social work programs. It wields a large amount of power as an institution and within social work education, guiding schools and departments of social work to focus on what they identify as important and how it is represented.

This power is demonstrated in the evolution of diversity, from the mandate of content on specific population groups over time (as identified in Table 1.1) to defining which diverse populations are relevant. An example of this is the description of “ethnic minorities of color and women” under the curriculum policy of “Special Populations” in 1988, and the identification of “people of color, women and gay and lesbian persons” as “Populations-at-risk” in 1994 and then
as not belonging to any categorical group in 2001. CSWE EPAS determines when a particular category is relevant enough to identify, as, for example, with the addition of “handicap” in 1981, “sexual orientation” and “culture” in 1988, and “class” in 1994. EPAS determines the representation of diversity in social work education.

Table 1.1: Categories of diversity

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<td>Race</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>“Ethnic minorities of color.”</td>
<td>NON-DISCRIMINATION: Age</td>
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<td>Color</td>
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<td>National origin</td>
<td>Ethnic or national origin</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>Sexual orientation</td>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Handicap</td>
<td>Handicap</td>
<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Family structure</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>Marital status</td>
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<td>Religious identity &amp; expression</td>
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<td>Race</td>
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<td>Sexual orientation</td>
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<td>Sex orientation</td>
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<td>Women</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gay &amp; lesbian</td>
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* Diversity is understood as the intersectionality of many factors to include:
It is clear that components of cultural competence can be seen throughout the different EPAS editions. These components are found in the language used, and in both the explicit and implicit curricula. Additionally, it is important to recognize that CSWE EPAS does have direct power over how it guides or does not guide the understanding of diversity and cultural competence as seen in the framework of CRT.

**Discussion**

The findings of the content analysis of the seven editions of EPAS clearly show the integration of cultural competence in both the implicit and explicit curricula. In the early editions, published in 1974 and 1981, the primary focus is on increasing the demographic diversity of the faculty, staff, and student populations, giving only minor guidance within the curriculum. These editions do recognize the need to “understand and appreciate… ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity,” and that curriculum is “enriched” if the content of “racial, ethnic and cultural diversity” is included. In the early 80s, cultural competence as a concept was starting to be recognized within the literature (Gallegos et al., 2008). Hints of that new understanding appear in the 1988 Curriculum Policy Statement, which starts to provide an emphasis on “oppression,” and specifically requires content on “groups that have been consistently affected by social, economic, and legal bias and oppression…” (CSWE, 1988 p.111). By 1994, cultural competence is a significant value amongst the social work profession, and that correlates with the expanded definition and understanding of diversity in the 1994 EPAS. EPAS is moving from a passive stance of “understand,” “accept,” and “respect” diverse population that we saw before the 1994 edition, to a new active stance of “use communication skills differentially,” and “implement strategies for effective practice….”
The early 2000s see an evolution of the new structure of EPAS and an expanded understanding of diversity. In the implicit curriculum, the 2001 EPAS recognizes a more holistic view of diversity within the structure, focusing on the demonstration of “respect” and understanding” within the learning context; this becomes explicit in the 2008 and 2015 editions. The change in understanding of diversity continues within the explicit curriculum by the dropping of content on categorical population groups in 2001, and the expansion of the diversity definition by 2008 to include the recognition of intersectionality of identity. With the new competency-based framework, EPAS identifies in its operational definitions of the diversity standard (EP 2.1.4) critical components of culturally competent practice—recognition of the extent of culture’s structures and values, self-awareness, an understanding the importance of difference in shaping life experience, and cultural humility.

EPAS does demonstrate the integration of cultural competence within the implicit and explicit curricula. However, cultural competence or culturally competent practice are terms never identified or defined within the EPAS, even as the idea became a foundational value in social work practice by the 1990s and is seen throughout the literature. In the creation of its Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice in 2001, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) reinforced culturally competent practice. Still, EPAS never explicitly identifies cultural competent practice even as concepts of cultural competence become more prevalent in the 2008 and 2015 editions, and as the structure changes to a competency-based framework. The lack of explicit connection in the content and language of EPAS to cultural competence can pose a challenge to the guidance of how to incorporate it into the explicit and implicit curricula.
Current research emphasizes the use of one diversity course as the primary measure of culturally competent preparedness in baccalaureate students (Guy-Walls, 2007; Walls, 2009; Block et al., 2016). This interpretation of cultural competence goes back to early editions of EPAS, when content on diversity or categorical groups was the mandate. CSWE needs to use language to explicitly connect cultural competence within the EPAS. Making this connection, if CSWE can go beyond the diversity standard and recognize the competency-based framework, is especially relevant in changing the discussion of cultural competent practice. Instead of the interpretation that cultural competence is a static and prescriptive construct (Jani et al., 2011), it is time to recognize that cultural competence similar to the definition of competence-based education is “…multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies” (CSWE, 2015), and should be seen as “…developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning” (CSWE, 2015). Only in a way consistent with critical race theory and more contemporary understandings of culturally competent practice can the construct of cultural competence be reframed and explicitly integrated into social work education.

**Strengths, Limitation, and Future Research**

This study critically examines how EPAS has guided the integration of cultural competency in both the implicit and explicit curricula going beyond the diversity standard. It adds to the current literature on cultural competency and social work education, and provides a new perspective on how EPAS has guided program and curriculum development in the area of cultural competent practice. Limitations of the study are that it only gives an analysis of the historical EPAS editions as interpreted by the researcher. To know how programs have interpreted the development of cultural competency in both the explicit and implicit curricula, it would be important to hear the voices of faculty and students in the baccalaureate programs. For
future research, a mixed methods study that included a quantitative analysis of the program policies or syllabi and interviews of faculty and students could provide more insight in how programs interpret EPAS to guide them in this manner.

Conclusion

Throughout its evolution, CSWE integrates components of cultural competence within the EPAS. However, the lack of explicit connection of EPAS content and language to cultural competence poses a challenge to the guidance of how to incorporate it into the curriculum. Many studies show that cultural competence education is being interpreted through EPAS as the mandate of including diversity content within the curriculum and diversity within its faculty and student populations (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015; Drabble et al., 2012; Jani et al., 2011; Roberts & Smith, 2008). Simply including diversity content within the curriculum seems to imply that, in and of itself, diversity equals cultural competence. This researcher contends that it is time to recognize that cultural competence similar to the definition of competence-based education is “…multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies” (CSWE, 2015), and should be seen as “…developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning” (CSWE, 2015). CSWE needs to use language that explicitly connect cultural competence within the EPAS in order to better guide bachelor level social work programs in graduating students who are knowledgeable of culturally competent practice.
References


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Integrating Cultural Competency Practice across the BSW Curriculum
Abstract

Undergraduate social work programs are tasked with ensuring that students are prepared for culturally competent practice. However, the Council on Social Work Education, Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), which guides social work curriculum, does not provide a framework for culturally competent or multicultural competent practice. The mandated standard by EPAS has been in providing diversity content. This conceptual paper discusses the need to integrate culturally competent social work practice throughout the undergraduate curriculum. It further articulates the use of the 2015 National Association of Social Workers Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice as a guide to integration.

*Keywords:* cultural competency, EPAS, NASW, curriculum
Integrating Culturally Competent Practice across the BSW Curriculum

Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). As stated in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics, Preamble, the social work profession is “…sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and [strives] to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice” (2008, p.1). This recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity is additionally clarified in the 2015 update of NASW Standards and Indicators of Cultural Competency for Social Work Practice, which provides ten professional standards of behavior to engage in culturally competent practice. Undergraduate social work programs are tasked with that ensuring students are prepared for culturally competent practice. However, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), which guides social work curriculum, does not provide a framework for culturally competent or multicultural competent practice (Daniel, 2011, Lee & Green, 2003). Many studies show that cultural competence education is being interpreted through EPAS as the mandate of including diversity content within the curriculum and diversity within its faculty and student populations (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015; Drabble et al., 2012; Jani et al., 2011; Roberts & Smith, 2008). The mandated standard in EPAS 2015 is Competency 2: Engage diversity and difference in practice. This interpretation provides too narrow a view of cultural competence.

This conceptual article discussed the need for guidance in integrating culturally competent social work practice across the foundation curriculum. It argues that the EPAS 2015 diversity standard provides too narrow a viewpoint, and may be challenging to use and interpret for undergraduate education. It will further discuss how the 2015 NASW Standards and
Indicators for culturally competent social work practice may provide a better framework for integrating culturally competent social work practice across the foundation curriculum.

This article uses the cultural competence definition by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competency in Social Work Practice, which:

…refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professions to work effectively in cross-sectional situations. (2015, p.13)

**Conceptual Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be the guiding framework for this article. CRT is based on the assumptions of (1) endemic racism, (2) race as a social construct, and (3) differential racialization (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Endemic racism is the idea that racism is normal and thus so deeply ingrained in our social systems and practices that we are unaware of how it impacts our way of thinking, making it often invisible (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012). Race as a social construct recognizes that race is a system designed to categorize people by observable physical traits and has no genetic or biological basis. Differential racialization suggests that dominant groups in society can manipulate and recreate racial groups in different ways at different times to
determine who is “in” or “out” of the dominant group (Constance-Huggins, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

CRT promotes a structural approach to addressing problems of a diverse society and promotes changes in institutional settings while recognizing personal distress and resistance (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Social work literature has already identified CRT as a relevant framework in teaching cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009), a multicultural approach to cultural competence (Constance-Huggins, 2012), and diversity (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

**Literature Review**

There is a vast array of literature around cultural competence and social work education. Much of the literature has been in four main areas; (a) culturally competent frameworks (Cross, 1988; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, Issacs, 1989; Lum, 2008), (b) culturally competent teaching practices (Kolie et al, 2010; Drabble, Sen, & Oppenheimer, 2012; Hall & Theriot, 2007), (c) difficulties with integrating multicultural content within the curriculum (Daniel, 2011; Mildred & Zungia, 2004), and (d) measuring student preparedness for culturally competent practice (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008; Walls, 2009, Loya, 2011).

**Cultural Competency Frameworks**

While a plethora of culturally competent frameworks have been developed (Lum, 2011; Lee & Green, 1999; Lee & Green, 2003; Anderson & Carter, 2003; George & Tsang, 1999), the only framework that will be discussed is Cross’s (1988) six-stage culturally competent continuum. This was originally created to assist in developing culturally competent systems and agencies. Cross (1988) identified cultural competence as being a developmental process. As such, he identified a six-stage continuum, from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency. The lowest stage of the continuum is cultural destructiveness, identified as attitudes, policies, and
practices that are destructive to cultures and individuals. The next stage is cultural incapacity, the idea that agencies or systems lack the ability to help minority populations though they are not intentionally harmful. The third stage is cultural blindness, the practice of being unbiased, but believing that the dominant ideology would be effective equally. The fourth stage is cultural pre-competence, where a system recognizes its weakness in working with minorities and attempts to make improvements. The fifth stage is cultural competence, characterized as being accepting and respectful of difference and as including continual self-assessment, consideration of the dynamics of difference, expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and the ability to adapt as appropriate. The sixth and final stage is cultural proficiency, in which culture is highly regarded and there is continued advancement of knowledge through research.

This framework recognizes that culturally competent practice is a process that should be integrated throughout systems. Utilizing this six-stage framework allows for an assessment not only of students’ progress towards cultural competence but of the progress of social work programs themselves.

Teaching Models

Many of the criticisms about cultural competent or diversity education have been in regards to teaching about racial or ethnic groups that reflects stereotypes, and comes from the view of whiteness being the “norm” (Johnson & Munch, 2009; Loya, 2011). Research on teaching models emphasizes the need to include content on white privilege (Abrams & Gibson, 2007) and “whiteness” or the majority culture (Nylund, 2006), to allow for a critical analysis of white culture in order to develop an anti-racist praxis.

Another focus is on the attempt to integrate new multicultural teaching models within course-specific curriculum. Hall and Theriot (2007) created an innovative model of teaching
multicultural education that included online journaling, reaction papers, and cultural and field audit reports. This teaching model was provided over the course of a semester, after which the pre- and post-tests of the 23 students who completed the semester were analyzed. The study found significant student improvement in an overall increase of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, and significant improvement in multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge. In another study, Drabble, Sen, and Oppenheimer (2012) argued for the need to integrate a transcultural perspective that focused on five interrelated but distinct dimensions of diversity: (1) culture, (2) dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression, (3) positionality and self-reflexivity, (4) respectful partnerships, and (5) cultural competence. In this study, 204 MSW and BSW students enrolled in Human Behavior and the Social Environment courses were taught within this transcultural framework, and pre- and post-tests were administered. Findings demonstrated that scores increased in three of the five areas: dynamics of power, privilege and oppression; understanding of cultural competence; and overall understanding of the whole model.

**Cultural Competence Education**

Cultural competence education has been vastly criticized in the literature (Johnson & Munch, 2009; Loya, 2011; Goldberg, 2000; Pon, 2009; Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Danielle, 2011, DiAngelo, 2011). Many of the criticisms about cultural competent or diversity education have been in regards to teaching about racial or ethnic groups that reflects stereotypes (Johnson & Munch, 2009) and comes from the view of “whiteness” or the racial majority as being the “norm” (Loya, 2011, p.205). Cultural competent education has been criticized for contradictory practices (Johnson & Munch, 2009; Goldberg, 2000) and its possible promotion of an obsolete view of culture (Pon, 2009). Findings from studies indicate why students may be resistant to
diversity issues in the classroom (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004), and why “white” people may find it especially challenging to discuss racial issues (Angelo, 2011).

Findings in Daniel’s (2011) study recognized that there are pedagogical tensions instructing on multicultural education. The study sought to understand the experience of minority students with the instruction of multiculturalism. The four themes that came through were (1) minority students struggled to be heard in the classroom, (2) speaking out posed dangers such as ostracism or retaliation, and the concern of a “collective identity,” (3) there was a lack of discussion/concern about the intersections of race, gender, class, and (4) minority students needed to create “counter spaces” where they could share experiences. This identified emerging problems for multicultural education: that, given demographic changes, students will be ill-prepared to meet the needs of minority groups and other marginalized communities, and that failure to integrate race/diversity issues within the classroom will alienate minority students and make it difficult for the profession to recruit minority applicants.

**Measuring Student Preparedness**

There is a strong recognition that measuring student’s preparedness for culturally competent practice is needed (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008; Walls, 2009). There have been a number of measures created in multiple disciplines to attempt to measure student cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Krentzman and Townsend (2008) set out to analyze the various multidisciplinary measurement tools on cultural competence in order to identify which ones would be most relevant to social work education. They analyzed 19 multidisciplinary measures for cultural competence that met three basic standards: (1) straight-forward and easy to use, (2) pre- and post-survey to measure growth, and (3) quick to score. This limited the measures to quantitative, standardized, and self-reporting measures. After analyzing 19
multidisciplinary measures on eight assessment scales—validity, reliability, relevance to social justice, item clarity, definition of diversity, coherence, social desirability, and appropriateness for social work—the authors recommend four. These four were the Ethnic Competency Skills Assessment, the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS), the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI), and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS). These measures of cultural competence can be utilized to determine if culturally competent education is providing more cultural awareness, knowledge, and skill.

It is interesting to note that none of these four recommended measures were utilized in the other studies reviewed, even though they are found to be the most appropriate measure of cultural competence. In one study, Loya (2011) attempted to determine if there was a correlation between white social work practitioner’s level of education and color-blind racial attitudes. He administered the Color-Blind Racial Attitude Scale (CoBRAS) to 179 NASW members. The CoBRAS looks at awareness in three areas: (1) racial privilege, (2) blatant racial issues, and (3) institutional discrimination. Level of education did appear to affect awareness of racial privilege and blatant racial issues. The study supports the idea that education needs to be developed around white privilege to enhance culturally competent practice.

Walls (2009) studied BSW level student preparedness on multicultural competence, recruiting 150 undergraduate students from two universities who were a mix of senior level BSW students, non-BSW students, and entry-level BSW students. Walls administered the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge- Skills Scale (MAKSS) and found that senior-level BSW students were more multi-culturally aware then their non-BSW counterparts or the entry-level BSW students. However, though it was clear that students received instruction on cultural
awareness, it may not clearly translate to multicultural competence (Wall, 2009; Sumpter & Carthon, 2011)

The plethora of literature on cultural competence demonstrates the need to have clear guidance on incorporating culturally competent practice within social worker education. Though many studies have identified useful teaching models, these studies have focused on diversity content or cultural competence demonstrated through one identified course (Drabble et al, 2012; Hall & Theriot, 2007). There is no current framework that addresses the need to integrate culturally competent practice throughout social work curriculum.

**Discussion**

The changing demographics of the U.S. population require that social work practitioners are sensitive to the growing diversity of the populous. It is estimated that, by 2044, more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group, and by 2060 the population will have increased to 417 million, with one in five individuals being foreign born (Colby & Ortman, 2015). It is also estimated that, with the declining fertility rates and aging of the baby boomer generation, there will be a higher proportion of the population that are age 65 and older (Colby & Ortman, 2015). With 53.9% of baccalaureate graduates identifying as white non-Hispanic, and 51.6% identifying as under age 25 (CSWE, 2014), it is even more pertinent that bachelor-level social work programs are graduating students who are knowledgeable of culturally competent practice.

**Education Policy and Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Social Work Education is responsible for developing Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for baccalaureate and master’s level social work programs. It is the guiding force for curriculum and program development within accredited social work
programs, and is thus responsible for how schools have integrated cultural competency within their curricula. The accreditation guidelines lack guidance towards culturally competent social work practice, providing only for diversity and social justice standards. Historically, this mandates curriculum content on diverse populations and content on strategy interventions on advancing social justice (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015; Jani et al, 2011). Even as the shift in accreditation standards from content-based assessment to practice-based competency occurred between the 2001 and 2008 EPAS, this did not appear to change the content-based curriculum. Simply including diversity content and social justice content within the curriculum seems to imply that, in and of itself, it equals cultural competence. However, this is too narrow a viewpoint and is challenging to use as a guidance for undergraduate education. This is especially true when the understanding of “diversity” continues to change over time.

Review of the EPAS diversity standards from 2001 to 2015 shows that significant changes have occurred in recognizing difference. In 2001, diversity was recognized only in age, class, color, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation (CSWE, 2001). By 2015, diversity was recognized as “the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status” (CSWE, 2015 p.7). The 2015 standards included five new categories of difference: culture, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, and tribal sovereign status. It also included a more inclusive understanding of two others: disability and ability, and religion/spirituality. With the evolving understanding of diversity and difference
and a continual growth of diversity within the population, there is a clear need to go beyond the diversity standard and provide a comprehensive framework on cultural competence.

**NASW Cultural Competency for Social Work Practice**

The national organization for professional social workers—the National Association of Social Workers—provides professional practice guidelines in all areas of social work practice. The 2015 NASW Standards and Indicator of Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (CCSWP) provide a more comprehensive framework for undergraduate social work programs than the CSWE EPAS.

The NASW Standards for Cultural Competence was originally developed in response to the 2000 Census, which indicated accelerated growth among Hispanic and black populations and a pressing need to have culturally competent practitioners to deal with the changing ethnic and cultural dynamics that can impact social issues (Simmons, Dias, Jackson, & Takahashi, 2008). An NASW by-laws mandated committee, the National Committee of Racial and Ethnic Diversity (NCORD), was tasked with developing culturally competent standards. The NASW Standards for Cultural Competence were finalized and published for distribution in 2001. As they were circulated, there were requests for methods for measuring cultural competence. NCORD again came together to address this need, and though they were unable to clearly define ways to measure cultural competence, they developed the cultural competency indicators, which allow for more flexibility and provide a framework for developing measures dependent on the practice area and level of practice (Simmons et al, 2008). The standards describe the various domains of cultural competence, and the indicators provide concrete examples of cultural competence in action within each domain. The NASW Standards and Indicators for CCSWP, first published in 2007, and the newest iteration was released in July 2015.
The NASW Standards and Indicators of Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (2015) outline ten standards of culturally competent practice (See Table 2.1):

Table 2.1: NASW Standards of Cultural Competent Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethics and Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cross-cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Service Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Empowerment and Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Diverse Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Professional Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Language and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Leadership to Advance Cultural Competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of the standards has seven to fourteen indicators describing practice behaviors that demonstrate the cultural competent domain. Some examples of the indicators are: S1 indicator 2, understanding of cultural humility as integral to client self-determination and worker self-awareness (p.21); S1 indicator 4, ability to describe and negotiate areas of conflict and congruity between their personal and professional values and those of other cultures (p. 21); S2 indicator 1, examine and describe their cultural identities, to increase awareness of assumptions, values, beliefs, stereotypes, and biases, and to recognize how these affect services and influence relationships and interactions with clients (p. 23); S3 indicator 7, describe how people within different groups manifest privilege (p. 27); and S4 indicator 2, display proficiency and comfort in discussing cultural difference with colleagues and clients (p. 31).

**Implications for Social Work Education**

When comparing the NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice (2015) with the EPAS 2015, Competency 2, the comparative NASW standards are self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural skills. The EPAS only explicitly guide programs in meeting three of the ten NASW standards. This may be a barrier for programs to prepare students to be culturally competent practitioners. The comprehensive and action oriented NASW Standards and Indicators CCSWP provide a clear framework for culturally competent practice. Social work undergraduate programs can utilize this framework to integrate measurable culturally competent practice behaviors throughout the BSW foundation curriculum.

**Conclusion**

Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education (Kohli et al, 2010). With projections that the U.S. population will continue to become a more diverse society—with more than half of the population identifying as a minority by 2044 (Colby &
Ortman, 2015)—it is even more pertinent to ensure culturally competent social work practice. The CSWE EPAS standards provide a foundation on the importance of including diversity content. While this is a first step in examining how social work educators can incorporate the teaching of cultural competency, a more specific conceptual framework is needed.

The NASW Standards and Indicators for Culturally Competent Social Work Practice (2015) can provide this framework. The comprehensive standards can be infused across the foundation curriculum, into courses that include Practice, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, and Social Welfare History, among others. Additionally, the indicators provide a measurable operational definition of how to meet each standard. The comprehensive and action oriented NASW Standards and Indicators CCSWP provide a more comprehensive framework for culturally competent practice.
References


http://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/meetings/docs/Meetings/2010/June/CLCC_Tab_4_Towards_Culturally_Competent_System.pdf


Cultural Competence across Distance Education
Abstract

Culturally competent practice is a recognized value within social work. There is, however, minimal research on how social work education has conceptualized culturally competent practice within distance education. This presentation highlights current practices in distance education and ways of utilizing technology to enhance culturally competent practice within a distance format. The following is an overview of *Cultural Competence across Distance Education*, a paper presented at the 41st National Institute Conference on Social Work & Human Services in Rural Areas on July 8, 2016, in El Paso, Texas.

*Key Words: Cultural competence, distance education, BSW*
Cultural Competence Across Distance Education

The process of presenting at a national conference is an important aspect of professional growth and development. Determining the right conference to submit on the topic of choice is important to overall success in the proposal submission (Appendix A). The National Institute Conference on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas is specific to rural communities and academic institutions that based in or focused on rural communities and rural issues. The Department of Social Work at the University of Alaska Fairbanks has a mission focused on rural issues and communities. The annual conference is also part of the professional organization of the Rural Social Work Caucus, of which this presenter is a member. Additionally, the topic of distance education and cultural competence was appropriate for the conference theme “From Surviving to Thriving: New Paradigms in Rural Social Work.” The growth of distance-based education has made quality higher education in rural communities much more accessible. However, teaching cultural competence within the traditional classroom is a challenge, so being able to incorporate it in the distance format is vital. All of these factors make this conference an appropriate fit for the presentation.

This presentation is the third dissertation product for this author. The banded dissertation theme is cultural competence in social work education. This third product is a recognition of the growth of distance-based education in the academic landscape, and challenges individuals to be intentional in thinking of how to apply the teaching of cultural competence in this modality. It provides specific tools and methods to incorporate cultural competence in the distance format.

This paper provides an overview of the presentation, and includes an annotation of the slides and presentation, a review of the survey summary, and, in conclusion, a critical analysis of the overall presentation process.
Hello. My name is Retchenda George-Bettisworth, Clinical Associate Professor and coordinator of Rural Cohort (one of our two distance delivered modalities) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Our distance delivered programs have been around for well over 10 years. Our straight distance program was initially created for accessibility for students across Alaska, and also because of our commitment to the large military population in the interior (military students who have to relocate before completing the degree can transfer into our distance program, or stay in our distance program till completion). Our cohort program is a blended delivery program that is specific for indigenous students in rural and remote Alaska.
Alaska is the largest state in the country—larger than Texas (2x), California, and Montana combined. From north to south, Alaska measures 1420 miles, the distance from Denver to Mexico City, and east to west measures 2500 miles, the distance from Savannah, GA to Santa Barbara, CA. With that large of a state, only 20% of Alaska’s roads are paved; this means that we have 640 sq. miles of land for every mile of paved road. For Alaska we consider *rural* those communities that are accessible by road, and *remote* is the term for communities that you only access by plane, boat, snow machine/4-wheeler, and dog sled during the winter in some parts.
Alaska also has a very diverse population, with a large indigenous population that includes 255 federally recognized tribes. Within these there are 9 ethnic groups, and 19 languages and dialects amongst them. We also have a large military population in the interior and the south central and southwestern regions. Alaska also has a seasonal and migratory workforce. This is all to say that distance education is an important part of UAF’s higher education system. And because we are the only distance BSW program in Alaska, ensuring that we graduate a culturally competent workforce is integral to sustaining the overall health and well-being of our rural and remote communities.
So today I am going to talk about cultural competence in distance social work education—first talking about distance education, then the importance of teaching cultural competency practice, and finishing off by talking about how to start putting those two together in undergraduate programs.
DISTANCE EDUCATION

- 3.7% increase in the number of distance education student enrollments
  - Public institutions increased by 4.6%
  - Private not-for-profit increased by 12.6%
  - Private for profit decreased by 7.9%
- 5,267,379 students take one or more distance education courses

http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/survey-report

2014 BABSON STUDY
Distance education has become an integral part of sustaining higher education across the nation. The 2014 Babson Study—an annual study on online learning—shows a continuing increase in the number of distance education students (3.7% increase from 2012-2013), specifically in public and private non-profit institutions. Federal data shows that there are 5,257,379 students now taking one or more distance education courses, an increase of 189,187.

Distance education is not going away. These programs are accessible, and the growth of distance delivered courses and degrees provide options. Distance delivered social work programs are also increasing. Currently, the Council on Social Work Education identifies 13 BSW distance-based programs, and 55 MSW programs (4 of which are here in Texas).

So what constitutes “distance”? When people think of distance, they think asynchronous, online learning. A lot of classes and programs fall under this traditional form of delivery. However, there are many different forms of distance delivery. UAF’s straight distance program
is audio-distance with technology-enhanced classrooms, meaning there are regular meeting times via audio-distance with video conferencing available for those who have the capability. However, a growing number of programs use hybrid or blended distance delivery: (1) Completely online but blending asynchronous with required synchronous sessions, or (2) Online with face-to-face in-person intensives/requirements. Our cohort program includes face-to-face intensives at the beginning and end of each semester with weekly audio distance in between. Therefore, distance education itself continues to evolve in its delivery.

As social work educators, we are challenged with converting a very hands-on, interpersonal, practice degree into this new educational landscape. In addition, one of the biggest challenges is teaching culturally competent social work practice.
CULTURAL COMPETENCE
Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education. As stated in the Preamble to our National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, social workers are “Sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.” As our wonderful plenary speaker Dr. Rodriguez le Sage stated yesterday, cultural and linguistic competence is needed to fight racial and cultural disparities across systems. Social Work programs are tasked with ensuring that students graduating into the workforce are prepared for culturally competent practice.

In this presentation I focus on undergraduate programs, because, at least in Alaska, the helping professionals within our rural and remote communities are at the bachelor’s level, and even more are practicing in that paraprofessional role with no degree/or just a two-year degree. Many state agency caseworkers, specifically within systems of child welfare, practice at the bachelor’s level. So these are the line-workers, the ones with the boots on the ground.
Slide 10.

The changing demographics of the U.S. population also require that social work practitioners are sensitive to the growing diversity of the population. It is estimated that, by 2044, more than half of all Americans will belong to a minority group, and by 2060 the population will have increased to 417 million, with one in five individuals being foreign born. Its estimated that, with declining fertility rates and the aging of the baby boomer generation, there would be a higher proportion of the population that are age 65 and older. CSWE reports annually on the statistics of social work education in the United States. With more than 50% of undergraduates identifying as white, non-Hispanic, and under the age of 25, it is even more pertinent that bachelor level social work programs are graduating students who have knowledge, skills, and values for culturally competent practice.
So how do we put this together? Cultural competent education has continuously been criticized within the literature, in regards to teaching of other racial or other ethnic groups that reflect stereotypes, and coming from the view of the racial majority or Caucasian (whiteness) being the norm. It is criticized for contradictory practices and its possible promotion of an obsolete view of culture. Many studies find that students are resistant to diversity issues in the classroom, and that white students may find it especially challenging to discuss racial issues. So how do we as educators incorporate culturally competent education in a distance format when we haven’t necessarily done a great job doing it in traditional classroom environments? I have to tell you; I do not have that answer.
Slide 12.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY & DISTANCE EDUCATION

Slide 13.

- **Standard 1: Ethics & Values**
  - Social workers shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the NASW (2008) Code of Ethics. Cultural competence requires self-awareness, cultural humility, and the commitment to understanding and embracing culture as central to effective practice.

- **Standard 2: Self-Awareness**
  - Social workers shall demonstrate an appreciation of their own cultural identities and those of others. Social workers must also be aware of their own privilege and power and must acknowledge the impact of this privilege and power in their work with and on behalf of clients. Social workers will also demonstrate cultural humility and sensitivity to the dynamics of power and privilege in all areas of social work.

**2015 NASW STANDARDS & INDICATORS FOR CULTURALLY COMPETENT SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**
But I am going to discuss some effective ways that can be utilized within a distance modality to start that developmental process towards culturally competent practice. At the bachelor’s level, the start of culturally competent practice is knowledge of ethics and values and self-awareness. These are the first two standards of the 2015 NASW Standards and Indicators for culturally competent social work practice. If you have not looked at that document, I really encourage you to do so.

This focus is on self—what are the ethics and values of the profession, what are our personal ethics and values, how do they align with the professions, have we created self-awareness of our own culture, power, privilege, and social location. We first must understand ourselves before we can truly understand and appreciate others.
Distance education actually can provide many wonderful opportunities for rich discussion and self-reflection: (1) It can provide more opportunity for diversity within the classroom, especially for students within communities that lack diversity. This is not limited to racial diversity, but includes all forms of diversity: age, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, etc. (2) “Distance” in and of itself can create a sense of safety, which can bring our most authentic self to the classroom. In many ways, it allows voices that are usually very quiet to be heard, thus providing much more opportunity for critical self-reflection. (3) The resources and materials available via the internet are amazing, and having students be able to access those materials can bring a wealth of resources to the course that were previously unavailable in traditional classroom environments.
However, before you can really get into ethics and values and self-awareness, distance-based classrooms should have these two key component components, to encourage the development of culturally competent practice. First is *creating safe space*—an environment in which students feel that they can share their voice without harm. It is important to ensure that, just as in any classroom, there are clear and definitive rules and behaviors that ensure, to our best ability, a sense of safety. One small way to do that is making sure that your distance platform is secure. Open classrooms do not allow for safety. Materials and course content can be open, but you should ensure that any form of student interaction and dialogue is within secure systems, i.e. password protected, and restricted access.

Next, within a distance environment, feeling safe and comfortable with sharing and learning from each other requires the ability to *create community* (connection with each other, with the course, with the program). I believe and admit to my bias that creating community
happens best in a blended delivery system (the asynchronous/synchronous delivery, whether it is meeting face-to-face or via a video platform such as Adobe Connect, Skype, or Google hangouts). When you have the ability to put faces to names, to interact face-to-face, it can better facilitate learning from each other. Nevertheless, if you are working in a traditional online environment, requiring students to do introduction activities with pictures/videos incorporated in a discussion board is a good start. Utilizing social networking sites—such as a closed Facebook group for your class—can start creating community. The main thing with creating community, and something very relevant to developing culturally competent practice, is to make sure you provide opportunities for interaction.

So once you have in place these two components, safety and community, focusing on gaining knowledge of ethics and values and on the creation of self-awareness is easy, because there are two main activities that facilitate this: Self-reflection and dialogue (intermixed with good material and content, which, as I mentioned earlier, is available at your fingertips.). In addition, I do not talk about culturally competent education within one or two classes, because I truly believe that to start developing the knowledge, skills, and values it needs to be integrated and reinforced across the curriculum.

Creating opportunities for critical self-reflection and dialogue is key to gaining knowledge of ethics and values, and to creating self-awareness.
There is also a need to create regular opportunities for students to reflect on their understanding and reactions to diverse content, including opportunities to reflect on their own personal experiences and on how their experiences differ from their classmates or others. Self-reflection should be an *internal and external process*—internal being between the student and the instructor. This provides for deeper critical reflection that is much more personal in nature, something that is not necessary for sharing out in the open, but is important as an individual process. You could use secure electronic journaling (which should be available in most Learning Management systems, like Blackboard, Moodle, or Canvas). Then there should be opportunities for external reflection that creates dialogue amongst students.
Dialogue is the ability to hear and be heard. Dialogue is key to really starting to gain an understanding of others, and requiring students to learn from each other and their diverse and unique experiences. It involves basic communication and interaction, discussing ideas about and reactions to material content, case study examples, lived experiences. Dialogue can be created in discussion boards, blogs, and online applications such as VoiceThread, and Soundcloud. Dialogue should also be created using small groups (breakouts during synchronous sessions). In addition, peer reviewing/partnering on activities/assignments again allows opportunities to learn from each other.

So self-reflection and dialogue, as simple as they might seem, are critical for gaining knowledge of ethics and values, and creating self-awareness—the first two Standards in the 2015 NASW S&I of CCSWP.
Evaluation Summary

This presenter did not create a survey form for her presentation, but received copies of the conference session surveys. There was one survey form for each session and each session had three presenters. The form had ratings for individual presenters and ratings of the overall presentation content. The host of the conference, the University of Texas at El Paso School of Social Work, completed a final conference report (Moya & Monteblanco, 2016). This included a summary of the surveys of each individual session and a compilation of the content responses under the concurrent session theme. Below is the conference session individual rating for this presenter and the compilation (15 individual presenters) of content responses. The concurrent session theme this presentation fell under was “Health, Social Work, and Inequalities.”
Table 3.1: Rounded Ratings for Individual Presentations (p. 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Presenter</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retchenda George-Bettisworth, <em>Cultural Competence Across Distance Education</em> (N=18)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Compilation of Content Responses (p. 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Content</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The topic(s) was presented effectively (N=137)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation(s) was well organized (N=137)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The session topic(s) was of interest to me (N=136)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The session objectives were met (N=133)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The session topic(s) was valuable to me (N=135)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can apply the content of this session to my work (N=133)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= number of survey responses

In reviewing the individual session surveys (N=18), the content responses are as follows:

Table 3.3: Content Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Content</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The topic(s) was presented effectively (N=137)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation(s) was well organized (N=137)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The session topic(s) was of interest to me (N=136)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The session objectives were met (N=133)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The session topic(s) was valuable to me (N=135) | 61% | 39% | 0% | 0% | 0%
---|---|---|---|---|---
I can apply the content of this session to my work (N=133) | 61% | 39% | 0% | 0% | 0%

It is important to note that the content responses are for all three presenters within one session. The individual session survey was in line with the compilation of responses. There were minor differences in the “…presented effectively” question, and in “the session topics were of interest to me,” with each question having about a 10% increase under “Agree” in comparison to the compilation responses.

The survey forms also had two additional qualitative questions for more specific feedback. One respondent identified this presentation as the most valuable part of the session. Other responses generally stated the need for longer oral presentations, which was also identified in the final conference report (Moya & Monteblanco, 2016).

This presentation was well received by the audience members. At least five individuals came up to thank this presenter for the presentation, two individuals identified the need for more research in this area of cultural competence and distance education, and one individual stated they had not thought of cultural competence within their online courses and appreciated some of the suggestions in creating community and resources provided.

**Critical Analysis**

This presentation attempted to provide a foundation of understanding on the importance of cultural competence in distance education, along with providing some specific ideas and tools that could be easily incorporated into distance-based social work courses. It was important first to provide a general understanding of the landscape of distance education, the growth of distance programs, and the different modalities in which distance was delivered, especially when most
individuals equate distance education solely as online asynchronous courses. This presentation worked to expand that definition. It then provided a foundation of cultural competence and its importance to social work education. Finally, it looked at how to incorporate teaching of cultural competence in the distance-based classroom, focusing on the use of self-reflection and dialogue.

Cultural competence is such a broad amorphous topic; it was important for this presentation to break it down to something tangible and applicable to any distance-based social work course. In reading the current research on teaching cultural competence and reviewing the 2015 NASW Cultural Competence standards, the use of self-reflection and dialogue continued to come through as important aspects to being a culturally competent practitioner. It originally seemed that focusing on these two techniques as a teaching tool would seem too rudimentary, but they are essential components to culturally competent practice that cannot be emphasized enough. They also lend themselves well to being transferred into a distance-based classroom, since they are teaching tools that should be common practice for social work educators.

Overall, the presentation was successful. The time limit of 20 minutes was a constraint and the reason why it needed to be focused on the basics of cultural competence and distance education. The time frame did not allow for an ability to delve deeper in the understanding of cultural competence. The conference itself, as indicated in the beginning, was a good fit for the presentation. The presentation was the only one focused on higher education in rural communities and the use of technology. Amongst presentations that focused on practices and research, this provided a nice balance. The session theme that the presentation was put under, “Health, Social Work and Inequalities,” seemed misplaced to this presenter, as it would have been more appropriate to the theme of “Rural America, Access, Technology and Innovation”.
However, this was not within the control of the author, and observationally it seemed that a number of presentations were misplaced under these two themes.

This author has presented at a number of national conferences. However, this is the first time presenting individually. It was a positive experience and encourages this author to continue presenting in the future. After completing this presentation and receiving positive responses, it also reinforces the need for more research in this area of cultural competence and distance education.

**Conclusion**

This paper concludes an overview of *Cultural Competence Across Distance Education*, a paper presentation given at the 41st National Institute Conference on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas.
Annotated References


The most comprehensive annual survey on online education in the United States. Provided historical information on online education and the rate of change over time. It emphasized the rate of growth of online education over the past 10 years.


This article researches the use of electronic discussion forums for to teach diversity. It provided some foundational understanding of creating community within the online classroom and safe space when discussing difficult topics.


The annual report published by CSWE provides statistical information on social work students at the baccalaureate and master’s level programs. It provides statistics on the racial and age disparities in social work majors versus the population of the U.S., which emphasizes the need for a more culturally competent work force.

The author provides an overview of critiques in teaching cultural competence in social work education. Identifying specific barriers to this practice is important in attempting to understand how to overcome these barriers.


This article provides historical information and context to the process of accrediting social work programs, specifically focusing on cultural competence and the CSWE diversity standard. It is a foundational article to this author’s banded dissertation.


This article provides for the historical development of cultural competence in social work education. It is a foundational article to this author’s banded dissertation.


This article discusses the use of dialogue forums in online education platforms in social work education. It discusses successes and implications for use in future.

This article discusses the use of dialog forums in online education platforms. It provides for understanding on the importance of creating community with the online classroom and safe space when discussing difficult topics.


This report provided a summary of the conference, and compilation of the individual survey and content responses.


This publication provides the NASW standards of Cultural Competency, defining what that means, and how to conceptualize these standards in practice. The focus in this presentation was specific to Standard 1 and Standard 2.
Appendix A
Conference Proposal

Conference: National Institute Conference on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas
Where: University of Texas, El Paso
When: July 6-8th 2016
Session Preference: Technology
Presentation Format: Short oral presentation
Presenters: Retchenda George-Bettisworth, MSW
           University of Alaska Fairbanks
           rbgeorgebettisworth@alaska.edu
           (907)474-7025

Title: Cultural Competence Across Distance Education

Abstract:

Culturally competent practice is a recognized value within social work. There is minimal research on how social work education has conceptualized culturally competent practice within distance education. This presentation will highlight current practices and how one school has utilized technology to enhance culturally competent practice within a distance format.

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the challenges to providing diversity content in a blended and/or online format.

2. Reflect on how to measure culturally competent practice when students are geographically spread out.

3. Identify effective tools and resources that are being utilized to address the challenges of providing diversity content in an online format.
Proposal

Cultural competence is a recognized value within social work education (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). Undergraduate social work programs are tasked with ensuring students are prepared for culturally competent practice. Cultural competence as defined by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice:

refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. (2015, p.13)

However, the Council on Social Work Education, Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (CSWE EPAS), which guides social work curriculum, does not provide a framework for culturally competent or multicultural competent practice (Daniel, 2011, Lee & Greene, 2003). The mandated standard by EPAS 2015 has been in providing diversity content (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). Diversity is understood by EPAS “as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status” (p. 7).

Though there is a wealth of literature on cultural competency and social work education, there has been little research done on how culturally competent practice is being applied in distance based social work education. The minimal research available focuses on the tools utilized in online courses to increase cultural competence (Lee, 2014, Bertera & Littlefield,
2003). Specifically, research recognizes the use of online dialogues as a useful format to discuss sensitive issues (Littlefield & Bertera, 2004; Lee, Brown & Bertera, 2010).

This presentation will highlight current practice in distance education and one school’s use of technology to enhance culturally competent practice in an audio-distance and blended-delivery program.

References


Appendix B
Proposal Acceptance Email

Paat, Yok Fong <ypaat@utep.edu> 4/22/16
to me, Eva

Dear Retchenda George-Bettisworth:

On behalf of the planning committee of the 41st National Institute Conference on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas, it’s my pleasure to inform you that your submission “Cultural Competence Across Distance Education” has been reviewed and selected to be included in the program for the national conference to be held in El Paso, Texas from July 6th to 8th of 2016. Your presentation date and time will published in the conference program on our website http://rural-sowk-conf.utep.edu/ in mid-May. Email of acceptance is only sent to the corresponding presenter. If you have co-presenters, please inform them about the acceptance accordingly. Conference rooms will be equipped with laptop computer and projector.

This conference will be hosted by the College of Health Sciences Department of Social Work at The University of Texas at El Paso. As you are planning for your trip to El Paso, you may find the following websites helpful.

The University of Texas at El Paso (http://www.utep.edu/)

Visit El Paso (http://visitelpaso.com/)

City of El Paso (http://www.elpasotexas.gov/visitors.php)

Presenters must be registered for the conference. Until May 31st, presenters may register at a reduced rate ($225.00) by following the link http://rural-sowk-conf.utep.edu/. After May 31st, presenters must pay the full rate.

If you cannot attend the meeting, please inform our conference chair, Dr. Eva M. Moya immediately at emmoya@utep.edu or (915) 747-8493. General inquiries about the conference may be directed to her as well.
To accept this offer, you must send an email to Dr. Moya (emmoya@utep.edu) with 1) the complete list of the authors of how you want them appear on the program (first name, last name and degree if applicable); 2) highlight the name of the presenting author(s) by May 6th, 2016 using the following format:

e.g., John Smith, Margarita Moya, & Stephanie Green

We look forward to having you at the conference.

Thank you!

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Yok-Fong Paat, Ph.D., LCSW
Assistant Professor of Social Work
The University of Texas at El Paso
College of Health Science, Room 427
500 W. University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968
Tel: (915) 747 – 5789
E-mail: ypaat@utep.edu
Appendix C
Documentation of Presentation
41st National Institute Conference on Social Work & Human Services in Rural Areas

From Surviving to Thriving: New Paradigms in Rural Social Work

The University of Texas at El Paso
July 6-8, 2016
Tomas Rivera Conference Center
www.rural-sowk-conf.utep.edu

Hosted by:
College of Health Sciences
Department of Social Work

In partnership with:
Kellogg Fellows Leadership Alliance
National Rural Social Work Caucus

"La Familia" by Hol Marcus 1995
Friday, July 8th

7:00 AM - 8:30 AM
Breakfast
Tomás Rivera Conference Center

8:45 AM - 9:00 AM
Opening Remarks
Dr. Mark Lusk, Professor Department of Social Work, The University of Texas at El Paso
Tomás Rivera Conference Center

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
Plenary
Reflections on Resilience
Dr. Rosalinda Mercado-Sarza, PhD
Chief Executive Officer, E-Cores in Education, Inc.
Tomás Rivera Conference Center

10:00 AM - 11:15 AM
Oral Presentations Program

Concurrent Sessions 5.1 - 5.4 | All Rooms Located in Third Floor Union East, Tomás Rivera Conference Center - UTEP

5.1 Special Topics
LGBTQ
Ray Room

*Percepciones de los/as Cuidadores/as Domiciliarios informales del Cuidado de las Personas Adultas Mayores en Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua
(Perceptions of Caregivers of Informal Home Health Care Providers for Older Adults in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua)

Lic. María Luz Russo

*Percepciones de la discriminación Salarial de individuos de Diversidad Sexual en México 2005 al 2010
(Metrics on Wage Discrimination of Individuals of Sexual Diversity in Mexico 2005 to 2010)

Elizabeth Hernández-Mursato, BA, BS
David Vázquez-Guzmán, PhD

*Lav Evaulación Desde el Trabajo Social en una Temática Emergente: Diversidad Sexual y Derechos Humanos (Evaluation from the Social Work Perspective on an Emerging Theme: Sexual Diversity and Human Rights)

Lic. María Eugenia García

5.2 Special topics in Health: Community Health Worker
Smiley Room

Building the Capacity of Community Health Workers to Deliver Eye Health Information: Lessons Learned from a National Training Effort
Marcela Aguilar, MHS
Ana Toro, MA, APR

Learning to Use the Diabetes and Healthy Eyes Toolkit
Marcela Aguilar, MHS
Ana Toro, MA, APR

Building Research Capacity among Community Health Workers in Rural Southern New Mexico
Maria Garrolo, PhD
Elizabeth Olivarez, MPH
Jill McDonald PhD

5.3 Health, Social Work and Inequalities
Templeton Suite

Food Banks and Health Promotion
Perla Chaparro, BA

Environmental Justice and Social Workers: A New Paradigm for Health and Wellbeing
Patricia M. Juárez-Carrillo, PhD, MPH

Cultural Competence Across Distance Education
Ritchendas
George Bettleworth, MSW

5.4 Rural America, Access, Technology and Innovation
Elkins Room

From the Emergency Room to the Home: Lessen Recurrent Fall Injuries in Seniors
Guillermina Solis, PhD, APRN, CNP, GRNP-C

Promotoras Advocacy and Community Surviving, Thriving and Organizing in Rural Southern New Mexico
Maria Garrolo, PhD
América Teneraz

Border Infectious Disease Surveillance in Rural Texas Counties
Tom Jeffreys, MPH