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The impact of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI): cultivating cultural humility among social work students

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ABSTRACT

Cultural humility, understanding others' culture and the impact of one's own culture on interactions with others, is recognized in many professions as a requirement for effective practice. However, cultural humility is difficult to define and even more elusive to measure. In an exploratory study of social work students, a National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) diversity issues workshop was used during program orientation to introduce participants to the importance of understanding one's own culture and its potential impact on future practice. The intent was to 'prime' students' thinking for course content, class discussions, and practicum experiences. The authors created an instrument to measure the potential impact of the workshop. The results of that study are reported here along with implications for future research and practice.

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Preparing students to work with diverse clients is a keystone of social work education. Educational experiences in working with diverse clients and addressing discrimination and oppression typically occur during social work coursework as well as field education at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Often competency in working with diversity and equity is framed around the term cultural competency and more recently, cultural humility. Preparing pre-service social workers to become culturally competent and at a deeper level, culturally humble, is a personal and educational journey requiring more than a single class. Miller, Hyde, and Ruth (2004) compiled a list of key principles for multicultural social work teaching to be most effective including:

- (1) Oppression is both a reality that is coded and embedded in social arrangements, ideology, and institutions, and also a set of values and attitudes that are internalized.
- (2) None of us, neither teacher nor students, are neutral or objective when it comes to studying multiculturalism, oppression, and social justice.
- (3) Social Justice and oppression do not sit at the doors of the academic institutions (or agencies), but are part of the classroom experience.

- (4) The goals of teaching multiculturalism are not to simply understand but to challenge, change, and dismantle oppression and unearned privilege;
- (5) Learning must include experiential components that lead to self-awareness and social action strategies that go beyond the classroom (p. 411).

This exploratory study examined the use of a required one-day workshop developed by the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) to prime in-coming graduate and undergraduate social work students at one midwestern American university. The curriculum for this diversity issues training directly addresses many of Miller, Hyde and Ruth's (2004) key points, in that it includes opportunities where trained NCBI facilitators (in this case social work faculty, who are predominantly white), model experiential activities that directly address implicit and explicit bias, discrimination and oppression. The NCBI curriculum encourages participants to explore their own thoughts, beliefs, and experiences around a variety of identities, including race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, among others. Additionally, the NCBI curriculum includes a skills component to help participants build confidence and skills around interrupting and addressing prejudicial jokes, slurs, and speech. As NCBI's model focuses heavily on the use of modeling and personal stories, the social work faculty at this university believed the workshop might help propel students along the path towards cultural humility and set a strong foundation for this type of self-exploration in later coursework.

Is it cultural competence or cultural humility? For some these two terms might be understood to be the same concept that can be used interchangeably. Others argue that cultural competence has never been clearly defined or that 'cultural competence' is only a portion of what is encompassed by the term 'cultural humility' (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Historically, the social work profession has always recognized the importance of respect for diverse clients, with the focus on a practitioner learning 'cultural specific knowledge' about a client's culture, beliefs or cultural practices (O'Hare, 2009; Sue, 2006). Practitioners who were more knowledgeable about their clients' cultures were viewed as being more culturally competent. Some have suggested that there are degrees of cultural competence that exist along a continuum (for example, Cross, 1988) and others describe cultural competence as a lifelong journey of continuous learning (for example, Allen-Meares, 2007; Perry & Tate-Manning, 2006).

In its Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2015) relies on a definition of cultural competence from the National Center for Cultural Competence, defining it as 'a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or amongst professionals and enable the system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.' (p. 13).

Over the years, thinking about cultural competence has expanded beyond the basic requirement of understanding a client's cultural background to include a requirement for the practitioner to understand his or her own complex cultural background and its influence on working with clients or patients (O'Hare, 2009). For example, Green (1999) described 'culturally sensitive' practice as attitudes and values that include recognizing one's own culture and the culture of others that allows a student or practitioner to recognize and appreciate the cultural differences among their clients as well as recognize their own culture and how it influences their work.

A related term, ‘cultural humility,’ adds the requirement of a consistent commitment to learning and self-reflection, as well as an understanding of power dynamics and one’s own role in society (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Waters & Asbill, 2013). Hook et al. (2013) argue that cultural humility ‘involves the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the client’ (p. 354). This study is primarily interested in this on-going self-reflection where pre-service social work students are asked to examine their own cultural identity and its power in society.

Moving beyond knowledge about cultures (the basic premise of cultural competence) to personal reflection about one’s own culture and role in society (cultural humility) does not come without challenges, however. Mindrup et al. (2011) discuss the challenge of understanding one’s culture and its impact on others if an individual does not recognize the beliefs and values of their culture and therefore is not able to examine their impact. For example, if white persons do not think of their background as being a culture they are not likely to examine the power dynamics included in the term *white privilege*. In reality, an individual has an intersection of multiple diversities such as ‘*I am an elderly Asian male who is gay and has a disability*’ which increases the complexity of self-reflection and understanding (Sue, 2006). Sue (2006) suggests that for many, personal self-awareness remains at an intellectual or cognitive level rather than getting in touch with the emotional impact of the attitudes, beliefs and feelings associated with cultural differences which sometimes results in ‘unintentional racism, sexism, heterosexism, able-bodyism, and ageism’ (p. 25). Reaching this deeper level is critical for social workers to be able to work most effectively with clients (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Waters & Asbill, 2013). This greater self-awareness is believed to increase empathy that is a cornerstone of all professional social work and other helping relationships.

In the United States, both the NASW and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), (as well as other allied professional groups) have consistently recognized the importance for students and practitioners to understand cultural diversity and cultural humility by updating the expectations for education and practice. In addition to its Code of Ethics, NASW updated the Standards and Indicators of Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice in 2015. Within this update, NASW (NASW, 2015) highlighted the need for cultural humility as an integral part of culturally competent social work practice, recognizing a shift in the literature, social work education, and professional discourse. Together with the Code of Ethics, these documents identify values and skills expected of culturally competent practitioners. In parallel, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has historically included expectations and guidelines for academic programs to include course content about diversity and cultural competence. The most recent Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (Council on Social Work Education, 2015) requires students to demonstrate achievement of nine competencies which include ‘Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice’ (Competency 2).

There continues to be discussion about consistent definitions and meaningful measures of cultural competence and cultural humility. For example, Hook et al. (2013) discuss the additional challenges of practitioners reporting on their own efficacy of conducting culturally sensitive counseling. O’Hare (2009) reminds us that even though measures of cultural competence are found in the literature it remains that ‘cultural

competence' and 'cultural humility' are theoretical terms that have not been empirically related to social work outcomes.

Even without a clear empirical relationship established, a number of professional groups (for example, social work, medicine, psychology) have paid increasing attention to the importance of a professional's cultural humility and culturally competent practice in their education and training programs. For example, Lee and Greene (2004) describe a framework for transformative multicultural social work education and Ross (2010) describes a model for a two-course sequence that integrates community-based participatory research and ongoing self-reflection relevant for macro social work and community development students. Social work programs sometimes require a specific course on diversity and others integrate diversity content and reflections into all courses across the curriculum or a combination of both (Saunders, Haskins and Vasquez, 2015).

There are relevant critiques from the social work literature around the use of the terms cultural competence and cultural humility. Park (2005) argues that the term 'culture' has regularly been used in social work discourse as a replacement for the terms race and ethnicity, thus maintaining a trope by simply using a different name. Pon (2009) too critiques the practice of cultural competency for 'otherizing' non-whites by allowing for historical colonialism and racism to persist unchallenged. Similarly, Sakamoto (2007) criticizes the concept of 'cultural competency' for ignoring the power carried by whiteness within social work practice. There has been a lack of attention to the intersection between racialized trauma, colonialism, and engaging in culturally competent practice (Herring et al., 2013). Furlong and Wight (2011) have pointed out the tendency for cultural competency within social work to tokenize marginalized populations. They argue that social work education programs seek to graduate students who are deemed 'competent' because they have been given a brief education on a variety of culturally different populations. These authors argue that this brief, topical scatter-gun approach lacks the depth and nuance that comes with truly understanding any individual's expression and experience of their culture, let alone any focus on critical self-awareness. Other authors too have noted the problems in assuming that acquiring rote knowledge about other cultures will automatically result in culturally competent social work practice (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Dean, 2001).

Students enter a social work program with varying degrees of professional and life experiences and different degrees of reflection on their own culture and exposure to cultures different than their own. Recognizing this diversity among students and believing that cultural humility enhances social work practice, one school of social work chose to introduce cultural humility to students as they entered their program. As part of their required orientation, students (undergraduate and graduate) participated in a one-day workshop designed by the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), whose model utilizes personal stories to spark a shift in attitudes and change hearts. The intent of requiring students to attend the workshop was to help students move from a purely intellectual (knowledge) level about diversity to an understanding of the emotional impact of cultural diversity on one's professional practice. It was believed that the NCBI workshop would serve as a catalyst for heightening personal awareness of their own culture and its impact on their future practice as they began the program and (hopefully) use this awareness throughout their course work and practicum experiences.

National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)

Since its founding in 1984, the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) (<http://ncbi.org>) has become an international network across a full spectrum of settings, including educational institutions, government, and both the public and private sectors. NCBI is a nonprofit leadership training organization based in Washington, D.C. Although the majority of NCBI's Community Chapters, Organizational Affiliates, and Campus Affiliates are located in the United States, NCBI has dozens of chapters worldwide, including in places such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Greece, and Brazil. Through its work, NCBI aims to enable participants to develop skills in areas of prejudice reduction, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and coalition building. Its message has been the same throughout: to give voice to the idea that every diversity issue matters and that hearing personal stories helps bridge the gap between differences. NCBI provides a variety of programs from one day workshops to more intensive six day trainings. These workshops have been presented to students from the elementary school through the university level and in many workplace settings to address issues of diversity and discrimination (Brown & Shabazz, 2013; Cavanagh, 1999) and school violence (Ferriter et al., 2010). Teams of trained/mentored facilitators lead all workshops. NCBI has campus affiliate teams on university campuses across the country. The university where this study was conducted has a campus NCBI team, of which multiple social work faculty are members. The one-day workshop that students in this study attended required participants to reflect on their own origins, experiences, beliefs and values and how they might influence an individual's thinking and behaviors. This is one of the requirements of cultural humility that is believed to be important for professional practice (Hook et al., 2013).

As part of the NCBI workshop format, participants are asked to respond to six statements before and after the program related to diversity and prejudice. These items ask participants to indicate their level of agreement with six 'I' statements. For example, 'I am proud of all aspects of my identity,' and 'I am inclined to let people know when I hear prejudicial statements.' At the conclusion of the workshop, participants are also asked about the degree to which the workshop met its objectives: NCBI training ... 'helped me identify misinformation I've learned about people different from me,' and 'helped me develop more appreciation or pride about the groups to which I belong' are examples of these items.

However, despite the widespread use of NCBI workshops, no rigorous, quantitative, qualitative or program evaluation studies can be found in the literature to understand the impact or usefulness of the workshop for participants in any setting. There are a small number of anecdotal reports, some described as qualitative studies, which offer a little insight into how the workshop has been used by participants. In one of those studies involving eighteen higher education professionals in the student affairs field, Croteau et al. (2002) reported two themes among comments from the participants: having a privileged status lessened the effects of oppression and lessened the person's recognition of oppression in others and secondly, as a result of the workshop, participants were able to experience a connection to other oppressed groups through a translation of their own experiences of oppression. In another anecdotal paper, Rader et al. (2002) described the use of NCBI's six-hour (one day) diversity workshop

as part of an experimental university course designed to build a sense of community on campus. Faculty and students involved in the course reported feeling increased critical consciousness, empathy skills, empowerment, and an overall sense of community among the students.

While believing that the NCBI workshop could be a catalyst for social work students to get in touch with their personal experiences that would promote cultural humility but also recognizing an apparent lack of measures to assess outcomes, the authors of this study led a small research team to develop an evaluation tool to assess the potential utility of the workshop for social work students' academic work and future professional practice. The development of the study design and instrument, the study methods, and results of this exploratory study are detailed here. The authors designed this study around the primary research questions, 1) In what way(s) does the NCBI diversity issues workshop impact pre-service social work students' sense of cultural humility? and 2) Is the NCBI diversity issues workshop able to teach pre-service social work students skills to better prepare them to have difficult conversations around diversity?

Methods

Research design

This study was designed as a mixed methods study, utilizing paper and pencil surveys at multiple points in time as well as focus groups. Participants were asked to complete a pre-test survey immediately prior to attending the one-day NCBI workshop and then a post-test survey upon completion of the workshop. The NCBI workshop was completed as part of the students' orientation to the social work program, for both incoming undergraduate and graduate students. At the end of the students' first semester, a follow-up survey was then administered. In order to try to obtain more nuanced information about any effects of the NCBI workshop, focus groups were offered during the students' second semester in the program.

The researchers' university is a Campus Affiliate of the NCBI organization, meaning that a team of specially trained students, faculty and staff, provide trainings across campus in conjunction with the organization. Campus Affiliate teams are voluntary positions and team members receive no financial compensation for providing trainings, either from the university or from NCBI. As the social work department at this university has prioritized the one-day NCBI workshop for incoming students, numerous social work faculty are active members of the NCBI Campus Affiliate team. These social work faculty work on diverse teams with other Campus Affiliate team members to provide the trainings within the social work department and across campus. Each training utilizes 4–5 trained facilitators where each facilitator engages in teaching and serving in supportive roles. For this study, the Campus Affiliate teams included a combination of social work faculty and other Campus Affiliate team members from various disciplines and departments. Two of this study's authors were active members in the Campus Affiliate Team and therefore were each engaged in providing some of the trainings involved in this study. Although the Campus Affiliate leadership in the university's diversity office were aware of and supportive of this study, the authors conducted the study without the influence of the broader NCBI organizational leadership.

Sample and data collection

This exploratory study utilized a convenience sample comprised of both undergraduate and graduate level students ($n = 439$) entering the social work programs of a large public Midwestern university. They attended a required, one-day NCBI workshop as part of their orientation at the beginning of their first semester. The university operates three satellite centers across the state in addition to the main campus location. The main campus and one satellite center offer both undergraduate and graduate level programs whereas the other two centers offer only graduate level programs. The programs at the satellite centers operate on a staggered multi-year schedule of cohort incipency. This study was conducted over the course of three years in order to obtain data from all university centers because different campuses begin cohorts in different years.

Approximately 91% ($n = 448$ students) of the total new students ($n = 492$) were able to attend the workshop on the scheduled day, with 98% of workshop attendees participating in the survey ($n = 439$). Separate workshops were held for students in each program level at each university center. Those not able to attend on the scheduled day were able to participate in the same workshop offered on campus at a later date but were not included in this study. Demographic characteristics were not collected as part of the study to ensure participants' anonymity. However, students attending this school of social work are primarily white (93%) females (90%) with a combination of traditional and non-traditional aged students at both program levels. Students were assured of their anonymity, that their participation was voluntary and that their participation, or choosing not to participate, would not affect their status in the program in any way or influence any grade in any future course. All instruments and procedures were approved by the university institutional review board (IRB) prior to the conduct of the study.

Students agreeing to participate completed a short survey prior to the workshop (pre-test) and immediately after (post-test). At the end of the students' first semester participants completed a follow-up survey that was administered during a required course to more easily access as many participants as possible. Participants created a unique identifier for themselves to alleviate concerns about anonymity while still allowing for matching instruments for a single participant across the three data collection points. On the top of each paper survey instrument, participants were asked to create their unique identifier from the following information: Last name of your 1st grade teacher, First state you lived in, and the Quarter in which you were born (January-March, April-June, July-September, or October-December). This information allowed the surveys to be matched across the multiple administrations. Each survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. At each data collection point, surveys were administered by a research team member; in some instances, the research team member was also serving as a facilitator for the NCBI workshops where data collection was taking place.

At follow-up, participants were given the opportunity to indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group at the end of their second semester to discuss to what extent the NCBI workshop influenced (or did not influence) their course work or practicum experience over the course of the second semester. Separate focus groups were offered for undergraduate and graduate students, scheduled for multiple dates and times at each of the university's locations.

Instruments and measures

The research team created survey instruments for this study after reviewing a number of cultural competence and humility measures found in the literature. The research team found the available instruments to be fairly generic in nature and believed that creating unique survey tools for use with the NCBI workshop content would allow for a more focused assessment of the impact of the workshop on students' social work education and anticipated future practice. The instruments integrated the six items used as part of the NCBI workshop format described above.

The surveys were developed around four conceptual areas addressed in the NCBI workshops with the purpose of measuring different aspects of a person's sense of cultural humility: 1) views of my own identity and comfortableness with differences; 2) views about others' identities and how that affects me; 3) worldview of oppression and discrimination; and 4) deliberate actions to promote cultural competence and/or address oppression and discrimination. These conceptual areas were believed to follow the goals of the NCBI training, which include fostering pride in one's own identities, building connections with others who may be different from yourself, and teaching skills to interrupt and address oppression and discrimination in everyday life (www.ncbi.org). The research team believed these conceptual areas also describe important components of professional and personal cultural humility that are directly applicable to future social work practice. Recognizing the limited time to distribute the surveys and to encourage participation, the instruments included no more than five statements in each conceptual area.

Pre-test

Due to the nature of the NCBI training which relies on information being provided in a strategic manner to provoke thoughtfulness and examination of beliefs, the pre-test instrument was designed to avoid contaminating the effect of the NCBI strategy but would still provide a foundation for understanding the participants' cultural humility beliefs and related actions. The pre-test contained a total of 20 items. Examples of these items include: 'I am aware of power and privilege in interactions with others,' 'I am aware that there are individual differences among members within particular groups,' and 'Being a member of a particular group can bring with it different challenges and experiences not recognized by others.' For each item participants selected their level of agreement with the statement on a seven-point Likert scale from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (7).

Post-test and follow-up

A similar 20 item instrument was created as the post-test for use at the conclusion of the NCBI workshop and at follow-up at the end of the first semester. The post-test instrument incorporated the six items NCBI used to measure achievement of its objectives (described above) as well as most of the pre-test items regarding beliefs, to allow for measurement of changes over time. The remainder of the items were specific to the impact of the NCBI training on individuals. Examples of these items include 'NCBI training gave me an opportunity to experience the personal impact of acts of discrimination' and 'NCBI training gave me skills in interrupting prejudicial jokes, remarks and/or slurs.'

The follow-up instrument was identical to the post-test instrument with the exception of not including the six items used by NCBI itself. Each of the items on the post-test/follow-up instrument were answered on the same seven point Likert scale as was used on the pre-test. In addition to the Likert scale statements, the post-test and follow-up surveys included two qualitative questions in an attempt to capture a more nuanced understanding of the impact the workshop had on students over time. A summary of those results are reported elsewhere.

Focus groups

The study design included separate focus groups for both the undergraduate and graduate students during the students' second semester in the program. At the time of the follow-up survey administration, consent forms were also distributed for students to indicate if they wished to receive a focus group invitation during their second semester. Invitations for the focus groups were distributed via email, based on the information provided by the students on the consent form. Students were asked to RSVP for the focus groups by contacting a designated research team member, who had participated in leading the NCBI workshops. Focus groups were offered at each of the four campus locations across the state and were led by the same research team member. Discussion questions and a guiding script were developed by the research team to provide some structure to the focus groups. These discussion questions are presented in [Table 1](#). The focus group discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted in IBM SPSS statistics version 23 using paired sample t tests to examine differences across the three survey administrations for individual participants. Paired sample t-tests were determined to be the appropriate statistical test as the responses from individual participants were matched over the various data points, there were no significant outliers in the differences between scores for individuals, and the data followed a normal distribution. An alpha level of 0.05 was chosen to test as the significance level.

The audio recordings from the focus groups were transcribed for use in qualitative analysis. The research team utilized grounded theory to analyze the transcriptions. Grounded theory involves looking for key concepts or themes across the qualitative data as well as looking for any relationships between the concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Two research team members separately coded the transcriptions for re-occurring themes/concepts. Each coder created an electronic document, sorting the data into thematic categories and writing defining descriptions for each theme that was representative of all data housed within that theme. The coders then compared their coded data. The coders discussed each piece of coded data and the piece of data was then assigned to an agreed upon corresponding thematic category, creating a new iteration of sorted data. Together, the coders reviewed and refined the thematic categories and corresponding thematic descriptions over multiple iterations until the coders reached a consensus about the themes present in the data.

Table 1. Focus group questions.

Focus Group Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My first question has to do with your thoughts about oppression and discrimination . . . Thinking back to your views on oppression and discrimination before beginning your program in August, have you noticed any changes in those views? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) What changes have you noticed? Can you share some specific examples? (b) What or who do you think most influenced your views in that time frame? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) [include, if possible] Faculty, students, course content . . . (c) [if not yet discussed] How, or to what extent, do you think the NCBI training affected your perceptions? 2. Again, thinking back to your NCBI training, what skills did you gain from the NCBI training? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) In what way have you been able to use these skills (in the program or with family/friends) or how do you intend to use these skills in the future? (b) Can you share specific examples? 3. In what ways do you think the NCBI training affected your awareness of or interactions with others? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Can you share examples from classroom discussions? (b) Working with clients? (c) Talking with other students or faculty? 4. In what ways do you think the NCBI training affected your views of your own personal identity? And your professional identity? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Can you share specific examples? 5. How or in what ways do you think you integrated your experience in the NCBI training into your courses? And in your practicum experience this year? 6. Would you like to share any other thoughts/feelings/or reactions that have stuck with you from the NCBI training? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) What would you say to the new cohort of students next year about the NCBI training?

Results

Quantitative results

Ninety-eight percent ($n = 439$) of the total workshop participants (approximately 448 students) chose to participate in the evaluation on the day of the workshop: 174 undergraduate and 265 graduate students. The results below describe the responses to the items on the surveys. It should be noted that some items were used only on the pre-test (and are reported first). The majority of the items were used on more than one survey which allowed for comparison of responses—for example, post-test to follow-up.

Pre-test only items

As part of the pre-test prior to the workshop, participants were asked to characterize their beliefs and behaviors related to persons different from themselves by indicating their level of agreement with five statements on a seven-point scale: *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (7). On average, participants slightly agreed they took part in events showcasing diverse cultures (mean 4.95), and more strongly agreed that they socialized with persons different than themselves (mean 5.75), best understand others after getting to know them (mean 5.95), and felt comfortable interacting with others from diverse backgrounds (mean 6.21). On average, they disagreed with the statement ‘getting to know someone different from me is an uncomfortable experience’ (mean 2.39). These items were not used on the post-test/follow-up surveys.

Comparison of responses: pre-test/post-test/follow-up

All six items used in the national NCBI model intended to measure specific aspects of the workshop showed a statistically significant ($p < .01$) improvement (decrease in scores)

from pre-test to post-test suggesting that the workshop was successful in meeting its goals. As shown in Table 2, scores for each item indicate that participants, on average, were more likely to report increased frequency (1 = almost always, 5 = never) of each value, belief or behavior after the workshop compared to prior to the workshop. Overall, the results suggest that the workshop facilitated positive changes among the participants over the course of the day the workshop was given.

At the conclusion of the workshop and again at follow-up, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a seven point scale, *Strongly disagree*, (1) to *Strongly agree* (7) with five statements about the intended outcomes of the workshop. As reflected in Table 3, participants generally agreed with each statement. Higher numbers indicate greater agreement with a statement; however, 'less agreement' is the best response for some items.

Over time, as is also shown in Table 3, the impact of the NCBI workshop declined, as there was a significant decrease in agreement with each item. Given that the follow-up survey was conducted 4 months after the Workshop and students had completed a number of social work courses, it is perhaps not surprising that the initial impact of the Workshop 'wore off.' It is important to note that, overall, participants still rated each item fairly high at the time of follow-up suggesting that they still were able to identify the contribution the workshop made to their overall social work education.

As shown in Table 4, nine items demonstrated significant change from pre-test to post-test measurements. Overall, these results suggest that after the workshop, students felt more aware of privilege and oppression issues and felt a greater sense of responsibility in addressing these issues. Only four items demonstrated statistically significant differences from post-test to follow-up. All of these results showed declines in the

Table 2. Average responses of NCBI workshop items at pre-test and post-test.

NCBI Pre/Posttest Items	Pre-test Mean (Range)	Post-test Mean (Range)
I am proud of all aspects of my identity	1.81 (1–4)	*1.66 (1–4)
I trust others will accept me for who I am-even if I am different	2.25 (1–5)	*1.98 (1–4)
I am at ease with people unlike myself	1.76 (1–5)	*1.61 (1–4)
I understand the impact of oppression and discrimination	1.73 (1–4)	*1.46 (1–3)
I am inclined to let people know when I hear prejudicial statements	2.21 (1–5)	*1.83 (1–4)
In most situations where discrimination is evident, I believe I can make a difference	2.63 (1–4)	*1.79 (1–4)

* $p < .01$.

Table 3. Level of agreement with achievement of workshop outcomes at post-test and follow-up.

NCBI Workshop items	Posttest Mean (Range)	Follow-up Mean (Range)
NCBI training opened my eyes to the mistreatment groups, other than my own, have experienced	6.31 (1–7)	*5.70 (1–7)
NCBI training helped me develop more appreciation or pride about the groups to which I belong	6.05 (1–7)	*5.29 (1–7)
NCBI training gave me an opportunity to experience the personal impact of acts of discrimination	6.49 (1–7)	*5.73 (1–7)
NCBI training gave me skills in interrupting prejudicial jokes, remarks and/or slurs	6.15 (1–7)	*5.50 (1–7)
NCBI training helped me identify misinformation I've learned about people different from me	6.12 (1–7)	*5.62 (2–7)

* $p < .01$.

students' perceptions of themselves and of understanding others. For one item, 'Being a member of a particular group can bring with it different challenges and experiences not recognized by others,' students displayed an increase in support for this item from pre-test to post-test and then a significant decrease from post-test to follow-up. The mean for the follow-up data point returned to just below the mean of the pre-test measure.

Finally, ten items showed statistically significant differences from pre-test to follow-up. Seven of these items further supported the results on items from pre-test to post-test, that showed students felt more aware of privilege and oppression issues and a greater sense of responsibility for addressing these issues. Two items were significant both from post-test to follow-up and from pre-test to follow-up. For the item, 'I feel more comfortable with my identity,' and for the item, 'I believe people are responsible for their own outcomes in life,' students endorsed a significant decrease in agreement with the statements. The final item to demonstrate significant results was the statement 'I feel uncomfortable when people make inappropriate statements about others groups.' Students endorsed a significant increase in agreement with this statement.

Qualitative results

In addition to the written survey instruments, the study design included plans to conduct focus groups in order to elicit a clearer understanding of NCBI's effect on students' academic coursework and practicum experience. The focus groups were scheduled and conducted but were poorly attended, making it inappropriate to draw any conclusions from the results. In total, only five MSW students participated in two focus groups. Two primary themes were identified across the data from the two focus groups: *personal awareness* and *opportunity*.

Under the theme of *personal awareness*, the students expressed that the NCBI training helped them recognize and analyze their own biases, feelings and experiences. They felt this self-awareness helped them to recognize other people's perspectives and experiences as just as valid as their own. References to 'stories' were common throughout participants' responses, particularly around connecting with and understanding others. Hearing other people's stories as well as the opportunity to share their own stories was noted by the students as a powerful part of the NCBI experience. One student shared their own personal experience with being discriminated against for being poor within the focus group and then shared the following about having listened to other people's stories during the NCBI training:

"So for me, it's personal, but for other people it's also personal. It's almost like, I can't . . . I can't identify with everybody's experiences, but on some levels, I can, I think. I can identify with what it feels like, you know."

Another student shared thoughts directly around an activity involved in the training called 'Caucusing' where groups are formed from a list the large groups generates of shared identities that are present in the room. Each identity group creates a list of what they want others to know/understand about their group and what they want others to never say/do again towards their group. The student shared:

Table 4. Paired samples t-test mean differences: items in bold indicate a significant difference.

	Pre to Post Differences Average N = 364				Post to Follow-Up Differences Average N = 288				Pre to Follow-Up Differences Average N = 292			
	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Mean Diff.		Post Mean	F/U Mean	Mean Diff.		Pre Mean	F/U Mean	Mean Diff.	
I am aware of power and privilege in interactions with others	5.96	6.36	**-.398		6.36	6.44	-.078		5.89	6.44	**-.549	
People of different backgrounds generally treat me respectfully	5.86	5.95	-.087		5.97	5.86	.108		5.82	5.88	-.065	
Oppression and discrimination are not as prevalent today as in the past.	2.47	2.07	*.406		2.08	2.14	-.056		2.51	2.09	**-.418	
Knowing about different experiences of other people helps me understand them better	6.71	6.73	-.025		6.75	6.66	*.092		6.73	6.66	.071	
I feel comfortable with my cultural identity	6.14	6.20	-.056		6.24	5.98	**-.261		6.15	5.98	*.175	
Oppression and discrimination do not affect me	2.78	1.98	**-.789		2.00	2.14	-.135		2.82	2.13	**-.684	
I feel uncomfortable when people make inappropriate statements about other groups	6.02	6.20	-.175		6.25	6.19	.051		5.97	6.20	*.232	
I am aware that there are individual differences among members within particular groups	6.58	6.68	**-.106		6.67	6.60	.071		6.57	6.61	-.040	
Oppression and discrimination are not my problem	1.42	1.23	**-.183		1.23	1.33	-.097		1.44	1.32	*.118	
People who are different from me can teach me things I could not learn elsewhere	6.62	6.65	-.031		6.64	6.61	.031		6.61	6.64	-.030	
Power and privilege are real and active forces in our society	6.50	6.66	**-.160		6.63	6.60	.038		6.48	6.60	*.123	
Being a member of a particular group can bring with it different challenges and experiences not recognized by others.	6.47	6.59	**-.117		6.56	6.46	*.106		6.49	6.44	.051	
There is little I can do about oppression and discrimination issues	2.08	1.60	**-.485		6.56	6.46	-.141		2.09	1.84	**-.242	
My cultural background influences the way I think and act	5.92	6.08	**-.160		6.08	6.18	-.105		5.85	6.17	**-.318	
I believe people are responsible for their own outcomes in life	4.18	4.05	.130		4.14	3.71	**-.434		4.23	3.67	**-.554	

* p < .05; ** p < .01.

“I think I was in the group of just women, facing gender oppression, how other people saw that as an oppression was really interesting and so I had to sort of step back and realize that their views are valid too. (Laughs) Because that is something that I have pretty well shaped in my mind, like what I think that looks like, and like oh yeah, there are other women who have other experiences.”

Under the theme of *opportunity*, the students endorsed feelings that while the NCBI training went emotionally deep in a very short period of time, helping them unify as a cohort and opening the door for sensitive conversations in later courses, that may not have otherwise occurred. This sentiment was captured in the following quotes:

“I think it sort of helped us get to know each other really quickly and since it’s such a small program, I don’t know. We ended up knowing a lot of details about each other that maybe we wouldn’t have known otherwise.”

“I think it did break down some walls maybe in the area of identity and social issues so I think having the training here does help set a tone as to going into all of these other areas, whether it’s policy, whether it’s you know, Discrimination, Oppression, & Diversity [required diversity coursework at both graduate and undergraduate levels], or whatever.”

“I think the training made it pretty clear to people that these are things we need to talk about and this is how you start talking about these issues, which was helpful I think in going forward into some of the classes.”

Discussion

The results of this exploratory study provide preliminary support for the use of the NCBI workshop as a catalyst for increasing cultural humility based on the overall positive responses and perceptions of students. Participants reported that the workshop helped them to develop a more culturally competent perspective and a heightened awareness of the role of culture, both important aspects of cultural humility. The results also suggest students feel better prepared to take action in situations involving oppressive or discriminatory behavior. Although the results showed that the impact of the NCBI workshop declined over time, students continued to report the workshop contributed to their education. One student noted that the workshop helped students to feel more cohesive as a cohort which allowed them to discuss issues openly during class discussion. This lends support for the use of such experiential cultural humility workshops early on in social work educational programs to create a foundation for continued learning and personal growth. However, further research is needed to better understand the short-term and long-term impact of such a workshop.

Results for some survey items were particularly interesting for the research team. The decrease in students’ recognition of challenges and experiences based on group membership over the course of the semester is potentially problematic as the students were all enrolled in a required course on diversity and oppression issues during their first semester. The mean at follow-up had a much smaller sample size and was only slightly below the pre-test mean. However, this is an area that may need more exploration to understand students’ responses and to determine if the survey item itself was problematic.

A second item of interest was ‘Knowing about different experiences of other people helps me understand them better.’ This item specifically addresses a key component of NCBI, which involves participants hearing the personal stories of other participants. The idea behind this guiding principle of NCBI is that stories have a greater potential to impact people and lead to change compared to simply providing statistics. Personal stories provide an emotional component that may help them be more inspiring to the listener, particularly if the person sharing the story is someone you personally know, as is the case in the NCBI trainings in this setting. The results of this item are contrary to the beliefs behind the NCBI training. Although this decrease was only significant from post-test to follow-up, there was also a decrease in the results from pre-test to follow-up. As this item relates to a core component of NCBI, further research will need to be done on this area to better clearly examine the impact of personal stories on changing attitudes towards or perceptions of others.

For the item, ‘I feel comfortable with my cultural identity,’ participants felt less comfortable both from post-test to follow-up and from pre-test to follow-up. This result was also in contrast to the pre-test/post-test result where students reported feeling proud of all aspects of their identity. One possible explanation for this, with the understanding that the vast majority of students at this university are white, is that the decrease was related to participants gaining knowledge about diversity and oppression issues both through the NCBI workshop and reiterated in their coursework during the first semester. Essentially, students who may not have been aware of such issues lost their ‘rose-colored glasses.’ NCBI stresses pride in all identities, including identities that hold power in society, with the understanding that pride and chauvinism are different entities. It may be though, for someone gaining new information about issues they were not previously aware existed, that having pride in a privileged identity can create a feeling of guilt or shame. The theory behind NCBI holds that ‘guilt is the glue that holds prejudice in place.’ If a person feels guilt or shame over having a privileged identity, NCBI believes that person is less likely to engage in work towards dismantling structures of privilege and power. To feel pride in one’s sense of self, including privileged identities, is very different from chauvinism, where a person believes that their identity is better than another identity. In this distinction, pride is therefore not about achievement and instead is more an intrinsic positive experience. Future research would benefit from a longer term follow-up, where it might be more likely to see an additional gain again as students reach a comfortable identity equilibrium after they have had time to incorporate new information into their self-concepts. There is also room for further research around supporting pre-service social workers around privileged identities, the idea of pride versus chauvinism, and how privileged identities affect social work practice.

As discussed previously, the data for this study was conducted over a three-year period but it is important to note that the data collection occurred in what arguably was a very different time than the present state we are living in. Because the data collection ended in mid- 2018, this study does not account for any effects of the current Black Lives Matter movement or the COVID-19 pandemic, either within the United States or globally. Additionally, former U.S. President Donald Trump had issued an executive order in September 2019 effectively halting the NCBI training and other similar diversity trainings across a number of entities, including at public universities. Although that executive order has since been rescinded by now President Joe Biden, it is unclear yet what the

lasting effect will be on universities attempting to offer NCBI or similar diversity trainings within their programs. It is possible that fearing future governmental censorship, universities will be hesitant to implement programs such as NCBI. Within social work education, there may be real and valid fears that diversity-specific coursework or trainings might make programs a target from disapproving government administrations, even if those courses/trainings are provided within the context of professional ethics and/or discipline-specific accreditation standards. This is true within the U.S. and in global social work education.

Although the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement started in 2013, the movement has gained global prominence since the murder of George Floyd in the United States in mid-2020. Globally, the BLM movement has shone a light on the recesses of institutional racism that is inherent in the design of many societal structures. While these issues have always existed, we would argue that even amongst social workers, there has been a varied degree of recognition of these issues, let alone engagement in anti-racist social work practice. Based on our collective 25+ years of experiences leading these NCBI trainings, we believe that the BLM movement offers an opportunity for NCBI trainings to be even more important and useful in preparing pre-service social workers. BLM has made race and the effects of racism more openly discussed topics, yet these topics remain uncomfortable for many and at times, polarizing. There may also be a priming effect in that future students entering social work programs may have already started to engage both cognitively and emotionally with these issues in ways that past cohorts of students had not. While we believe that the NCBI model offers a strong opportunity for building comfort around openly discussing these topics and developing skills to interrupt/address discrimination and oppression, further research specifically geared towards examining these issues is needed. There are additional opportunities to examine the NCBI training specifically in relation to BLM around any priming effect the movement has created, the impact of personal stories, the development of awareness of issues of oppression, and the use of empathy as a core social work skill.

In light of the literature critiquing the use of the terms cultural competency and cultural humility detailed earlier in this article, NCBI offers a unique approach to helping expand participants' understanding of 'culture' and 'diversity.' The authors would agree that these terms are frequently conflated with race and ethnicity and that issue needs to be recognized in any diversity coursework and/or training. The NCBI training, however, incorporates multiple activities specifically designed to expand participants' consciousness of a variety of both visible and hidden cultural identities and to examine how those various identities affect the person holding that identity. For example, the training specifically asks participants to claim cultural identities around birth order, age, socioeconomic status, ability, and birthplace, in addition to gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Participants are offered the opportunity to identify and claim other hidden or private cultural identities, not accounted for in the other categories that are explored. As a program in a Midwestern state, even exploring identities around birthplace culture can be eye opening for some students. Urban versus rural life create very different cultures. Urban lifestyle cultures also greatly differ between a mid-sized U.S. city and a larger U.S. metropolis. For each of these cultural identities, NCBI asks participants to think about the effect their identities have in creating their individual culture and in examining assumptions they make about others' identities and cultures. In this way, NCBI is able to provide an expansion to the idea of

‘culture’ that goes far beyond race and ethnicity. Finally, the script for the U.S. version of NCBI’s training directly acknowledges the continued impact of colonialism and slavery on all training participants. Such acknowledgements would likely be beneficial if this NCBI training was adopted in international contexts.

It is important to evaluate the format for delivering this training in light of health and safety issues due to COVID-19. The training model relies on an in-person format with frequent small group interactions. Additionally, NCBI facilitators are trained to look for and respond to individuals within the group who may be emotionally struggling with or otherwise negatively reacting to the material. Facilitators intercept participants who are struggling and can provide one-on-one debriefs apart from the larger group. The training model was adapted to a virtual format following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the social work department had already decided to delay the fall 2020 NCBI training until the spring of 2021. The authors have therefore not had the opportunity to engage in the virtual version of this training and due to its recency there is no research or known data regarding the virtual version. The authors would suggest that any interested social work programs engage in thoughtful consideration to determine if it would be appropriate and/or feasible to do such a training virtually. In the current need to use virtual trainings for physical safety reasons, this training may not be appropriate to conduct virtually for emotional safety reasons. The authors would also suggest that it may be most appropriate for a virtual NCBI facilitation team to be comprised primarily of experienced NCBI facilitators who may be better able to recognize and manage any issues that arise, which could be further complicated by the online format.

Finally, although NCBI as an organization operates internationally, it would be appropriate for social work programs considering using NCBI’s training to evaluate it based on the cultural context that the program exists within as well as the needs that cultural context creates around cultural humility within social work practice. Adaptations may need to be made to the training curriculum based on the socio-political climate the program educates future social workers in. As the curriculum is copyrighted, any such changes must be made in conjunction and with the permission of organizational NCBI leadership. For example, the authors’ Campus Affiliate team had struggled with feeling that the NCBI format can inadvertently tokenize people from marginalized identities, particularly people of color, when asking for participants to share their stories. Although participants of any marginalized identity can choose to share a personal story during the training, the Campus Affiliate members frequently observed that people of color may feel an extra burden for being visible in a pre-dominantly white space. The Campus Affiliate recognized that it was operating within a cultural context of a predominately-white institution and the recognition that people of color, in particular, frequently can be burdened with the responsibility of educating white-identifying people. The Campus Affiliate leadership was able to work with the organizational NCBI leadership to create a format that still focused on sharing personal stories, but felt less like it was encouraging or expecting one of only a few people of color in the room to carry the burden.

The researchers specifically developed the instrument for this exploratory study. Because this instrument was developed in a cultural context specific to the researchers’ university, the instrument itself may not be the most appropriate instrument for future research. This may be particularly true for future research evaluating the NCBI training

in other cultural contexts. The instrument itself may benefit from revisions for continued use, even within the U.S.

Although the survey response rate was strong based on the possible sample available to the researchers, this study still had a limited sample size of primarily white, female students. The generalizability of the results is limited as such. Additional research replicating this study with groups of future students in social work and allied professions would help to confirm or challenge the initial findings of this study. Replications including a more diverse groups of students at both the BSW and MSW level would also be advantageous to examine any distinguishable impact on various groups.

In the future, focus groups would be a beneficial component to help provide a more in-depth understanding of students' take-away from the workshop. Focus groups may help better examine the nuanced aspects that make the workshop effective as well as to determine the effects of the NCBI workshop as opposed to required social work coursework. Focus groups could also provide particularly useful information as students move into field placements regarding any effect NCBI has on their practice. In retrospect, the researchers believe that the timing of the focus groups, at the end of the spring semester, may have contributed to the low rate of participation as students were busy with exams and projects. Additionally, the students did not have regular contact with any of the research team members throughout their second semester, which may have affected any benefits of relationships and connection that may have stimulated students to participate.

This study was limited only to incoming social work students required to complete the NCBI workshop as part of their program orientation. Accreditation standards for social work programs require the inclusion of coursework on diversity and cultural competency, which these students subsequently began in the first semester of their respective programs. Issues related to diversity and cultural competency are built into most, if not all, social work coursework. While this is a core component of social work education, it also 'muddies the water' in determining any longer-term specific effects of NCBI as opposed to additional influences of required coursework. It is possible that after four months of classes, the social work students had difficulties identifying specific influences on changes in perspective and how those changes occurred. It is also possible that social work in general, attracts a certain type of person, who may be more willing/open to shifts in perspective regarding diversity and cultural competency issues. For these reasons, future research should consider the use of a comparison group from another discipline in which diversity and cultural competency issues are not a foundational element of the coursework. This would help establish a better understanding in terms of the lasting effects specific to the NCBI workshop. Future research may also seek to examine the effects of NCBI in non-academic settings as the NCBI workshop is used in a wide range of institution, business, and service settings.

Overall, the findings support the researchers' overall impression that providing a workshop like NCBI to incoming social work students has many positive aspects. Although more research would be beneficial, at this time, NCBI will continue to be used as a required part of the orientation for incoming social work students at this university.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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