

Prioritizing Experiential Learning and Self-Reflection in the Development of Multicultural Responsiveness

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ABSTRACT: This phenomenological study investigated the experiences of counselling psychology graduate students who completed the *self-reflective field activity* in the context of a practicum course. For this course assignment, students chose a minority cultural group that they were unfamiliar with (e.g., a specific ethnic or religious group). They were then asked to a) identify their assumptions about this group (pre-reflections), b) attend a community event hosted by the chosen group, and c) reflect on how their perspectives changed over time (post-reflections). Participants completed an in-depth qualitative interview about their learning and engagement regarding the self-reflective field activity. An inductive content analysis methodology was used to analyze participants' pre- and post- reflection logs as well as transcribed qualitative interviews. Results yielded three overarching categories, depicting participants' experiences prior to, during, and after the assignment. Implications for cultural competence training are discussed, including the benefits of experiential learning as well as the need for self-reflection inside and outside of the classroom.

Keywords: Self-reflective field activity, cultural responsiveness, experiential learning, self-reflection, teaching and learning

RESUMÉ: Cette étude phénoménologique a examiné les expériences des étudiants diplômés en psychologie du counseling qui ont terminé l'activité de terrain réflexive dans le cadre d'un cours de stage. Pour cette partie du cours, les élèves ont choisi un groupe culturel minoritaire qu'ils ne connaissaient pas (p. ex., un groupe ethnique ou religieux particulier). Ils ont ensuite été invités à a) identifier leurs hypothèses sur ce groupe (pré-réflexions), b)

assister à un événement communautaire organisé par le groupe choisi, et c) réfléchir sur la façon dont leurs perspectives ont changé au fil du temps (post-réflexions). Les participants ont effectué une entrevue qualitative approfondie au sujet de leur apprentissage et de leur engagement à l'égard de l'activité de terrain réflexive. Une méthodologie d'analyse de contenu inductive a été utilisée pour analyser les journaux pré-et post-réflexion des participants ainsi que les entrevues qualitatives transcrites. Les résultats ont donné trois catégories globales, illustrant les expériences des participants avant, pendant et après l'activité. Les implications pour la formation en matière de compétences culturelles sont discutées, y compris les avantages de l'apprentissage expérientiel ainsi que le besoin d'auto-réflexion à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de la salle de classe.

Mots-clés: activité de terrain réflexive, réceptivité culturelle, apprentissage expérientiel, auto-réflexion, enseignement et apprentissage

The cultural landscape in North America is continuously shifting. Such diversity is represented among various educational contexts, including graduate programs in psychology. Not only do psychology students need to learn to work with a wide range of diverse clients, they must also learn alongside their peers from multiple and intersecting cultural identities and social locations. As such, the importance of multicultural responsiveness is critical and students must receive adequate training in the area of cultural competence (Kassan & Green, 2016).

Cultural competency can be conceptualized as the extent to which helping professionals possess appropriate awareness, knowledge, and skills when working with people from diverse backgrounds (Kim & Lyons, 2003; Sue, 2001). Moreover, some scholars have discussed the role of the counselling relationship as an important component of cultural competency (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Vinson & Neimeyer, 2000). Developing competency in these areas can be challenging, as psychology students must cultivate a wide range of abilities that allow them to be culturally sensitive and responsive (Davies, Lewis, Anderson, & Bernstein, 2015; Lee & Khawaja, 2013). Although the value of multicultural training itself has been empirically validated (Manis, 2012),

surprisingly limited research has explored *how* to effectively cultivate cultural competency among counselling psychology students (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Davies et al., 2015; Kim & Lyons, 2003).

Many scholars have advocated for the need to integrate experiential learning into the curriculum as a way to help students enhance their multicultural responsiveness. Experiential learning is a means for acquiring knowledge through action (Warren et al., 2012), and can link multicultural theory to practice (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). The purpose of this type of learning is not to emulate another person's exact cultural experience, but, rather, "to develop awareness and accuracy of understanding about the viewpoints of others and to move out of a culturally encapsulated view of the world" (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002, p. 2). Research has shown that experiential pedagogies can provide exposure to diverse cultures in counsellor training programs (Greene, Barden, Richardson, & Hall, 2014; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega, 2005).

An effective way for students to engage in experiential learning is by moving outside of the classroom. Although direct interaction with different cultures can be challenging to coordinate (Greene et al., 2014), this type of learning comprises a valuable component of training that can positively impact cultural responsiveness (Kassan & Green, 2016). In a study addressing multicultural competencies and attitudes, Roysircar et al. (2005) found a positive correlation between counselling students' participation in a mentoring program for English as a second language students and their scores on the Multicultural Counselling Inventory (Sodowsky, 1996) and Helms' White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (1990). However, more research is needed that explores the role of these types of field experiences in shaping cultural competency. For example, although Priester and colleagues (2008) found that 34% of the 64 multicultural counselling courses they investigated required students to attend a cultural event where they represented the minority, research has yet to thoroughly explore the ways such experiences can impact cultural competency.

Regardless of where experiential learning takes place, there is wide consensus that experience alone is not enough to consolidate learning. That is, experientially based learning should be coupled with self-reflective processes to enable

learners to gain the maximum benefit from new contexts (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Greene et al., 2014; Roysircar et al., 2005). Self-reflection can be conceptualized as an active and intentional process of critically examining one's knowledge and past experiences with the aim of deepening understanding and improving future alternatives (Park-Taylor et. al, 2009; Schmidt & Adkins, 2012). Self-reflection plays an important role throughout an experiential learning activity. It is helpful for students to engage in reflection prior to the experience, during the experience (while consolidating large volumes of information and addressing emerging emotions), and following the experience (while making sense of new ideas and information) (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Writing has been identified as a meaningful reflective activity that can help students critically examine their experiences and lead to a deeper understanding of practice (Bassot, 2016). Furthermore, processing and debriefing with facilitators and other students is an important piece of the reflection process, and can help students make sense of new ideas and resolve any powerful feelings that may have emerged during the experience (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Greene et al., 2014).

This qualitative study focused on students' learning and experience as they completed the *self-reflective field activity*. This course assignment was designed to engage graduate students in experiential learning outside of the classroom, facilitating their self-reflection along the way (Kassan & Green, 2016). Taken from a larger assignment – Sinacore and Kassan's *community portfolio* (2011) – the self-reflective field activity was adapted in the context of a practicum course to help graduate students develop greater multicultural responsiveness. Specifically, the self-reflective field activity required students to a) choose a cultural minority group that was unknown to them, b) identify their assumptions and biases about this group (pre-reflections), c) attend a community event hosted by this cultural group (field-activity), and d) reflect on the potential shift in their perspectives (post-reflections). For the purpose of this assignment, culture was defined inclusively, to include an array of identities and social locations, such as age, race, ethnicity, indigenous heritage, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, (dis)ability, language, and social class (Collins & Arthur, 2010; La Roche & Maxie, 2003; Kassan & Sinacore, 2016). As such, students could choose any cultural minority group that was new to them. In each step of the self-

reflective field activity, students were asked to document their experiences by writing a three to five page summary of their emerging reflections. Moreover, they were given the opportunity to share those experiences (to the extent that they felt comfortable) through three separate group discussions in class. For a more detailed description of the self-reflective field activity, please see Sinacore and Kassan (2011) as well as Kassan and Green (2016). In order to investigate students' learning and experience throughout this assignment, this study investigated the following research question: *What are students' lived experiences of engaging in the self-reflective field activity?*

Method

Research Design

This phenomenological study centered on the experience of completing the *self-reflective field activity*. A phenomenology aims to describe the subjective perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of several individuals in regards to a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the central phenomenon under investigation was that of the self-reflective field activity. That is, participants' subjective learning and experience was elicited with respect to the three phases of this course assignment.

Data Collection

Once ethical approval for this study was obtained, graduate students in counselling psychology who completed the self-reflective field activity in the context of their practicum course were recruited to participate. After completing the course, interested individuals contacted a graduate-level research assistant who explained the procedures of the study and secured informed consent. Participants then completed a demographics questionnaire and handed in their pre- and post- reflection logs. Subsequently, they completed a 90-minute in-depth qualitative interview. A semi-structured protocol was employed to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to respond to similar topics reflected in the multicultural literature. The interview centered on the following topic areas: a) warm up questions, b) overarching learning and experience, c) specific learning and experience, d) enhancement of multicultural counselling competencies, e) assessment of learning and growth, and f) process questions.

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

Participants

Five second-year graduate students in counselling psychology participated in this study. They were between the ages of 23 and 32, self-identified as cisgender women, and were from European backgrounds. The cultural minority groups they selected to immerse themselves in included: a) the Mormon community, b) youth who engage in self-harm behaviours, c) persons with intellectual disabilities, d) individuals who struggle with substance misuse, and e) LGBTQ individuals who perform in drag shows. Data collection ceased at this number, as data was said to have reached saturation (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). That is, four participants completed a 90-minute qualitative interview and five submitted their pre- and post- reflection logs, yielding 14 sources of data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative inductive content analysis was used (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007) with the goal to obtain a condensed and broad description of students' perceptions and experiences of engaging in the self-reflective field activity. Firstly, the units of analysis were selected, which included four transcribed interviews as well as ten (pre- and post-) reflection logs. Each unit of analysis was analyzed as a whole and read in its entirety a number of times to obtain an overall meaning of the narrative. Next, during an "open coding" phase, all utterances (which could be a word, part of a sentence, or entire sentence) were coded in all texts while reading them. As many codes were written down as were required to describe all aspects of the content. Next, these coded utterances were collected into coding sheets and combined into sub-categories. Similar sub-categories were collapsed together and organized into categories and main categories until a general description of the topic was generated (see Tables 1 and 2). Finally, each unit of analysis was read again in its entirety to ensure that all information was reflected in the themes. Two researchers engaged in a final revision by re-examining the categories and reaching a final consensus.

Table 1

Open-coding Phase and Generating Sub-categories

Utterances	Coded utterances	Sub-category
Um, I really wasn't sure [what I would get out of assignment] I didn't immediately have an idea what I wanted to do or what kind of population I'd be looking into.	Initial uncertainty about what to expect from the assignment Unsure what population to select for the assignment	Initial hesitancy/uncertainty about the assignment
It [the assignment] felt very much like it was something that I had control over and I could go whatever route I wanted. Um, I think, I think it's very, I think it's very important, especially at this level to be able to take control of your own learning and go down the path that you find interesting and that are really going to, um, enrich your clinical practice as well. I also think that it's something rare and I haven't seen it in, kind of across the board with every professor or with	Having control within the assignment Value in having control over one's own learning Acknowledgment of the rarity of having control in school assignments	Appreciation for aspects of the assignment

every class so um, it is something I really appreciate when given that opportunity. [speaking about the assignment] ...less of something I had to check off or something that I had to complete or another hoop I had to jump through	Viewing the assignment as meaningful	
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Table 2
Organizing Sub-categories into Categories and Main Category

Sub-categories	Category	Main Category
Initial hesitancy/uncertainty about the assignment Appreciation for aspects of the assignment	Conceptualizing the assignment	Pre- activity Experiences

Rigour

Various means were employed to maximize the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study (Shenton, 2004). First, bracketing and peer debriefing were used to monitor the researchers’ subjective stances throughout the study (Patton, 2002). Second, transcription was verified by the interviewer for accuracy (Schwandt, 2015). Third, a judge and an auditor were consulted during data analysis in order to verify the emerging results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Fourth, an audit trail was maintained throughout the entire research process (Morrow, 2005). Fifth, triangulation was obtained, as participants contributed three sources of data to demonstrate their learning experiences (Schwandt, 2015). Finally, catalytic validity was established when debriefing the qualitative interviews with participants (Stiles, 1993).

Results

After each unit of analysis was analyzed, three main categories relating to students' perceptions and experiences of engaging in the self-reflective field activity emerged: Pre-Activity Experiences, Within-Activity Experiences, and Post-Activity Experiences. Each of these three main categories as expressed by the participants was further divided into three sub-categories (see Table 3).

Table 3
Final Categories and Sub-categories

Main Categories	Categories
Pre-activity Experiences	Conceptualizing the assignment
	Turning inwards
	Desire to increase cultural competency
Within-activity Experiences	Challenge and discomfort
	Connection
	Shifting perspectives
Post-activity Experiences	Enhancing understanding through reflection
	Sense of increased cultural competency
	Desire for more

Pre-activity Experiences

Conceptualizing the assignment. Participants reported a period of conceptualizing and making sense of the field activity when it was presented to them. For all participants, this included an initial sense of hesitancy towards the assignment as they expressed, for example, uncertainties about what to expect, worries about the time commitment within their already-busy timetables, and curiosities about whether or not the assignment would be meaningful. Additionally, participants expressed some fears about stretching themselves outside their comfort zones; one participant noted, "I was a little bit nervous about that, going and being really out of my element and maybe somewhere where I wasn't wanted."

At the same time, participants expressed their appreciation for the assignment, seeing value in its hands-on nature and anticipated applicability to their clinical work. Particularly, participants appreciated that they had control over the structure of the assignment, including the ability to

select the group and community event that would be most relevant for them. This was viewed as being important for their learning. One participant addressed the uniqueness of this type of autonomy, noting that “it’s something rare and I haven’t seen it in, kind of across the board with every professor or with every class so, um, it is something I really appreciate when given that opportunity.”

Turning inwards. Prior to engaging in their chosen field activity, all participants described a period of “turning inwards” wherein they reflected upon their assumptions and existing knowledge about their chosen group. Participants acknowledged that many of their biases stemmed from their personal experiences and upbringings, and talked about past experiences they had with individuals from their chosen groups.

The process of turning inwards sometimes involved feelings of surprise, discomfort, or shame when participants realized the types of the assumptions they held towards their chosen group. One participant reflected that “when I first started...I did not think I had any strong biases towards this population or that I had any discriminatory thoughts about them. However, if I look deeper within myself, I do have some harsh thoughts about this population.” Some participants expressed worries that these biases would become exposed while they engaged in the field activity. One participant described the difficulty she experienced when turning inwards, and said, “It was like very hard for me to do that, like to really, really pick apart what I felt or what I thought maybe about this population, and like maybe I felt a bit uncomfortable putting that on paper.”

Desire to increase cultural competency. Participants expressed their desire, prior to engaging in the field activity, to use the activity to challenge their existing biases and assumptions, expand their knowledge and, thus, increase their multicultural competency. Participants acknowledged that they intentionally chose groups they were less comfortable or competent working with in order to meet this goal. They expressed their desire to connect with and increase empathy towards individuals from their selected group. One participant wondered, “How can I open myself up at that emotional level, enhancing my sense of understanding and empathy?” Another participant used this desire as motivation to help her manage her anxiety about the assignment:

I remember trying to tell myself that if I was uncomfortable for a couple of hours it at least can kind of demonstrate to me the way that they might experience their day-to-day life all the time...that was kind of like, okay, I can just suck it up and take it as it comes and look at it as a way for me to try to maybe relate to some of the things that they've experienced.

Within-activity Experiences

Challenge and discomfort. During the field activity, most participants expressed moments of feeling challenged or uncomfortable as they found themselves outside their comfort zones. Some participants had moments of feeling like an “outsider” during the activity or as though they were violating the privacy of the group they had chosen. One participant reflected that “I was clearly an outsider looking in, which obviously gives a voyeuristic quality to my experience.”

Some participants were singled out as a “psychology student” or “newcomer” during their activities, which felt slightly awkward. One participant worried that she was simply “dropping in” and getting what she needed from the activity, and wondered about the potential negative impact of this. Another participant felt negatively triggered by some of the things she witnessed during her chosen activity; more specifically, she felt uncomfortable with jokes that were made by members of her chosen population towards members of a different vulnerable group.

Connection. All participants noted the importance of connecting to or building relationships with individuals from their chosen group during the field activity. There was an overall sense that this relational aspect was helpful in transforming biases and breaking down stereotypes, and that it was valuable to connect personally with individuals from their chosen group. Some participants connected with individuals more than they thought they would and were surprised by this. One participant described how the personal interaction helped her to break down some of the differences she had previously conceptualized as existing between herself and members of her selected group, describing how she learned that “this population like kind of wants the same goals and like things in life that I want out of my life.” Another participant recalled how her openness about her biases with an individual from her chosen group about his culture was helpful in developing a personal connection; she recalled that, in doing so, “I felt relieved and as if a barrier had dropped between us.” However, another participant noted that, although she tried to connect personally with an

individual during her field activity, this attempt was not well received. As she described: "I knew that I was going in there, um, in a way that I might not be very welcome, but it was unfortunate because I was there hoping to understand, and...I didn't get the opportunity to."

Shifting perspectives. There was an overall sense that participation in the field activity shifted participants' perspectives by enhancing their practical knowledge and challenging their biases and assumptions about their selected group. One participant described how participation in her chosen field activity equipped her "to have a better kind of understanding from an intellectual perspective, and also from an emotional perspective." There was an overall sense that participation in the activity helped participants acknowledge individual differences among members in a particular group, allowing them to break down stereotypes and recognize and value diversity. Participation also helped many of them to challenge their negative beliefs or aversion towards individuals in a particular group in a way that was sometimes unexpected. One participant, when describing her interaction with an individual from the Mormon community noted that "I totally felt that he would be like a certain type of person...for lack of a better word super 'preachy'...and...he wasn't preachy at all, he was just very like open-minded...and that kind of took me aback too in during the interview." Another participant, however, described how, during the field activity, her negative biases were magnified, and that this was very disappointing for her. The subsequent section will explore how the process of reflection helped this participant make sense of this experience.

Post-program Experiences

Enhancing understanding through reflection.

Participants described how, following participation in their chosen field activities, their learning and understanding was enhanced through processes of reflection (more specifically, through self-reflection journals, debriefing with classmates, and during the interview process itself). Some participants noted that this assignment provoked a deeper level of reflection than they had originally anticipated. There was an overall sense that these experiences were meaningful in helping participants articulate, process, and internalize their experiences. For example, the participant who asserted that her negative biases were amplified during the field activity noted that, upon self-reflection after the activity, she realized

she had not participated in an activity wherein she truly had access to the group she had set out to learn about. She noted that “[spending] time thinking about what I saw with my eyes and how that didn’t really apply to what I was hoping to learn was a big part of my learning process.”

All participants emphasized the value in sharing their experiences with classmates during the class debrief. This helped participants normalize their experiences; as one participant noted, “my cohort is very accepting...it was good to know that I’m not the only one who went into this assignment with biases.” Participants valued not only being able to share about their own learning, but also being able to learn about others’ experiences, and about the ways others hoped to translate their learning into their clinical practices.

Sense of increased cultural competency. All participants expressed the belief that participation in this assignment enhanced their cultural competency. Firstly, participants acknowledged that the field activity and subsequent self-reflection processes resulted in increased self-awareness, and reaffirmed the importance of having such awareness before working with clients from other cultural backgrounds. There was a sense of responsibility to become even more self-aware; as one participant expressed, “understanding myself is equally as important in that multicultural competency as understanding the group that I’m interested in.”

Participants anticipated being able to translate their learning from this assignment to their clinical practice. One participant noted that “it [the field activity] definitely broadened my understanding of this particular issue, this particular population, and feeling more comfortable within a therapy room to address it in a competent way.” Participants also believed they would be able to use their learning not only when working with individuals from their chosen population, but also when working with individuals from other minority groups. One participant described how participation in the field activity reaffirmed to her the importance of “adopting a stance of inherent curiosity” and “not making any assumptions” in her work with all clients. An increased sense of empathy towards individuals from their chosen group was also noted, which participants believed would potentially enhance the therapeutic alliance with clients. Additionally, one participant described how having increased understanding about individuals from her selected group

would help her to advocate for and empower future clients. When asked during her interview about her perceived growth from the assignment, another participant described:

To be able to hear these stories and to be able to put faces to these stories and to be able to watch that and receive that and feel something about it. Yeah, I guess there was that empathy component that I was able to expand.

Desire for more. Following their participation in the field activity, all participants voiced their desire for something more. Firstly, participants wanted to continue increasing their knowledge and understanding about their chosen group. There was an overall sense from participants that engagement in one cultural event was not enough to completely transform their beliefs or cultural competency. They also acknowledged that they had only been exposed to a select group of individuals from the larger population; as such, participants wanted broader or different types of experiences with their chosen groups and more personal connection. They had persisting curiosities and the sense that they had only just begun to tap into their learning. Furthermore, all participants expressed that they would have benefited from more time to debrief their experiences with classmates, as this was valuable for their learning. At the same time, participants acknowledged that one can never know everything about any group, and many expressed how they believed their biases, knowledge, and skills would continue to evolve and grow over time. Finally, many participants anticipated that they would be better able to engage in social justice efforts once they had expanded their knowledge even further.

Discussion

Results of this study highlight the importance of experiential learning and self-reflection in enhancing multicultural responsiveness. That is, participants attested to the positive role that stepping outside of the classroom and reflecting on their experiences had on the development of their cultural competence. More specifically, findings revealed that students' experiences culminated around the three stages of the self-reflective field activity – prior, during, and after engaging in a community event hosted by their chosen cultural minority group. These results speak to the importance of preparing students for experiential learning,

ensuring an adequate process for self-reflection, and developing cultural competence in stages.

According to participants, the introduction of the self-reflective field activity, which would require them to move outside of the classroom, was daunting at first. Students expressed anxiety and discomfort about the ideas of entering a new cultural community. It is important to consider that integrating experiential learning in a graduate level course in counselling psychology may be a new experience for students (Priester, Jones, Jackson-Bailey, Jana-Masri, Jordan, & Metz, 2008), particularly in the context of a practicum course. However, as found in this study and others (Greene et al., 2014; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Roysircar et al., 2005), the learning that accompanies this type of activity cannot be replicated in the classroom. Thus, it is critical for instructors to prepare students before they engage in this type of assignment. It can be helpful to set clear guidelines and expectations for experiential learning, temper students' expectations and concerns, and encourage them to take risks within the boundaries of what they feel capable of doing in the context of the course.

Participants in this study also discussed the critical role that self-reflection played in enhancing their learning outside of the classroom. Specifically, they discussed how helpful it was to undergo different modes of reflection (personal writing and group debriefing), as it helped consolidate and deepen their learning throughout the self-reflective field activity. Previous studies have documented the importance of self-reflection in the development of cultural competencies (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Greene et al., 2014; Roysircar et al., 2005). When bringing this type of learning into the classroom, it is vital for instructors to remember that such a reflective process can be quite uncomfortable for students, tapping into their core values and beliefs. For students to engage in this process in a safe way, time and space is needed inside and outside the classroom to support their learning. Results of this study also support the need for self-reflection throughout all steps of an experiential learning activity (Boud et al., 1985).

Moreover, participants discussed how experiential learning and self-reflection allowed them to enhance their multicultural responsiveness at different stages of the self-reflective field activity. That is, students initially expressed a desire to increase their competence, despite being

uncomfortable with the idea of moving outside of the classroom. While such discomfort is not surprising (Priester et al., 2008), the willingness and motivation to enhance cultural competence may have had an important impact on participants' overall learning. In cases where students may not be so motivated, instructors need to tread lightly between educating them about the importance of developing multicultural responsiveness in their professional roles and encouraging them to participate in experiential learning and self-reflection without causing them to disengage from the course.

Also noteworthy, participants in this study identified a few components that were critical to the development of their cultural competence. That is, they explained how having the autonomy to choose a cultural minority group and community event was helpful. It seems that providing students with agency in their own learning can empower them to make meaningful choices and engage more fully with experiential learning. Participants also reported how making an individual connection with someone in their selected group allowed them to deepen their knowledge and empathy for that person as well as the overall community. Participants discussed how attending a community event hosted by their chosen group allowed them to see and experience the diversity within that population. As such, the role and importance of intersectionality could be translated from theory to practice when students step outside of the classroom. Relatedly, it is important for instructors to remember that choosing one cultural minority group represents a point of entry to discuss diversity in all its facets.

As students completed the self-reflective field activity, they were left with a desire for more training in the area of cultural competency. That is, they shared how much they learned as well as how much they had left to discover in order to become culturally responsive professionals. The ongoing process of developing cultural competence has been well documented in the literature (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Kent Butler, & Rafferty McCullough, 2016; Sue, 2001). These findings highlight the need for multicultural training to be infused in all aspects of the curriculum (not simply in a single course) to ensure a continuity of learning for students. Should cultural competence be addressed in multiple courses throughout a training program, students will have the opportunity to build

on their previous learning and transfer their skills across multiple cultural minority groups.

Strengths and Limitations

This study represents a rare research effort to investigate the role of experiential learning and self-reflection in the development of multicultural responsiveness among graduate students in counselling psychology in Canada. Results are applicable to psychology students more broadly and transferable to other disciplines where diversity training is warranted. That being said, further research is needed to explore the specific multicultural needs of students across different areas of specialization. This study centered on an innovative teaching assignment, the self-reflective field activity, and employed multiple strategies to increase rigor. While this study can be perceived as having a small sample size, each participant contributed three sources of data to demonstrate their learning. Moreover, such a sample size is in line with the phenomenological tradition of inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). Future research is needed, beyond self-report data, to examine the mechanisms involved in the development of cultural competence.

Conclusion

Despite clear evidence that experiential learning and self-reflection are essential to the development of cultural competence, such learning remains largely absent from the counselling psychology curriculum (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Kassan & Green, 2016). Results from this study provide context for *how* students can become more culturally responsive by engaging in learning that takes them outside of the classroom and allows them to reflect on their new experiences. Moreover, findings support the infusing of cultural competence training across the curriculum as a way of consolidating learning over time. Taken together, these results highlight the responsibility and opportunity counselling psychology programs and educators have to generate culturally responsive students. However, cultural competency may not develop to its full potential through traditional teaching methods alone; rather, to truly thrive, it may require transformative pedagogy that breaks the mold of the traditional classroom.

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