

### Introduction

- The helping profession literature defines cultural competence as multidimensional and a developmental process of learning. One aspect of cultural competence requires an understanding of the macro-level dynamics, such as institutionalization, social power, and privilege (Vera & Speight, 2003).
- Teaching on privilege and social power in multicultural counseling courses illuminated a need to construct a social power awareness learning experience.
- The *Hierarchy of Social Power (HoSP)* (Warner, 2011), was developed to facilitate small group discussions on social power and increase awareness of the relevancy of multiculturalism to students' professional development.

### Research Questions:

1. Will HoSP increase students' knowledge about social power?
2. Will HoSP increase students' personal awareness about their social identities and social power?
3. Will HoSP help students understand the relevancy of social power to their professional development?
4. Will students report positive or favorable experiences with HoSP?

### Methods

**Participants.** Students ( $n = 986$ ) from two predominantly white public institutions (52% from Institution A and 48% from Institution B) participated in the *HoSP* as a class activity during the academic years of 2010-2012 (Phase 1) and 2015-2017 (Phase 2).

The sample was predominantly female (69%), Caucasian (88%), and freshman (68%). Refer to handout for Graph 1.

**Procedures.** A brief survey (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ ) and post-survey process questions measuring students' feedback were developed for the study. Based on the feedback and data analyses from Phase 1, post-survey items and the Likert scale were modified for Phase 2. The surveys were converted from paper to online during Phase 2.

**Data Analyses.** Sample t-tests compared the differences between the pre- and post-survey responses test the hypotheses. Descriptive statistics were reported for the third research question.

### Results

**Research Questions 1, 2, and 3.** An analysis of the differences between the mean scores for the pre-survey ( $M = 3.697$ ,  $SD = .428$ ) and post-survey ( $M = 3.952$ ,  $SD = .428$ ) was significantly different ( $t = 25.817$ ,  $p < .000$ ). A paired sample t-test revealed statistically significant differences for each question item (see Table 1). Thus, our results supported the hypotheses for research questions 1, 2, and 3.

**Research Question 4.** Students endorsed positive scores (e.g., scores 4 or 5 on the 5-point Likert scale) on additional post-survey process items. The frequencies ranged from 62% to 87% and the averages of these items ranged from 3.67 to 4.37 (refer to Table 2 in handout).

Table 1. The Average Mean Differences for the Pre- and Post-Survey Responses

Survey Items	Average Mean Differences	Standard Deviations	t Scores*
<i>Knowledge</i>			
1. Social power is defined by money or wealth	0.41719	1.159	11.119
2. All residents of the United States are treated equally	-0.12788	1.040	-3.799
3. There is evidence of oppressive practices in today's society	0.30915	1.047	9.107
4. Some cultural groups have more privilege and social power than other groups	0.40461	0.932	13.409
5. There is evidence of discriminatory practices in today's society.	0.25000	1.027	7.513
8. Anyone can achieve success, regardless of his or her cultural group, if he or she has ambitions and willing to work hard.	-0.36925	0.990	-11.528
<i>Awareness</i>			
6. Understanding privilege and social power will help me be a better citizen.	0.23214	1.069	6.697
9. I am aware of my many social identities	0.35616	0.977	11.226
10. I can explain how my social identities have power and privilege.	0.75815	1.086	21.529
<i>Professional Development</i>			
7. Understanding privilege and social power will help me be a better educator (professional).	0.27406	0.914	9.269

\*All t-scores are statistically significant at  $p < .000$ .

### Conclusions

- Students' responses on the survey **supports the research hypotheses that HoSP is an effective learning activity**. Our results confirm facilitators' and instructors' observations that the activity fosters learning.
- One limitation of this study is its homogenous sample. Results may differ based on a more culturally and demographically diverse sample.
- **The study's results support the use of HoSP as a learning activity to engage discussion and self- and other-awareness of social power and privilege**. Although this study focuses on college students, *HoSP* may have utility with other populations, such as high school students, graduate students, and professionals, with appropriate modifications.

### References

- Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology: Expanding our roles. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 31(3), 253-272. doi: 10.1177/0011000002250634
- Warner, C. B. (2011). Hierarchy of social power. In A. D. Coker, J. S. Pangelinan, & M. Pope (eds.), *Experiential Activities for Teaching Multicultural Counseling Classes and Infusing Cultural Diversity into Core Classes* (pp. 192-194). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.