

5

Knowledge

In this chapter, we discuss the importance of counselors' cultural knowledge about their own heritage and how that knowledge affects their understanding about how they define normality/abnormality and the process of counseling. In addition, we encourage counselors to explore the effects of oppression, discrimination, and stereotyping on the counseling process. We also explore microaggressions, which are defined as unintentional and invisible offenses that occur every day in many different kinds of conversations and interactions (Sue et al., 2007). Finally, we suggest intervention strategies that take into consideration a counselor's biases and stereotypes about clients from diverse backgrounds. We particularly challenge stereotypes, as within-group difference are often pronounced.

The concept of U.S. society as a melting pot has strongly influenced how Americans are expected to work, marry (or not), raise families, socialize, and worship or practice a religion (Laubeová, 2000). K-12 education practices in the United States focus on majority-culture values, and it is expected that these values are accepted and adopted by all students; minority groups (and their ethnic values and practices) are paid little attention in the public school arena. Most members of the majority culture (Euro-Americans) are taught that their ancestors became part of the melting pot of the New World and, for the most part, left ethnic identity behind in their countries of origin. Members of minority ethnic groups are taught that their ethnic ideals and cultural identities are not as important as their adoption of the ethnic practices of the majority culture.

How we define ourselves as "American" changes depending on cultural and political events occurring at the time (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001). Research in this area has focused, for the most part, on acculturation

and identity denial (Park-Taylor et al., 2008). Furthermore, while some researchers focus on how we define “American,” others have measured the extent to which ethnic minority group members feel as though they are perceived as “American.” Both of these concepts are important because of (a) how we experience cultural identity, (b) how we identify with the qualities we attach to being “American,” and (c) the extent to which we feel a “fit” with the majority cultural group.

One area of recent research has involved measuring the cultural identities of second-generation Americans (citizens who were born in the United States to parents who immigrated to the United States). Park-Taylor et al. (2008), for example, conducted qualitative research investigating the extent to which second-generation Americans identify with majority-culture Americans and how the perceptions of others influence the degree to which they feel American. This research is important because counselors and others in the mental health professions are learning to explore with all diverse clients their levels of racial identity, whether or not the clients were born in the United States. Some of the activities presented in this chapter and the related recommended readings focus on second-generation diversity issues.

Many students of counseling begin their professional training without much knowledge about their own cultural heritage. These individuals were raised within a majority culture that believed in the melting-pot concept. According to this concept, immigrants leave behind ethnic values and practices in order to assimilate into the dominant American culture. Many other students, however, have a great deal of knowledge about their own cultural heritage because they were raised with an understanding about the importance of valuing, believing, and practicing ethnic elements of their culture, despite the mainstream cultural pull to assimilate. Counselor trainees from both kinds of backgrounds are challenged to consider their personal and familial levels of assimilation and how these may affect their relationships with clients.

As you explore the Multicultural Counseling Competencies emphasized in this chapter, you will examine your level of how others perceive you and how your membership or lack of membership in the majority U.S. culture is an advantage or disadvantage. You will also gain an understanding of microaggressions and how you may covertly and unintentionally be committing these acts of prejudice. Students unfamiliar with the following MCCs should begin their examination of this competency area by reflecting on their own cultural self-awareness and sensitivity to their own cultural heritage. They should examine their families’ practice of ethnic rituals and values and consider whether these reflect the majority U.S. culture, and what that means either way. Advanced students

familiar with the MCCs will want to review their current level of knowledge about their own ethnicities and how it affects their counseling practice. These students should also review the concept of oppression and examine their role in discrimination toward diverse others.

This chapter focuses on the competency area of Counselor Awareness of Own Cultural Values and Biases: Knowledge. According to Arredondo et al. (1996a):

1. Culturally skilled counselors have specific knowledge about their own racial and cultural heritage and how it personally and professionally affects their definitions and biases of normality/abnormality and the process of counseling.
2. Culturally skilled counselors possess knowledge and understanding about how oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping affect them personally and in their work. This allows individuals to acknowledge their own racist attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. Although this standard applies to all groups, for White counselors it may mean that they understand how they may have directly or indirectly benefited from individual, institutional, and cultural racism as outlined in White identity development models.
3. Culturally skilled counselors possess knowledge about their social impact upon others. They are knowledgeable about communication style differences, how their style may clash with or foster the counseling process with persons of color or others different from themselves based on the A, B and C Dimensions, and how to anticipate the impact it may have on others. (paras. 5-7)

Activity 1 (low risk): "Melting Pot" Research the following terms: *acculturation, adaptation, separation, segregation, marginalization, integration, and assimilation*. Think about these terms and how they relate to your experiences with inclusion or exclusion.

Recommended reading: Berry, J. (1980). Acculturation as variety of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, model, and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview Press; • Laubeová, L. (2000). Melting pot versus ethnic stew. In *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities*. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn (available at <http://www.tolerance.cz/courses/texts/melting.htm>).



Journal Entry

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Activity 2 (medium risk): "True to Yourself" Berry (1980) describes two categories of acculturation to consider for self-examination: one's belief that it is important to retain cultural identity and one's belief that it is important to relate to the dominant group. Consider the following concepts developed by Berry and contemplate your level of agreement with them:

- If it is important to you to maintain cultural identity *and* it is important to relate to the dominant group, then you will be successful in *integration*, which is the maintenance of your ethnic identity *and* incorporation of majority identity.
- If it is important to you to maintain cultural identity but it is not important to you to relate to the dominant group, then this would be known as *separation* or *segregation*, which happens when one chooses or is forced to withdraw from the majority of society.
- If it is not important to you to maintain cultural identity, and it is not important to you to relate to the dominant group, this is known as *marginalization*, which is a lack of identification with either group.
- If it is not important to you to maintain cultural identity but it is important to you to relate to the dominant group, this is known as *assimilation*.

Assimilation occurs when you give up your ethnic identity and adopt (assimilate into) a majority identity. When we talk about the melting-pot concept, we are talking about assimilation. Immigrants to the United States over the past 200 years have mostly assimilated into the dominant culture. Only in the past 50 years has there been less focus on the melting-pot concept and more on concepts such as tolerance, acceptance, and the celebration of living in a diverse society (Berry, 1980).

Spend time reflecting on which of the above-described modes of acculturation you and your family have experienced. Write about one or two very specific experiences to explain why you would place yourself in a particular category. For example, if you are a White majority Euro-American student and your ancestors emigrated from Ireland and your family assimilated into the U.S. culture, this may mean that

they have released the identity of being Irish for the most part and adopted the majority-culture identity. Think of the ways in which you continue the assimilation that your ancestors began. Write about how you feel about this and about how it feels to know that there are other ways to acculturate, as described by Berry (1980). Write about your awareness of living in your particular acculturation category and what changes you would like to make as you grow more aware of your own ethnicity.



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Activity 3 (high risk): “Is That Normal?” Keeping in mind the acculturation category in which you live, imagine that you are working with students from a family or at a school who are Hmong and their parents were refugees when they arrived in the United States in the mid-1980s. Imagine that you hear your students talk about their parents’ multiple marriage partners or the way in which they use farm animals or the things they believe about death. Think about what you already know about Hmong and what else you might want to know about Hmong families. Research Hmong history and cultural customs. Talk to a peer student about how you imagine that you would see these lifestyle beliefs and activities as normal or abnormal and what that means. Define “normal” and “abnormal” regarding these activities and beliefs of Hmong people. Base your definitions as much as you can on the category of acculturation that you identified for yourself in Activity 2.

Alternate Activity 3: Social Justice Counseling/Advocacy Work by the Macro-Level Multicultural Counselor—“The Frank Parsons Project” (contributed by Cyrus R. Williams, Ph.D., and Michael Tlanusta Garrett, Ph.D.) Spend time volunteering during the course of the semester at a community site such as an agency that provides counseling to low-income and at-risk adolescents and adults, a food pantry, a soup kitchen, or a homeless shelter. While volunteering, take the opportunity the experience provides you to learn about oppression, institutional barriers, classism, sexism, and poverty. Explore how these factors

influence systematic oppression, power, generational poverty, and the intersections of race, class, and gender. After you complete your volunteering assignment, write down your responses to the following questions:

Privilege

- What feelings and insights occur to you as you create your list of privileges or nonprivileges?
- What important life memories and critical incidents does this activity stir up for you?
- What insights does this offer you based on what you are struggling with right now in your life?
- How might you use what you have learned from this exercise to help you better deal with your issue(s) or make some constructive life choices for yourself?

Oppression

- What does oppression mean to you, and how has it affected your life?
- Do you remember the first time you began to understand that prejudice exists?
- What is the source of most of your views toward members of cultural groups different from your own?
- How do your beliefs affect the way you interact with people from these groups?
- How has oppression affected the lives of people close to you?
- Do you consider yourself to be privileged or nonprivileged? In what ways?
- How has your privilege or lack of privilege affected your view of the world?

Class and Classism

- What does it mean in our society to be wealthy? Poor?
- How do you define success? How is success defined in your family? In your culture? In the larger society?
- What is your social class? Has it changed? If so, why?
- What have been some of your experiences with people from different social classes? What made those experiences either positive or negative?

- Who are you in terms of social class? How important is this in your personal and cultural identity, and what impact does this dimension have on how you view the world and live your life?
- How did your class-based definition of yourself develop, and who were some significant people in your life who helped to shape this definition?
- How has your view of social class been reinforced or challenged during your life?
- What does your culture say about social class?
- What do your family and community say about social class in terms of both beliefs and practice?
- How do issues of power and privilege influence your view of social class and concept of classism?
- How has your view of social class affected the way you define yourself now and at previous points in your life?
- How will your view of social class continue to affect the way you define yourself and the way others see you or treat you?
- How has your view of social class affected the way you interact with others who are similar to you versus those who are different from you at various points in your life?
- Who are some people of your own social class that you look up to, and why?
- When and how did you first become aware of classism? What was your initial reaction, and how has that reaction changed over time?
- What have your experiences with racism been, and in what ways have those experiences shaped who you are as a person as well as the issues you are dealing with now?
- What efforts have you made to work toward positive social change with regard to the classism that exists in your own life at the individual, group, and societal levels? What other kinds of efforts would you like to make?
- To what extent do you value prestige, power, economic resources, education, income, and status as signs of someone's worth?
- Have you ever stood up for someone being harassed or oppressed on the basis of social class? If not, why not? Has anyone ever stood up for you in this way?
- What is your definition of the "American Dream"?
- Can you think of anyone for whom the American Dream is not possible? If so, why?
- How does social class play into the issues you deal with every day?

Institutional Power

- In what ways do you benefit from existing institutional systems of power?
- In what ways do you suffer because of existing institutional systems of power?
- If there were one thing about existing institutional systems of power that you could change, what would it be and why? How could you go about helping to make this change?

Systemic Inequality

- In what ways do you benefit from existing systems of inequality?
- In what ways do you suffer because of existing systems of inequality?
- If there were one thing about current systems of inequality in your community that you could change, what would it be and why? How could you go about helping to make this change? How could you involve others to help make this change?

Recommended reading: Choudhuri, D. D., Santiago-Rivera, A. L., & Garrett, M. T. (2012). *Counseling and diversity: Central concepts and themes for competent practice*. Boston: Cengage/Lahaska Press; • Davis, H.V. (1969). *Frank Parsons: Prophet, innovator, counselor*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; • Parsons, F. (1909). *Choosing a vocation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin; • Sensoy-Bridgick, H. (2009). The Boston vocation bureau’s first counseling staff. *Career Development Quarterly*, 57(3), 215–224.



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Activity 4 (low risk): “Affirmation” So far in this chapter, we have been addressing group membership within an individual’s own culture and within the majority culture. Now we take this discussion a step further and examine oppression, prejudice, and discrimination through the lens of Robinson’s (1999) model on discourses. This model allows a person to examine his or her level of identification

with “dominant U.S. discourses”—that is, categories of ways in which people are demographically organized. When you are able to gain perspective on your own membership in a group based on various identities (gender, race, sexuality, and so on), you are better able to acknowledge your own prejudiced attitudes and behaviors. Think about the following discourses: race (White or not), gender (male or female), sexuality (heterosexual or GLBTQ), ability (able-bodied or disabled), class (middle class or lower class), and religion (Christian or non-Christian). Notice that the dominant U.S. discourses are affirmed, celebrated, and made visible, while the opposite discourses are negated, ignored, oppressed, and not recognized (made invisible). Think about your demographic identity and how you have either overtly or covertly discriminated against others and been overtly or covertly discriminated against.

Recommended reading: Robinson, T. L. (1999). The intersections of dominant discourses across race, gender, and other identities. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 77(1), 73–79.



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Activity 5 (medium risk): “Say What?” As we learn more about oppression and discrimination, all of us have the opportunity to explore the ways in which we have benefited from institutional, individual, or cultural racism. For this activity, think about the ways in which language is used as a way to benefit in the majority culture in the United States. Specifically, those who speak Standard English perfectly are less likely than those who do not to be stopped at a Homeland Security checkpoint or detained by a police officer if stopped for a minor traffic violation. On the other hand, those who speak English as a second language are discriminated against in a number of ways socially, vocationally, politically, and culturally. Think about comments you have heard in public, in the media, and in your own life that discriminate against someone. For example, have you ever heard someone say, “If they’re going to live here they really need to learn how to speak English”? Or “That person has such a strong accent I don’t understand what she’s

saying even though she says she's speaking English"? Or "That person talks so fast I don't understand what he's saying and he's not very good at speaking English"?

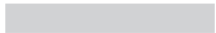
Think about experiences in your own life when you have seen discrimination based on language and write about your reflections. Then, introduce yourself to somebody in your community who speaks English as a second language and ask him or her three or four questions about experiences in school or the community and how long it took to learn English. Ask your interviewee to describe the easiest and the hardest things about learning English. Also talk to the individual about what it is like for him or her to speak up in an English-speaking group, and ask if he or she is self-conscious about having an accent.

Variation: If you are a student for whom English is a second language and you have been discriminated against, consider the preceding questions and how you have experienced oppression. Think about your own difficulties in these areas and interview someone for whom English is a first language, maybe a classmate or a community member or friend. Share with that person your thoughts and feelings about the difficulty or ease of learning to speak English in U.S. culture.

Recommended reading: Park-Taylor, J., Vicky, N., Ventura, A. V., Kan, A. E., Morris, C. R., Gilbert, T., Srivastava, D., & Androsiglio, R. A. (2008). What it means to be and feel like a "true" American: Perceptions and experiences of second-generation Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 14*(2), 128-137.



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Activity 6 (high risk): "What Did You Call That?" We understand that microaggressions are typically unintentional and invisible. According to Sue et al. (2007), microaggressions occur every day in many different kinds of conversations and interactions. Read the article recommended below and then think back to yesterday and see if you can come up with three or four examples of interactions that might be considered racial or gender microaggressions. If you are not sure if any

of the interactions you think of is an example of a microaggression, ask a classmate or friend. As you write about these interactions, think about how they affected you and how they affected the other people involved. Finish this activity by interviewing others who are racial minorities in your community and ask them about the small ways in which they have experienced microaggressions.

Recommended reading: Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286 (available at http://www.ols.edu/local_links/socialwork/OnlineLibrary/microaggression%20article.pdf).



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Activity 7 (low risk): “It Sounds Like You Are Speaking a Foreign Language!” Familiarity with the four different communication styles described by Neuliep (2006) is critical to understanding how counselors work with clients and students. These communication styles are direct/indirect, elaborate/succinct, personal/contextual, and instrumental/effective. Persons who use candid, precise, and concrete statements use direct communication styles. Those who communicate with ambiguity and abstract ideas use indirect styles. Elaborate and succinct communication styles differ in the following way: Elaborate communication styles are often metaphoric and use adjectives in abundance; succinct communication styles are concise and very concrete. Personal and contextual styles differ in that personal communication relies on the use of the first person and informality, whereas contextual communication uses the third person and formality. Instrumental styles are communication styles that are pragmatic; effective styles are focused on the affect.

Consider which of the communication styles in each of the four areas you use most often. Think of three situations in your past (personal, social, and occupational) in which you had challenging

conversations with others because they differed from you in communication style. Write about each of these three experiences in detail and then rewrite each experience in a way that illustrates your improved ability to navigate such conversations with your new knowledge about communication styles. Finally, intentionally conduct a conversation with someone—a fellow student, a friend, or someone else in your social network—who uses a very different communication style from yours. Without telling the person that you are taking part in an activity or experiment, adapt your communication style to his or hers and see how the conversation flows or does not flow.

Recommended reading: Neuliep, J. W. (2006). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



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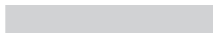
*Relevant CACREP core areas: Social and Cultural Diversity; Human Growth and Development; Helping Relationships

Activity 8 (medium risk): “Do You See What I See?” Often we cannot understand how or when we might offend someone with our actions or words if we do not have explicit examples and pictures of how we would experience the same actions or words ourselves. Watch the 1995 film *White Man’s Burden* to see an imaginative depiction of how White persons might be oppressed if the races were “flipped” in the United States and persons of color controlled government, vocational, and criminal practices in the same way that the majority culture currently controls these areas of society. Think about the ways in which you are freshly aware of some of the things you have either taken for granted (if you are White) or suffered through (if you are a member of an ethnic minority group). Write down as many examples as you can think of in which you have committed microaggressions and how you can prevent doing the same kinds of things in the future.

Recommended viewing: Bender, L. (Producer), & Nakano, D. (Director). (1995). *White man’s burden*. United States: HBO Home Video.



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Activity 9 (high risk): “Did I Do That?” Imagine the following three scenarios and think about your responses to these questions in relation to each of them:

1. Is this an example of a microaggression?
2. If so, what kind of microaggression is it?

Scenario 1: A white male colleague comes into your office and closes the door. He says that he is really trying to understand gender bias and how sexual harassment still exists in the workplace. He gives you this scenario and asks if you think it is a microaggression against women. He says that he and a male buddy will often, behind closed doors, tell jokes about women or “dumb blonde” jokes. He says, “If it’s just the two of us behind closed doors and I never repeat these to a woman, is it an offensive or discriminatory behavior toward women?”

Scenario 2: Imagine that you are in an airport and you watch a couple of African American women sitting across the way visiting with each other and waiting for a flight. As your flight is announced, you realize that you are on the same flight as the two women you have been watching. You watch them board ahead of you and you board about 10 minutes later. As you are boarding the plane, you are surprised to see these two women in the first-class section—then you realize that you are astonished that you are surprised by this. You do not say anything to anyone and you do not tell anyone about your reaction. You just sit with it as you take your seat and get ready for takeoff. You wonder how you may have appeared in terms of facial expression, eye contact, or body language. Is it a microaggression if you are just aware of a thought that you are surprised that African American women would be sitting in first class? Can you be sure about how you appeared to others?

Scenario 3: You are walking across a street at an intersection and you approach a corner where the sidewalk has a wheelchair-accommodating slant. Since you are in a hurry, you do not notice a young man in a wheelchair heading toward the same corner, and when you arrive at the corner, the man has to slow down to avoid hitting you. You notice his difficulty in getting up speed again to get

up the slant in the sidewalk, but you do nothing and continue on your way. Is this a microaggression?



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Intervention Strategy Exercises

1. Think about doing counseling with a 70-year-old Asian woman who has lived in your community since she came to the United States at the age of 20. Her presenting concern is that all her friends have passed away and it is hard for her to make new friends with people who are second-generation citizens. She complains that she has observed how immigrants these days come to the United States and retain much of their own culture. She feels cheated that she was unable to be true to her culture as she was growing up. She feels lost and sad most of the time. Think specifically about how your awareness about your own culture would enhance or get in the way of your work with this client. In what ways would your communication style work effectively with this type of client? Discuss with your instructor or supervisor the dynamics of your relationship with this client based on your self-awareness of your own culture and the relationship between your culture and the Japanese culture.

2. Create five scenarios in which you are uncomfortable about working with a client who is different from you in terms of (a) culture, (b) gender, (c) sexual orientation, (d) religion, and (e) developmental age. In these scenarios, explore ways in which your physical or behavioral presence might communicate this discomfort to the client. Process with your instructor or supervisor how you will determine your options (referral, supervision, treatment approaches, and so on). How might you work through any discomfort regarding this situation? Conduct counseling simulations with each scenario and process your reactions afterward.

3. Imagine that you are working with a client for whom English is a second language. Her communication style and mispronunciation of words cause so much difficulty for you that you secure the services of an interpreter. You then realize that working with an interpreter

adds a dynamic to the counseling sessions that you find problematic. How would you approach working with an interpreter in a way that is effective?

4. You are working with a Native American male client who is grieving the loss of his wife and using alcohol to cope. He wants to work on the addiction, while you feel it would be more beneficial to address the grief while working on the addiction to reduce the need for alcohol. In your client's tribal culture, talking about someone who has died is not allowed. How do you proceed with working on the grief while respecting the client's need to not talk about the deceased?

Discussion Questions

1. Given the attention in this chapter to the concept of normalcy, what are your thoughts about how you view "normal" behaviors in your work? What happens when you find that the use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* for diagnosis and treatment of your clients is disrespectful toward or inaccurate for their ethnic beliefs?

2. After reflecting on various communication styles, how are you more aware of your own? What role does a person's ability to speak English play in discrimination in the United States?

3. Role-play with a class partner one or more of the scenarios you have created as a result of the readings and exercises in this chapter. Discuss with your partner and others in class your reactions to new concepts and your plans to study the issues and concepts presented in this chapter.