Social and Cultural Diversity

Grand Canyon University

CNL-509 Counseling the Culturally Diverse

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**Part 1**

Cultural bias is the interpretation of situations, actions, or data based on the standards of one's own culture. A good way to begin to develop a multicultural perspective is by becoming more aware of your own culturally learned assumptions, some of which may be culturally biased (Pedersen, 2003). The past eight weeks have helped me to understand the impact my faith has made on my life and how it has influenced my perception of others. I surrendered my life to Christ at the early age of 16. I am now 43. My lifestyle, choices, and daily activities have been a pursuit to love Christ and live a life that is pleasing to God for the past 27 years! I have adopted a culture of faith in Christ that overshadows my African American ethnicity, gender, and race. My belief system, morals, and values are who I am. I was introduced to something during this course. The world! For the first time, I was forced to see things about myself that I probably wouldn't have accepted before. Right now, I can honestly describe myself as a culturally encapsulated counselor. Culturally encapsulated counselors define reality according to a narrow set of cultural assumptions and fail to evaluate other viewpoints, making little attempt to understand and accept the behavior of others. Corey, Gerald; Corey, Marianne Schneider; Corey, Cindy; Callanan, Patrick. (2014). As you can imagine, my strong belief system can possibly present a challenge if I fail to know how my assumptions, convictions, and biases are likely to affect my interactions with others. I recognize that I pose a high risk of violating professional and ethical responsibilities. Section A.4.b. Personal Values state,

Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas in which they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor's values are inconsistent with the client's goals or are discriminatory

in nature. American Counseling Association (2014). As a student counselor in training, I understand education about cultural differences is invaluable to becoming a competent multicultural and diverse counselor.

           Thankfully, I cannot recall many experiences of discrimination. However, the one that stands out to me the most was my family's involvement in a particular football program. We have been fortunate to have a son who took a considerable interest in playing football at the age of five. He is now a professional football player for the Chicago Bears. However, to participate in a more organized program and access better park facilities, we chose to enroll in a different county's athletics program. This particular park at the time was in a predominantly white area and with participation. Our arrival and participation weren't met with open opposition, but the nonverbal body language and stares were uncomfortable at times. There were apparent social divisions during the first season of participation. We spent a couple of seasons in that football program until we began to see our children encounter backlash as a result of the frustrations and disapproval of our presence. We then removed our son from that program to a more culturally familiar area.

           After relocating to Georgia, I attended a predominantly white elementary school. This was my first time attending school with white children. I was quiet and shy, but I don't recall feeling rejected by any of my classmates. During recess, we played soccer together.  That was the sport of choice, and it was the first time I was introduced to it. I remember being very competitive; I thought I was good at it, actually. But during recess we were just children playing soccer, there weren't any differences between us, just the soccer ball.

           Today, my interactions with people different from me are limited.  I am naturally quiet, and I observe my surroundings and people I'm not familiar with before letting my guard down.

 I prefer small group settings or one on one communication. During the close of our eight weeks, it has been more evident to me that my behavior is problematic and gives a very unfavorable presence. I see this the most during social gatherings or in large crowds of unfamiliar people.

**Part 2**

Covert racism is a form of racial discrimination that is disguised and subtle rather than public or obvious. Racism in today's world is less immediately discernible than it was years ago. DeRicco, J. N., & Sciarra, D. T. (2005) states indeed, the manifestation of racism is not the obvious, overt ways. Racial microaggressions are subtle or indirect statements or behaviors (intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostile or denigrating messages toward the target group.

**Part 3**

The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics serves six purposes for the professional and counselor in training. These purposes identify how the code of ethics guides the ethical obligations of its members and practicing professionals. Without hesitation, the introduction provides a clear description of the counselor's responsibility to understand the clients' diverse cultural backgrounds and explore their own cultural identities and how they affect their values and beliefs about the counseling process. ACA (2014). I am professionally and ethically required to uphold; here are a few examples. Section A.2.c. Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity informs of the responsibility to communicate information in both developmentally and culturally appropriate ways, helping bridge the linguistic and cultural divide between client and therapist. Jones-Smith, E. (2019). In addition, section A.4.b. Personal Values, counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas in which they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor's values are inconsistent with the client's. Last but not least, section C.5. Nondiscrimination Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination against prospective or current clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/ partnership status, language preference, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or any basis proscribed by law.

             Jones-Smith, E. (2019) defines treatment -plans as objectives, and counseling interventions, where goals are broad statements of desired outcomes, objectives are statements of observable and measurable outcome targets, and interventions are counseling techniques or strategies used to help the client reach the objective. A good treatment plan has a case conceptualization that includes an understanding of what the problem is, how it developed, and what steps should be taken to resolve/deal with the problem. Cultural sensitivity is not limited to one group but applies to all cultures. The therapist's ability to communicate with a client in a culturally sensitive manner, exhibit cultural competence during an assessment, and establish a therapeutic alliance is more important than having a similarity of race or ethnicity between therapist and client (Duan & Brown, 2016).

           Culturally competent counselors possess knowledge about their social impact on others. They are knowledgeable about communication style differences, how their style may clash or foster the counseling process with persons of color or others different from themselves, and how to anticipate the impact it may have on others. American Indians and Alaska Natives have a communication style that differs from that of the average American. In general, Americans are very talkative, while American Indians are usually quiet and reserved people.

              One of the first meeting aims is to establish rapport and create a climate of safety in the therapeutic situation. It is essential to be aware of and respect the differences that exist among different cultures and people in establishing trust, especially at the beginning of a therapeutic relationship.  For some, it is very foreign to speak to a stranger without first developing a rapport with the person. Some clients have a greater need than others to develop a relationship with a therapist before they make themselves vulnerable.

           An examination of the monocultural clinical orientation can pose problems for culturally competent counseling. Monocultural is defined as having familiarity with only one culture or sharing a common culture to the exclusion of others. Counselors who follow this type of orientation use a monocultural approach when working with clients from different cultures. Counselors may encounter problems with diagnosis (over-or underdiagnosing disorders), assessment, interpretation of symptoms, and chosen treatment method. (Gallardo, Yeh, Trimble, & Parham, 2012).

           Monoculturalism is one specific area I intend to overcome and not making a part of my professional practices. Through research and study, I will continue to educate myself on cultures and communities different from my own, explore my attitudes and fears about working with people who are different from me, and seek to carry out my practicum and internship in a more diverse location to gain experience with different cultures. This provides a context for understanding how diverse cultures share common ground and also how to recognize areas of I can become a more competent counselor.

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