

Social and Cultural Diversity Analysis

Michelle D. Trimmell

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Grand Canyon University

CNL-509: Counseling the Culturally Diverse

Dr. Zandra Rutledge

December 4, 2024

Introduction

Acknowledging personal biases and experiences with discrimination is critical for developing multicultural competence as a counselor. My upbringing in a conservative Catholic home in rural Virginia and experiences in both collectivist and individualistic cultures have deepened my appreciation for cultural differences. This reflection strengthens my dedication to ethical, culturally aware, and client-focused counseling practices described by the ACA.

Personal Biases and History With Discrimination

My genogram reflects biases from my upbringing, including perceptions of anti-Semitism from my father and racism from my mother and stepfather. However, I do not adopt these behaviors. Raised in a conservative Catholic home in the southern U.S. with an older European father, I experienced two distinct cultures, promoting my appreciation for diversity. My Christian values and experiences have made me open-minded, helping me recognize diversity as a gift. My nomadic lifestyle further broadened my perspective.

I spent two years in Japan, where a collectivist culture promotes conflict avoidance and is guided by societal norms (AFS-USA, 2024). These values resonated with my European father's focus on responsibility and community. In contrast to the individualism of the U.S., which promotes autonomy, Japan prioritizes modesty, respect, and group goals. In England, the culture shares similarities and differences with the U.S., emphasizing individualism and personal independence. However, some locals view therapy as an unnecessary weakness and consider Americans egotistical. Despite this, I connected well with many locals. While living abroad, I adapted to local customs, like staying quiet on Japanese trains and bowing when greeting others. I learned customs, and sometimes, it was the hard way. For example, hugging is taboo in Japan

because they protect their personal space. Though embarrassing, these experiences helped me appreciate that diversity is a gift.

Reflection of Racism and Discrimination

People can engage in racism without being openly racist. Subtle actions may show hidden biases (Sue et al., 2022). Subtle or covert racism involves negative attitudes toward other races that show up as vague discrimination, often through hints (Hanson, 2018). While many factors can lead to subtle racism, it usually stems from unconscious racist beliefs. Covert racism can appear through socially accepted behaviors that reinforce stereotypes, including microaggressions, implicit bias, racially charged language, institutional racism, or racial profiling (The General, 2024). As an American Caucasian, I recognize my advantages and reflect on my experiences with discrimination. I was teased for being from Virginia, facing labels of being uneducated, white trash, or racist. In Alabama, I experienced sexism and received less respect than my husband. In Hawaii, I was fired from a real estate job due to being a *houle*, a modern-day derogatory term for Caucasians. The Hawaiian wife also noted that she preferred a male realtor. Recently, while seeking employment, I received an ageist email, prompting a complete change in my career path to become a CMHC.

People from the same ethnic group can have significant differences in values and perceptions based on what area they grew up in, their religious preferences, socioeconomic status including education and opportunities, generational differences such as older people holding traditional values like my father, or personal life experiences. Some individuals may adopt values from the culture around them, leading to varied beliefs within the same group. Where someone lives shapes their identity, affecting how they perceive their social environment and influencing their actions (Manstead, 2018). When I visited Belfast, Ireland, I learned much about

the divide between Protestants and Catholics and their political views. From the 1960s to the 1990s, Northern Ireland experienced a significant amount of violence, with people fighting over religious and political lines and the future of the region. The divide remains in some areas where I viewed properties split by cement walls between protestant and catholic families.

Applying Ethics and Cultural Identity

1. The ACA ethics code describes multicultural counseling diversity as awareness and knowledge about self and others and applying this effectively with clients (ACA, 2014). Section A.4.b. advises counselors to respect clients' diversity by not imposing their values and seeking training to avoid conflicts with clients' goals or discriminatory values. Section C.2.a. of the ACA ethics code states that counselors should only work in areas where they are qualified, dictating that counselors expand personal awareness and skills pertinent to being culturally competent. Section E.8 emphasizes that counselors must use assessment tools cautiously and consider diverse factors, viewing test results alongside other critical information. Section H.5.d. requires counselors to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities and provide translations for non-native speakers, acknowledging that these may not always be perfect (ACA, 2014).
2. These codes form the basis of my commitment to ethical and diverse practices. They will help me avoid passing on the racist, ageist, or sexist behaviors I experienced and other prejudices, including intrinsic ones. They will also keep me self-aware and educated so that I can offer quality multicultural services and provide appropriate referrals when necessary.
3. I will strive for cultural humility by maintaining a learning mindset, acknowledging my limitations, and being curious about clients' cultures and religions, especially those different from mine (Levenson, 2018). I will use active listening to build trust, understand their perspectives, and validate their experiences. Recognizing the individuality of clients is vital, and

exploring my identity is critical (Bray, 2019). Engaging in self-education about clients' cultural backgrounds and seeking supervision or training will enhance my cultural competence. I can leverage cultural strengths and spiritual beliefs for effective counseling while remaining mindful of challenges like adaptation stress, gender roles, and mental illness (Sue et al., 2022). Treating clients individually and asking open-ended questions to understand their beliefs and values will help avoid assumptions.

4. Psychiatry Services is a journal provided by PsychiatryOnline, a digital platform provided by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). In *Implicit Bias and Mental Health Professionals*, Merino et al. (2018) explore the impact of implicit bias on mental health care and highlight disparities for vulnerable groups. This bias can limit access to care, influence diagnoses and treatments, and alter crisis responses. More research is needed to reduce implicit bias in mental health. BMC Psychology is a peer-reviewed journal part of the BioMed Central (BMC) series of journals. In the article, *Interventions Designed to Reduce Implicit Prejudices and Implicit Stereotypes in Real-world Contexts: A Systematic Review*, Fitzgerald et al. (2019) highlight that current data do not reliably identify effective interventions for reducing implicit biases. Future research should focus on successful intervention conditions, using large sample sizes, pre-registration, interdisciplinary approaches, and detailed methodologies.

5. Multicultural competence means recognizing your cultural identity and that of others. It involves humility and curiosity, listening to clients, and employing specific interpersonal skills to guide your behavior in cross-cultural situations (Williams, 2020). This also means regularly applying these skills to learn from new experiences and knowledge. I better understand how my cultural background, values, and implicit biases can influence the counseling relationship. I have learned to approach cultural differences humbly and commit to self-reflection through self-

awareness, continuing education, consulting with peers, and seeking additional resources and new developments.

Conclusion

Through self-reflection, I have gained insight into how my experiences and biases can impact my client interactions. My multicultural background gives me a unique perspective on the challenges and strengths diversity brings to counseling. I am committed to the ACA Code of Ethics and cultural humility and will prioritize ongoing education and advocacy for diverse populations. This growth enables me to embrace an inclusive and respectful environment that celebrates each person's distinctiveness.

References

- AFS-USA. (2024). *Japan: Tradition, technology, and transformation*. Intercultural Programs USA. <https://www.afsusa.org/countries/japan/>
- American Counseling Association (ACA). (2014). ACA Code of Ethics. <https://www.counseling.org/Resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>
- Bray, B. (2019, November). Multicultural encounters. *Counseling Today Magazine*. <https://www.counseling.org/publications/counseling-today-magazine/article-archive/article/legacy/multicultural-encounters>
- FitzGerald, C., Martin, A., Berner, D., & Hurst, S. (2019). Interventions designed to reduce implicit prejudices and implicit stereotypes in real-world contexts: a systematic review. *BMC Psychology*, 7(29). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-019-0299-7>
- Levenson, H. (2018). *Cultural humility: Engaging diverse identities in therapy*. American Psychological Association (APA). https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/Cultural-Humility-Intro-Sample.pdf?utm_
- Hanson, C. (2018). Subtle racism. *Huffpost*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/subtle-racism_b_14113118
- Manstead, A.S.R. (2018). The psychology of social class: How socioeconomic status impacts thought, feelings, and behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(2), 267-291. <https://www.doi.org/10.1111.bso.12251>
- Merino, Y., Adams, L., & Hall, W.J. (2018, May 5). Implicit bias and mental health professionals: Priorities and directions for research. *Psychiatry Services*, 69. 723–725. <https://www.doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201700294>

Sue, D.W., Sue, D., Neville, H.A., & Smith, L. (2022). *Counseling the culturally diverse: theory and practice* (9th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

https://bibliu.com/app/?bibliuMagicToken=2LigTmvINx47tA8FDvdcWq7bptUS1a1#/view/books/9781119861911/epub/OPS/f02.html#page_8

The General Commission on Religion and Race. (2024). *Overt and covert racism*.

<https://www.r2hub.org/library/overt-and-covert-racism>

Williams, C. (2020, March 27). What is multicultural competence and multicultural humility? and why is this important for leaders? *Legacy*.

<https://www.legacycrg.com/blog/2020/blog2>