

# **Social and Cultural Diversity Analysis**

Kerry Krauss

Department of Counseling, Grand Canyon University

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Dr. Fred Hall

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## **Introduction**

In this assignment, I will share my personal history of discrimination, including my own biases and discriminatory experiences. I will also reflect on the meanings of racism and discrimination. Then I will share how I intend to apply my cultural experiences and knowledge ethically and in line with my cultural identity.

### **Personal History with Discrimination**

I grew up in a very strict and isolated White American family. I was completely ignorant of the differences in the world around me. I was taught and believed for a long time that anyone can be successful if they work hard enough. Although my parents never behaved in a way that was discriminatory or racist, they believed that the only reason anyone didn't have a good life was that they were lazy, dishonest, and refused to get an education. It wasn't until I moved to Jordan that I began to understand that cultures and religions are very different.

I was raised alone and didn't have many interactions with other families, so I didn't like trying new foods, sharing food, or eating from other people's hands. However, in the Arabic culture, it is incredibly rude to refuse someone's food, not to share, and not to eat something given to you by hand. I offended a lot of people in my first few years in Jordan. I am a slow learner, apparently. My mother-in-law would serve me a plate of rice, lamb, and pine nuts with her own hands every time she cooked the traditional meal. She would separate the mushy, fatty meat and give me the dry meat, then spread it all over the rice with her fingers, flicking off the pieces of rice and meat that stuck to her fingernails. (I only

like to eat dry meat.) It was so gross to watch a table of people eating with their hands, rice flying everywhere, mouths full while talking loudly, stuffing huge balls of food into each other's mouths, and eating from a plate that unwashed hands and fingernails had groped. It was like watching vultures around a carcass. I remember feeling so disgusted. Over time, I somehow realized this was love in Arabic culture. They ate together, shared food, talked openly, and hand-fed each other their favorite bites. My mother-in-law knew I only liked to eat dry pieces of meat, so she would set aside pieces especially for me and separate them with her hands. I quickly learned that if she didn't use her hands on my food, something was wrong. I learned it from her, and I still do it for my kids. Love.

My experiences living abroad changed the way I look at people and their behaviors. I no longer assume that everyone must be like me, or that I can behave however I want, regardless of where I am or who I am with. Life isn't just about me, and it shouldn't be. I no longer react without first looking at the situation and the person's perspective. I give people the opportunity to be themselves without imposing or assuming my values (American Counseling Association, 2014). I made so many mistakes and offended so many people. I wish I could go back and change many of my thoughts and behaviors, but all I can do now is learn from my mistakes and not let them happen again. He who has been forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47). I no longer judge someone's experiences or circumstances based on my personal beliefs and norms, but I take the time to understand them from their perspective.

## Reflections of Racism/Discrimination

Subtle racism, also known as covert racism, is a form of racism (Ni, 2021). Because it is subtle and covert, racism might take longer to recognize and is harder to prove (Ni, 2021). A lot of times, the victim of covert racism experiences feelings of rejection, uneasiness, and exploitation without understanding why or where the feelings are coming from (Ni, 2021). A subtle racist might be completely unaware of their discriminatory beliefs and/or behavior (Ni, 2021). However, whether the perpetrator knows or not, they are still discriminating (Ni, 2021). Covert racism can be subtle jokes, healthcare disparities, profiling, hiring preferences, lending discrimination, and microaggressions (Ni, 2021). An example of covert racism is when my boss, who is Black, went into the bank wearing his glasses that have photochromic lenses. It takes them a couple of minutes to switch back to indoor lighting. Before he even got in the door, a security team met him and asked him to remove his glasses.

Different types of treatment will be effective with individuals of the same ethnic group because they may share the same ethnicity, but their experiences, beliefs, upbringings, and personalities are unique to each individual. Assuming one therapeutic approach for a specific ethnic group is negligent and reckless (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003). Suggestions in therapeutic approaches for a specific ethnic group cannot serve as a substitute for a counselor's expertise and ability to know each client's needs (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003). These suggestions are simply guides to the best available evidence for treatments for a specific

ethnic group (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003). However, counselors need to understand how and why a therapeutic approach works for a specific ethnic group and adjust and change according to their client's individual needs (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003). If a counselor chooses a treatment without understanding its purpose and effectiveness, they will cause more harm than good and have neglected the most important requirements of cultural competency, namely ongoing education and the continuous lifelong learning journey (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003). Implementing a therapeutic approach based on the client's ethnicity is a form of stereotyping. It can potentially harm them (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2003).

### **Applying Ethics and Cultural Identity**

Counselors are required to honor, embrace, and respect diversity, especially when the client's and counselor's beliefs conflict (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counselors seek training to better serve their diverse clients instead of referring them to other counselors (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counselors are aware that clients might define terms like "confidentiality" differently and adjust accordingly (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counselors understand that diverse families have dynamics different from their own and do their best to work collaboratively with the client's parents/legal guardians (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counselors select

assessments based on cultural sensitivity and effectiveness (American Counseling Association, 2014). Supervisors address multiculturalism with counselors-in-training (American Counseling Association, 2014). Educators integrate cultural competency and awareness in training (American Counseling Association, 2014). Counseling practices commit to hiring and retaining diverse faculty (American Counseling Association, 2014). Educators recruit and maintain a diverse student body (American Counseling Association, 2014). Educators integrate cultural competencies in curriculum and are aware of biases in research (American Counseling Association, 2014).

To apply the ethical requirements listed in the ACA Code of Ethics in my practice, I will seek to be aware of my own cultural values and biases (Berns-Zare, 2021). I will value my clients' perspectives and learn culturally accepted interpersonal skills (Berns-Zare, 2021). I will ask my clients questions and have open conversations about discrimination and biases (Berns-Zare, 2021). Application of cultural sensitivity requires personal dedication to ongoing education and personal growth, as well as a willingness to challenge my beliefs (Berns-Zare, 2021). Referral isn't an option unless I am unable to meet the client's needs; wrongly referring a client could inflict harm (American Counseling Association, 2014). As a counselor, I need to do everything in my power to effectively serve my client (American Counseling Association, 2014).

A strong therapeutic alliance between clients and counselors has a significant effect on counseling outcomes (DeAngelis, 2019). Person-centered therapy is one of my favorites for building rapport and a strong therapeutic alliance with the client. However, building rapport can be done while implementing most counseling theories. Building rapport

requires the counselor to be calm and accepting, to ask questions and wait patiently for the answers (Lonczak, 2021). To build rapport, the counselor should focus on the client without criticizing them and show genuine concern for the client's well-being (Lonczak, 2021). It also means that the counselor needs to treat the client like a partner, allow them to lead the exploration of their experiences and emotions, and hold them in unconditional positive regard (Lonczak, 2021). It doesn't matter who the client is; it matters who the counselor is. If the counselor is respectful, loves people and wants to serve them, is self-aware, seeks to learn and challenge their beliefs, and is genuinely empathetic, they can work with any gender, religion, sexual or gender orientation, race, socioeconomic status, disability status, or culture.

### **Professional Journals on Treatment Practices and Cultural Biases**

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). Quick guide for clinicians: Improving cultural competence. Based on TIP 59. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma16-4931.pdf>
- Hook, J. N., Davis, D., Owen, J., & Deblaere, C. (2017). *Cultural Humility: Engaging Diverse Identities in Therapy*. American Psychological Association. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18phh2w>

### **Scholarly Sources of Potential Counselor Cultural Bias within Practice**

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## **Multicultural Competence**

Multicultural competence is the ability to interact with individuals from a different culture and/or have different values and beliefs while simultaneously respecting, accepting, and honoring them (Berns-Zare, 2021). To apply it successfully to my development as a counselor in training, I will continuously challenge and explore my beliefs and biases, seek training and ongoing education in cultural competence, and engage with diverse communities and individuals.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my personal experiences helped me understand cultural diversity and the value of respectfully and sensitively embracing differences. Not only is this honoring to me and others, but it also creates a strong therapeutic alliance that almost always leads to a positive outcome. However, multicultural competence is not for the faint of heart; it requires work. I need to constantly seek out ways to serve diverse cultures, educate myself, and challenge my own thoughts, behaviors, and biases.

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