

*Overcoming
Unintentional Racism:
Striving for Cultural Competency
in Helping Professions*

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Objectives

- Gain awareness of own social identity group memberships and impact across differences
- Examine some of the effects of unintentional racism in helping relationships and some common UR thoughts/behaviors
- Learn indicators of a professional who is striving for cultural competency and to be an ally
- Explore specific clinical considerations related to culturally competent practice
- Develop action plan for disrupting personal, professional or organizational racism and share resources for future study

Competencies

- DOH Counselor Competencies:
 - Cultural Diversity
 - Professional Ethics and Responsibilities
 - Service Coordination
- NAADAC Code of Ethics:
 - Principle #1: Non-Discrimination
 - “The NAADAC member shall not discriminate against clients or professionals based on race, religion, age, gender, disability, national ancestry, sexual orientation or economic condition.”

Competencies Cont...

- Principle #12: Societal Obligations

“The NAADAC member shall to the best of his/her ability actively engage the legislative processes, educational institutions, and the general public to change public policy and legislation to make possible opportunities and choice of service for all human beings of any ethnic or social background whose lives are impaired by alcoholism and drug abuse.”

Limitations

- Lifetime process: no instant “competence”
- Breadth and depth
- Raising consciousness is “an inside job”
- Challenges and risks involved in exploring this topic in mixed groups—may be first time
- Complex subject with emotionally charged history and meaning
- Success will depend on *RISK* and *ACTION*...

“No one goes anywhere alone, least of all into exile—not even those who arrive physically alone, unaccompanied by family, spouse, children, parents, or siblings. No one leaves his or her world without having been transfixed by its roots, or with a vacuum for a soul. We carry with us the memory of fabric, a self soaked in our history, our culture; a memory, sometimes scattered, sometimes sharp and clear, of the streets of our childhood.”

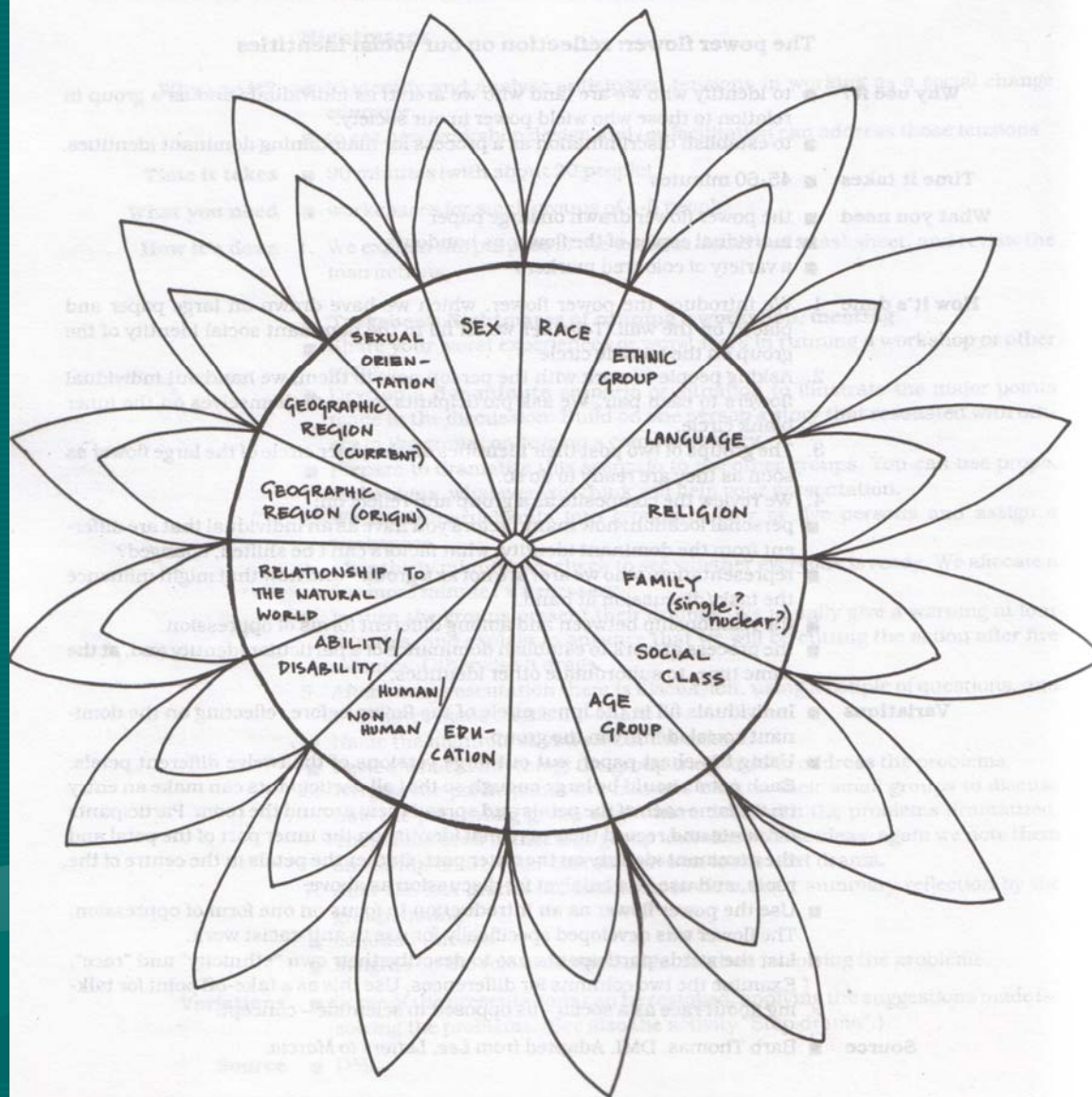
~*Paolo Friere* (1994)

Reflection Exercise:

Exploring and learning about each other's social identities while reflecting on our own experiences...

- Think about a time you felt different from the people around you. How did you feel about it?
- What were your first experiences recognizing or understanding your racial/ethnic identity?
- How do you see people of different racial/ethnic groups treated differently from your own racial/ethnic group? When did you first realize this? Did the significant adults in your life help to interpret those experiences, and if so, how?
- If you have ever been a target of racial stereotyping, discrimination, or harassment, describe this time. How did you feel about it?
- Describe an incident in which you were perceived as being racially prejudiced. Describe an incident in which you disrupted or took action against racism
- Describe a time when you felt proud of your racial/ethnic identity.

The power flower



How did we get here?

- Pre-Contact
- 1st Contact
 - Shock, genocide, grief, disease/alcohol
- Colonization
- Economic Competition
- Invasion/War
 - Loss, extermination, refugee symptoms
- Treaties
- Subjugation/Reservation
- Boarding Schools
 - Destroyed family systems, px abuse, rape, prohibited language & religion, forced assimilation
- Allotment
- Relocation/Termination
 - Urban areas, prohibited language, no rights, loss of community and governmental systems

Historical Trauma

“The collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide.”

~Dr. Yellow Horse Brave Heart

- Effects:
 - ^ child abuse, domestic/lateral violence, shame/guilt/anger, suicide, anxiety, stress, psychiatric and substance related disorders, depression, obligation... “soul wound”

See: Duran & Duran, Walters, Ball, others...

Behavioral Consequences of Unintentional Racism

- History and power dynamics (transposition)
- Survivors' child complex
 - Fixation to trauma, attempts to resolve past...
- Disenfranchised grief
 - Losses cannot be openly mourned
- Drop-out rates/participation
- Diagnosis (inaccurate or over or both)
- Staff assignment
- Tx planning/research
- Utilization/advocacy needs
- Misunderstood family dynamics and cultural beliefs

Consider Effects of UR:

- “Colorblindness”
- Overconfidence/over identification
- Stereotyping/dualistic thinking
 - Acculturation and assimilation
- Individual vs. collective identity
- Who gets named: the creation and perpetuation of “otherness”
- “Teach me” syndrome: risk, power, invasive questioning
- “Reverse” discrimination/affirmative action

Consider Effects of UR:

- Ignorant of—or ignoring—
organizational/professional culture and history
- Culture Vulture
- Collusion/passivity
- “Multiethnic” practice (agenda)
- Exclusive language and examples
- “Politically correct” (agenda)
- Other examples?

Some Considerations

- Physical space
- Posture/body language
- Sharing the expert role
- Tone/volume of voice
- Cultural values: family in healing, time, agendas
- Motivation
- Use of self disclosure
- Use of jargon
- Avoid invasive questions
- Use of statements as questions— “help me understand....”
- Consider translations, interpretations and contexts
- Inclusive language and examples
- Other ecological factors

Striving for Competency...

- Accepts the fact that they have much to learn about others and themselves; takes responsibility for learning about own and target group heritage, culture, and experience and how oppression works in everyday life—is aware of differences, not “colorblind”
- Feels good about own social group membership; is comfortable and proud of own identity—aware of own cultural values and contextual forces influencing choices and feelings

- Listens to and respects the perspectives and experiences of target group members; integrates into learning and tx objectives—has the ability to alter or adapt practice to the cultural context of the patient (use of skills in cultural context)
- Develops cultural knowledge and considers how learned and shared
- Views diversity as resource—*not* as a problem to be solved
- Acknowledges unearned privileges as a result of agent status and works to eliminate or change privilege into rights that target group members also enjoy

- Recognizes that unlearning oppressive beliefs and actions is a lifelong process, not a single event, and welcomes each learning opportunity
- Is willing to take risks, make mistakes, try new behavior and act in spite of own fear and resistance from other agents
- Is willing to be confronted about own behavior and attitudes and consider change—
organizationally, is willing take cultural assessment and advocate for change
- Practices self care

- Understands the connections among all forms of social injustice
- Believes they can make a difference by acting and addressing diversity issues in personal and professional life
- Considers: profession, self, program, patient
- Has ability to obtain culturally relevant information in the patient/caregiver relationship
- Understands that helping and healing are culturally specific activities
- Other indicators?

Confronting Oppression:

(Griffin, P. & Harro, B., 1992)

- Actively Participating
- Denying
- Recognizing: No Action
- Recognizing: Action
- Education Self
- Educating Others
- Supporting, Encouraging
- Initiating, Preventing



Supporting Oppression

Confronting Oppression

Next Steps:

- What action do you want to take to increase cultural competency and/or disrupt racism in your practice/organization?
- What resources or materials, if any, would you need to achieve your goal?
- How/where can you get those resources?
- What behaviors or steps would taking this action entail?
- What is a realistic timeline for carrying out the steps involved in this action plan?
- What hazards or risks are involved?
- Is this action worth taking the risk(s)? What might it cost?
- What obstacles might you encounter?
- What could you do to overcome these obstacles?
- What supports do you have?
- Where could you find more support?
- How could you evaluate your success?

Resources / References

- <http://xculture.org/>
- <http://ethnomed.org/>
- www.tolerance.org
- <http://www.diversityrx.org/>
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- Film: “The Way Home,” Butler, S. Oakland, CA.: World Trust, 2002.



Thank You!
I Honor Your Work and
Commitment!

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