Culturally Competent: Racial- & Ethnic-Sensitive Practice

Presented by Kelsi Rammell, BSW Student
& Ebony L. Hall PhD, MDIV, LMSW
Tarleton State University Social Work Program

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Introduction

• NASW Stance on Culture and Competency within the Profession
  • “seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity” as well as be “mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity” (NASW Delegate Assembly, 2008, p. 5).
  • The profession of social work relies on practitioners to “increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice... contribute to the knowledge base of the profession” (p. 6).
Defining Key Terms

- **Culture** (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 295)
- **Competence** (NASW, 2001, p.7)
- **Cultural Competency** (NASW, 2000, p. 61)
A Process of Learning

• The importance of self-awareness
  • Johari Window Model (Luft & Ingham, 1955)

• Phinney’s (1992) Three-stage Ethnic Identity Model
The National Association of Social Workers’ National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity (2001)

- **Elements of Cultural Competency**
  - value diversity
  - have the capacity for cultural self-assessment
  - be conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
  - institutionalize cultural knowledge
  - develop programs and services that reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures
Recognizing Race and Ethnicity

• Population served versus population serving
• Recognition of differences
• Realistic practices versus practitioner’s level of comfort and knowledge

• What role does race and ethnicity play in terms of competent practice, if any?
Acquiring Skills for Practice

- What we must continue to integrate in learning environments:
  - “[e]ach group has its own unique history, social context, and interface with White America” (Inglehart & Becerra, 2007, p. 52).
  - “colorblind” or “melting pot” philosophies are a disservice
  - use of stereotypical categorizing of groups based on ethnicity can be unhelpful
Assimilation & the Melting Pot
Colorblindness

TRANSLATION:
I’m going to use my place of privilege
to refute and deny the sufferings of
those who do not have
white privilege
while at the same time
erasing
their personal
and cultural history.
Ethnic-Sensitive Practice Approach

• “[S]tructural, institutional, and social factors that shape the minority group experience” (Inglehart & Becerra, 2007, p. 57).
• Acknowledging racial and ethnic differences
• Equipping students and furthering educating practitioners
• Intentionally incorporating race and ethnicity as part of framework
Our Research

• Qualitative Study
• Purpose:
  • To explore the perception of differences when working with clients of color and clients who are white.
Methodology

• Pre-developed questions on race and ethnicity
• Demographic questions
• Define race and ethnicity in their own words
• Rank and rate their perceived competency when working with clients based on the client’s race and ethnicity
• 12 qualitative questions in nature and assessed various areas of cultural competency as it specifically related to race and ethnicity.
Sampling Methods & Data Collection

- Purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling
- Sources: online databases, personal contact, and the use of professional referrals
- Hard copy survey
- Method of facilitation: telephone, email, postal service and in person
Participant Demographics

- Seventy-two licensed social workers
  - 65% (n=47) White (n=47)
  - 86% (n=62) Female (n=62)
  - 75% (n=54) in practice for four or more years
- Age range:
  - 25 - 75 years of age
- License Types:
  - 59% (n=40) Licensed Master Social Workers
  - 25% (n=17) were Licensed Clinical Social Workers
  - 19% (n=13) were Licensed Bachelor Social Workers
- Range of Practice areas
Measurement

- Specifically focused on four questions to assess the perceived cultural competency of practitioners
- Three level coding analysis (Hahn, 2003)
  - The first level of analysis produced over 70 codes for each of the questions
  - The second level analysis produced at least 14 categories.
  - Third level: collapsed categories into themes for each of the questions
What are some similarities that you have observed with your clients of color and clients who are white?

• All human
• Appreciative
• Courage and resilience
• Desires to be better
• Economic Status
• Everyone needs help
• Family history
• Genuineness
• Independence
• Irrelevant
• Love for children
• Respect
• Same need
• Same areas of help
• Share fear
• They are all victims

Over 70 codes

What are some differences that you have observed with your clients of color and clients who are white?

• Cultural values
• Different strategies
• Economic ties
• Education
• Entitlement
• Family ties
• Level of graciousness
• Mentality
• No differences
• Privilege and treatment
• Race card
• Religious ties
• Responsiveness
• Systems of oppression
• Trust
• Uniqueness

Themes

1. Irrelevance of comparing groups
2. Limited or no similarities
3. Positive similarities
4. Universal need amongst clients

Themes

1. Build rapport differently
2. Client uniqueness
3. Cultural and familial differences
4. No differences
What have been your practice experiences working with clients of color?

What have been your practice experiences working with clients who are White?

Over 70 codes

Categories

- Appreciative
- Appreciative diversity
- Barriers
- Competent in work
- Culture
- Differences
- Education
- Familiar
- Field of work
- Importance of culture
- Irrelevant
- No distinction by color
- Positive
- Positive and Negative

Themes

1. Different experiences
2. Positive experiences
3. Positive and negative experiences
4. Race is not a factor

- Client uncomfortable
- Different and enjoyable
- Easy to build rapport
- Entitled
- Feel most competent
- Judgmental
- Mixed reviews
- More prone to domestic violence
- More receptive
- No distinction by color
- Open
- Positive
- Family system in tact
- Think don’t need help
- Try to not intimidate
- Unapproachable
- Understanding
- Wanted reassurance
- Wanted a handout
Measurement

• All qualitative data of themes and demographics were converted into numerical values.
• Researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to measure descriptive information and frequencies, and comparisons by group.
• Primary focus on observing how participants perceived their work with clients based on race and ethnicity.
Analysis

• Practice experiences with clients of color
  • Fifty percent (n=36) of participants reported having different experiences when working with clients of color.
  • Over 20% (n=16) reported positive experiences when working with clients of color.
  • Over 20% (n=17) reported they do not consider race a factor when working with clients of color.
  • Less than 5% (n=3) reported both positive and negative experiences with clients of color.
Analysis

• Practice experiences with clients who are White
  • Decreased from 50% to 29% (n=21) of participants reported having different experiences when working with clients who are white.
  • Decreased minimally from over 20% to 19% (n=14) reported positive experiences when working with clients who are white.
  • Increased significantly from 20% to 39% (n=28) reported race is not a factor when working with clients who are white.
  • Decreased from less than 5% to 1% (n=1) reported both positive and negative experiences with clients who are white.
Analysis

• Similarities between clients of clients of color and clients who are white
  • Fifty eight percent (n=42) of participants reported clients of color and clients who are white had a universal need
  • Nineteen percent (n=14) of the participants reported limited or no similarities
  • Sixteen percent (n=11) of the participants reported positive similarities
  • Only 7% (n=5) indicated similarities between groups were irrelevant to their work with clients
Analysis

• Differences between clients of color and clients who are white
  • 40% (n=29) of the participants indicated that clients of color and clients who are white differ in the way they build rapport
  • 29% (n=21) of the participants indicates that clients have an individual uniqueness in how they differ
  • 24% (n=17) indicated some type of cultural and/or familial difference
  • 7% (n=5) indicated that there were no differences between clients of color and clients who are white.
**Group Comparisons**

*Comparisons of Groups by Degree and Racial Identity.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No differences</th>
<th>No similarities</th>
<th>Race not a factor&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Race not a factor&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Race not important&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW degree</td>
<td>4.1% (n=3)</td>
<td>4. % (n=3)</td>
<td>4.1% (n=3)</td>
<td>2.7% (n=2)</td>
<td>4.1% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW degree</td>
<td>18% (n=13)</td>
<td>12.5% (n=9)</td>
<td>30.5% (n=22)</td>
<td>18% (n=13)</td>
<td>13.8% (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both degrees</td>
<td>1.3% (n=1)</td>
<td>1.3% (n=1)</td>
<td>4.1% (n=3)</td>
<td>2.7% (n=2)</td>
<td>1.3% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16.6% (n=12)</td>
<td>16.6% (n=12)</td>
<td>19.4% (n=14)</td>
<td>16.6% (n=12)</td>
<td>18% (n=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>None indicated</td>
<td>None indicated</td>
<td>2.7% (n=2)</td>
<td>None indicated</td>
<td>1.3% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentage based out of the total number of 72 participants. Scores do not total 72 because columns are based on specific themes that presented as important findings.

<sup>1</sup>Refers to race not being a factor when working with clients who are white.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to race not being a factor when working with clients of color.

<sup>3</sup>Refers to race as unimportant when working with any client.
Discussion

- **Important to Note:** Majority (90%; n=64) of the participants were unable to identify their ethnicity.
  - Of those who were able (n=5), they provided clear reference to an ethnic origin of French, German, Irish, and/or Italian.
- Teaching racial- and ethnic-sensitive practices to future practitioners
  - The understanding of race versus ethnicity
  - The impact of socialization (Dot exercise & Herman grid)
- The “colorblind” philosophy
- The concept of “white privilege”
“It is critical that both white and nonwhite practitioners understand the dynamic of race within the therapeutic process. Research indicates that white Americans generally do not spend much time thinking through white privilege and their belonging to the white racial group. In sharp contrast, many ethnic and racial minority clients often prefer to see ethnically and racially similar practitioners.”

(Furman et al., 2009, p. 7)
Discussion

• Internalized racial inferiority
• Internalized racial superiority
• Historical understanding of disadvantaged and oppressed groups
• Intentional application based on historical knowledge
• The role of critical thinking in schools of social work
Future Research

• **Micro:**
  • Social workers must be aware of their cultural competency when working one on one with clients.

• **Mezzo:**
  • Social workers who are working with families or groups who are of a different racial or ethnic background need to be aware of the differences that may be present.
  • Practitioners must keep cultural attitudes in mind while working with families and groups in order to build trusting relationships.
  • Social work programs
  • Agencies

• **Micro:**
  • Cultural competency that intentionally integrates race and ethnicity is vital for the entire profession.
  • clients from diverse backgrounds
  • equitable services and treatment
  • further education on race and ethnicity
Recognizing culture as it relates to race and ethnicity: What does it mean for who you are serving? What does it mean for you?
Barriers to culturally competent practice

ASSUMPTIONS TO AVOID

• “Melting pot”
• American excitement
• Behavior explained by culture/disability
• “Color blind” approach
• Words have the same meaning for everyone
• Clients think like the worker
• Clients understand the worker role
• Community does not include us
Conclusion

• Emphasizes integrating racial and ethnic identity
• Utilizing ethnic-sensitive practices
• Inclusiveness and validation of “whites”
• Accurate understanding of historical impact on various ethnic groups
• Acknowledgement, assessment, and assurance of using self-awareness as a tool for effective racial- and ethnic-sensitive practices
References