Race, Ethnicity and the Labour Market

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1.   Introduction

'Race' continues to be a key aspect of inequality in the UK. In this resource you will find materials relating to the broader context of understanding inequality, implications of this for practice, multi-cultural counselling together with additional resources. The material outlined here is not intended to be comprehensive, rather it offers some possible ways of examining issues relating race, ethnicity and the labour market.

Terminology

Terminology is a frequently changing and highly disputed area, with changes in the acceptability of different terms in relation to race/ethnicity having important consequences. In biological terms, the notion of separate human races has long been discredited with 'social race' increasingly being used to refer to groups of people sharing common characteristics. Against this backdrop it is recognised that categories used in research reflect an understanding of race which is not necessarily shared, and which certainly changes over time. Gordon (1992) refers to this as the 'racialisation' of ethnic and racial data. Those with an interest in this area are advised to read his work, which explains more about this, in order to help them make sense of many of the reports within this section. In brief, Gordon argues that research in the area of race and ethnicity accepts that there is a degree of inequality based on race or ethnicity that can be quantified and that it is possible to devise categories based on difference that are meaningful. He concludes that: *'whilst statistical information can play an important role in identifying patterns of inequality and the processes that produce them ... it is important to keep in mind that these statistics do not just reflect facts that are 'out there' waiting to be discovered, but are the results of many decisions and, of course, can be open to very different interpretations'* (Gordon, 1992:33)

Changing patterns of experience within and between minority ethnic groups

Clarke, J. & Speeden, S. (2001) [Then and now: change for the better] document how progress has been made but more still needs to be achieved: *'Britain has changed since 1976. The country has passed through a period of major economic and social transformation, which has affected the development of racial equality policy and practice. Racial discrimination has persisted and, in some cases, emerged in key areas of social and economic life. British society has failed to deliver equality of opportunity and social inclusion to people from ethnic minorities.'* (Clarke and Speeden 2001)

The Cabinet Office (2003) [Ethnic minorities and the labour market] report points out that *'all ethnic minority groups - even those enjoying relative success, such as the Indians and Chinese - are not doing as well as they should be, given their education and other characteristics.'* (CO 2003:4). In the various linked documents and resources given, you will find statistics and narrative that suggest minority ethnic groups continue to be disadvantaged despite the passing of the original Race Relations Act (1976).

Platt, L. (2006) Understanding ethnic group differences in Britain: the role of family background and education in shaping social class outcomes in an IPPR report highlights how some members of minority ethnic groups (those identifying as Caribbean, black African, Indian or Chinese or other) with working class parents are more likely to end up in professional or managerial class families than white people of non-migrant but otherwise similar backgrounds. This means that Indians are now doing 'better' than the white majority. However, Pakistanis showed lower levels of upward mobility than their white British counterparts, and this disadvantage is exacerbated when their educational qualifications are taken into account. Thus there is not one 'story' that can be told for the children of immigrants. Instead, it is the way in which particular levels of class background and educational achievement intersect with ethnic group that seems critical.

At the time of the 1991 Census labour market disadvantage for ethnic minorities could be clearly seen: see, for example, Karn (1997) and Heath and McMahon (1997). The latter authors highlight how many members of minority ethnic groups, even if they were second generation, suffer a marked 'ethnic penalty' in the labour market, compared to UK-born whites, in terms of converting their similar qualifications into salaried jobs and in avoiding unemployment. The same authors, Heath, A. and McMahon, D (1999), in Ethnic Differences in the Labour Market : the role of education and social class origins examine this issue further and show that what is clear is that rather different processes of inclusion and exclusion operate in different areas of the labour market. For example, 'in competing for positions in the salariat qualifications are of primary importance and highly-qualified Chinese are relatively successful and compete on more or less even terms with the British-born whites. However, within the manual labour market the Chinese are not notably successful in gaining access to skilled work and avoiding unskilled jobs or unemployment' (p. 27). There are also marked variations in the economic activity and employment patterns of the ethnic groups in Great Britain, even though overall ethnic minority groups have lower rates of labour market participation; suffer higher rates of unemployment than white people; are more likely to be self-employed (Owen et al., 2000).

Overall then, there is variation in the experiences between and within different minority ethnic groups and within different parts of the labour market (see also, Aldridge and Tuckett, 2003). For example, it is important not to portray a uniform 'black experience' as this would be 'to oversimplify the everyday processes of exclusion and to minimise the creativity of response' (Cross, 1991, p. 311). Blackburn et al. (1997) reinforce this: ethnic minorities suffer disadvantages, but 'their experiences are not homogeneous and they are not passive victims' (p. 282). This would also fit with the pleas of Cohen (1992) and Drew (1995) to treat race issues as complex and multi-faceted phenomena, within a broader framework for understanding racism and ethnicity (Hall, 1992).

The TUC Report (2003) Black voices at work is based on a series of in-depth interviews with black workers and ethnic minority workers, conducted for the TUC in spring 2003. One key message of the report is that real progress has been made in combating race discrimination at work over the past 10 years, but that racism persists, often in disguised forms. Those interviewed acknowledge gains made, but also report being passed over for promotion, putting up with racist language, managements only paying lip service to equal opportunities policies, and more subtle discrimination.

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2.   Implications for practice

How can guidance practice take account of ethnic diversity?

This section contains frameworks for practice that have been developed for use with minority ethnic client groups and some discussion of these issues that took place on the NGRF.

Multicultural Counselling and Career Theory

Most career counselling and guidance practitioners would readily acknowledge that each client is unique, and that individual differences must be accepted and respected. However, practice often reflects the assumption that a particular interviewing approach is transferable across a wide range of clients. Multicultural counselling challenges this view. Multicultural counselling defines 'culture' as being multidimensional. That is, 'culture' should not only denote race and ethnic origin, but take into account other variables. More information can be found in the next section of this document on multicultural counselling. Some approaches have been developed specifically for particular racial and ethnic minority client groups and these are discussed below.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) argue that current career theory may be inadequate for large numbers of clients because of the questionable relevance of the concept of career development, because of the

historic neglect of large groups of the population and because it has failed to take proper account of structural and cultural factors (p. 103). They suggest that we are ignorant about the relevance of career theory for non-white and working-class clients, because we have never tried to find out (p. 105).

`It is fair to say that we know almost nothing about the career choice process in the majority of the population: those who do not attend college, are not white, and are of lower socioeconomic status' *(Fitzgerald and Betz, 1994, p. 106).*

Important issues related to assessment in careers practice with racial and ethnic minority clients are identified by Betz and Fitzgerald (1995). A summary of the main points follows:

a) Career Counselling must take place within a cultural context

The Western value system that many believe is embedded in guidance practice is finally being questioned. It is important that practice should include knowledge of and respect for the values of other cultures and that practitioners should constantly review their own values and ethnicity. This is essential because important variables in career counselling may co-vary with ethnicity. For example, the approach a practitioner adopts may be individualistic (i.e. assume choice and control lies with the individual client), and this may clash with the strong family values held by clients from some minority ethnic groups. Additionally, this type of self-awareness on the part of the practitioner is likely to encourage the examination of factors not previously considered. For example, decision-making styles demonstrated by some clients could be viewed as passive and/or dependent; with a working knowledge of different value systems, this could be reconceptualised more positively as indicative of a `collectivist orientation'.

b) Avoidance of Stereotyping

The importance of <u>within</u> as well as <u>between</u> group differences should be acknowledged. We must not assume that ethnic minority groups are homogeneous, nor that ethnic group coincides with racial group.

c) New Variables

New variables need to be incorporated into a culturally competent approach to careers counselling as follows:

- racial identity development: includes concept of client preferences regarding counsellor ethnicity; perceptions of the openness of the occupational structure; client responsiveness to counsellor suggestions. Of course, the racial identity of each practitioner affects the responses of careers counsellors to certain clients.
- acculturation: refers to the level of acceptance/integration into the self of the values of the dominant culture.
- language usage: English as a second language. Extent to which an individual is able to use his/her native language influences assessment and intervention in careers counselling.

d) Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Race and gender must be considered in interaction. In research, there has been a tendency to separate. Minority women, in this sense, have been invisible. The reality of the situation of ethnic minority women is one of double disadvantage - socially and economically, referred to as `double jeopardy'. An important feature of this interaction is the extent of differences in gender-role socialisation and expectations of women's adult roles across groups. For example, the extent to which women are expected to work outside the home as adults differs across groups. An important task for careers guidance may be to help clients to integrate the sometimes contradictory forces of cultural values and personal beliefs and goals.

Gainor and Forrest's model (1991) is proposed as a possible way in which women can be helped to integrate rather than separate their gender and racial identities. It includes helping clients towards knowledge of themselves first as female, second, as a member of an ethnic minority and third, as an unique individual.

The study of women's career development is also useful. For example, it can help with an understanding of:

- the need to value the family as well as career;

- perceptions of occupations being closed to women;

- the perniciousness of the `Old Boys'' Network;

- the difficulty of finding quality child care;

- the susceptibility of all women to sex discrimination, sexual harassment and violence.

Overall, the practitioner needs to be familiar with both women and minority ethnic group career development.

e) Inadequacy of Current Knowledge

Insufficient research has been carried out into the career development of minority ethnic groups. For example, measures of work values don't necessarily include the value systems of cultural groups. Also, the whole process of test administration and interpretation needs to be considered within a cultural context (e.g. it was found that Asian Americans more likely to live within an authoritarian family - less likely to challenge authority in a test situation). The next steps for research and practice are identified as:

Research: This needs to start to identify ethnic group membership of research participants so that an evaluation of the representatives of the findings and potential relevance to a particular group can be made.

Practice: Practitioners need to increase their awareness of styles of communication, values regarding the importance of the family, impact of fluency in language and expectations of counselling, among other dimensions. Telling an Asian client `it's your life, do what you want to do - make your own decisions' illustrates the `missed by a mile' counselling technique. The practitioner needs to help clients evaluate the functional versus dysfunctional aspects of traditional values and beliefs, and to make decisions that include elements of both self-values and respect for traditional beliefs.

2) CAREER MODEL FOR MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

Fouad and Bingham (1995) propose a `culturally appropriate career counseling model' (p. 344). In order for practitioners to implement this model successfully, they argue that practitioners must:

1. become multiculturally competent, as defined by Sue et al (1995, p624).

2. achieve an understanding of worldviews (Sue & Sue, 1990, p137).

3. acquire knowledge about racial ethnic identify development. Cross (1994, p122) is proposed as one such relevant model of ethnic identity development. This consists of a four stage development process:

Pre-change: the individual does not want to be described in racial terms, preferring to be seen as a human being. Being Black is somewhat insignificant.

Encounter: the individual begins to question the previous belief system of stage 1. Feels they have been mis-educated, and that they are not Black enough.

Transition: a period of metamorphosis, when the old identity and the emerging identity do battle. A period of extreme highs and lows. High energy, when the enemy is identified as White people and White society.

Internalisation: as the individual's life situation changes, s/he will begin to question such unequivocal stands and will become more internally secure, more pluralistic, and more appreciative of all ethnic groups. The person eventually develops greater comfort and the new identify is internalised.

The client's stage of development may have implications for his or her career aspirations and expectations, so it is important for the careers practitioner to assess the stage of development of minority ethnic clients.

Culturally Appropriate Career Counselling Model

Fouad and Bingham (1995, p344) have developed a seven step model for working with minority ethnic clients:

Step 1: **establish rapport/culturally appropriate relationship.**

Listen and observe clients' comments, learn how they wish to be related to; respond to client's main words and construct and check out statements with the clients.

Step 2: **identification of the career issues that the client brings: cognitive, social, emotional (e.g. panic attacks at work), environmental (e.g. working conditions, co-workers), behavioural (e.g. client being short-tempered at work), external barriers (e.g. discrimination, oppression, racism, sexism, financial concerns).**

Critical to the model is the explicit definition of external barriers because, for many minority clients, career choice is a matter of balancing those factors within their control with those outside their control.

Step 3: **assess the impact of cultural variables on career issues.**

For example, the impact a decision might have on the client's family and consequences for the client if s/he disappoints their parents. The meaning gender might have for the client.

Step 4: **set culturally appropriate processes and goals.**

For example, inappropriate goals may include career choices based on self-actualization rather than on pragmatism.

Step 5: **determining and implementing a culturally appropriate intervention: cognitive, social emotional, environmental, behavioural, external barriers).**

For example, use group intervention with those minority members who operate in a framework that is more collectivistic than individualistic. Involve the family in career decision making. Use race and gender appropriate role models to expand awareness of opportunities. Present interventions in native languages when appropriate and possible. Also, depending on the racial identity of the client, the most effective counselling will be conducted by a counsellor of the same race or ethnicity.

Step 6: **helping the client make a culturally appropriate decision.**

Clients may be making career choices, deciding to adjust their work roles or deciding they need more information. As they begin to implement plans, some may choose to cycle back through career counselling to work on different goals. Practitioners need to be open to this process since many minority clients will not see counselling as a linear, rational decision-making process.

Step 7: **implementation of the client's plans and follow-up.**

It may be important to encourage the client to return, if the need arises. This may be difficult since some clients may regard return as failure (and possible loss of face).

CONCLUSION

In common with many others, Osipow and Littlejohn (1995) identify what they consider to be weaknesses in current theory for minority ethnic groups, and suggest how we might revise current approaches. To make them work better, it is suggested that we need to learn from work done on career development for women: more variables, therefore individual variables assume less importance (because they have less weight in sum total of variables).

Perhaps it is time to create career theories that try to describe career development and choice as it is and not as we think it should be. Such a shift might produce more powerful career concepts for all kinds of people *(p. 256)*

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3) DISCUSSION ON NGRF OF FIRST GENERATION INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS AND AVOIDING STEREOTYPING

The **first discussion** highlights how some **first generational international migrants** have a significantly more restricted understanding of contemporary occupational and training structures and discusses some implications of this for careers education.

Comment 1: What does it mean?

I would be very interested in this topic. I am not sure how it differs from immigrants - of which I am one!

Comment 2: Confusion around terminology

I am not sure of the exact meaning of this distinction either - perhaps it is that the people have not officially taken up residence here. That is, they may still wish to return 'home' or move on to somewhere else. However, on the substantive point it may be that these people have a less rich understanding of the labour market and this may result in choices being made from a rather narrow set of options

Comment 3: The importance of careers education for this client group

Young people hold very different views about the labour market, skill development and careers: "knowledge, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards skill formation are socially structured and not shared equally. Associated with this orientation is the notion that a series of 'cognitive filters' operate within the skills formation arena that strongly influence individuals' decision-making. Furthermore it is generally recognised that such 'cognitive filters' are asymmetric: the least

privileged in terms of social background have the least knowledge about how the system itself operates" (Penn, 1998, p. 4, emphasis in the original). Penn et al. (1993) similarly have shown that first generation international migrants have a significantly more restricted understanding of contemporary occupational and training structures. This means that attention has to be given to broad careers education, and without that notions such as flexibility and mobility will have little meaning, if both external constraints and internal cognitive filters are acting to limit individuals' thinking about skills formation, occupational choice and career development.

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Comment 4: The role of careers education in challenging world views

This seems to involve saying that disadvantaged people are disadvantaged by their own perceptions of the situation as well as the situation itself, but that this might be overcome by careers "education" (as opposed to guidance?). It seems a bit obvious in some ways: surely everyone is to some extent limited by their constructions of reality: we have no other way of perceiving "reality" than through our perception of it! Crucial, and of most interest, surely, is whether and how far this perception can be altered, not whether it exists, which we surely know by now?

The **second discussion focuses on Overcoming Stereotyping**.

Comment 1: Stereotyping - it's just an extension of what we all do

Stereotyping is actually an extension and intensification of what we all do: perceive the things that we perceive through our own personal "cognitive filters" that are based on our own personal past experiences among other things: it makes sense in many circumstances to do this since our own past experience is a good guide on the whole to our future ones (pragmatically rational anyway)....

The problem comes, in fact, not with stereotypical perceptions themselves, but when people refuse to accept invalidation of their perceptions - willingness to change one's point of view depends on accepting that you've got it "wrong" somehow and that there is a better way of viewing it that makes more sense for you. That willingness, I would argue, is unlikely in threatening or insecure situations. So overcoming stereotypical thinking needs to be about creating the confidence and security that we all need to handle the process of changing our minds - if I'm afraid, I'm going to reach for the familiar and tried and trusted perceptions that have worked for me in the past, not experiment with new ones. In other words, what may be happening with recent immigrants is that they haven't yet gained the confidence to change, haven't been given the security to do so, and to that extent cling to the remains of the familiar rather than face the invalidation of every cultural and social construct at the same time.

A similar process surely happens in overcoming racism, sexism and other constellatory thinking or stereotypes - we may be counterproductive in working on a blame-orientated programme of change: "challenging" stereotypes may be less effective (especially if you're not in a powerful position) than rewarding non-stereotypical behaviour. For example, if nursery nurses were paid commensurately with their value to society, would more men take up the role? If this was accompanied by social and other rewards for those men who do such work, this might be more effective than "challenging" men to "confront" their attitudes to childcare.

Comment 2: 'Engagement' not education is the key

A number of interesting points were made in the previous comment. Your point about the need for careers education is well made, but in order to change people's perceptions you have to engage them. This is where the arguments of Stephen Ball and colleagues come to the fore. They found that very often what careers staff were offering was for them perceived to be 'cold knowledge' that did not engage them as individuals. Do we have evidence of careers practitioners successfully overcoming this problem?

I agree with your point about rewarding non-stereotypical behaviour. Another way forward could come from greater exposure of what work actually entails. For example, in Germany (where many occupations are even more highly gendered than here) there far more males entering nursing and other caring occupations because of their experience of civil (non-military) service.

Comment 3: How do we address the issue of a hostile labour market

On the other hand there may also be some dangers in encouraging people (women into science and engineering?) to go into 'hostile' environments without addressing the fundamental reasons why those environments are hostile - this links to other strands of work of the equal opportunities group.

3.   Multi-cultural counselling

Research shows clients from ethnic minority groups are the least likely to make use of counselling services. One explanation for this is that it is an ethnocentric activity, based on the values of the white middle classes, an approach which can alienate those from other cultures. A multicultural approach to counselling challenges the assumption that one style of interviewing is transferable to all clients. This section examines a theory of multicultural counselling; definitions; and models of multiculturalism; highlighting the implications these have for guidance practitioners.

Theory of multicultural counselling and therapy (MCT)

Most career counselling and guidance practitioners would readily acknowledge that each client is unique, and that individual differences must be accepted and respected. However, practice - based on theories taught during initial training and subsequently developed into 'action theories' in the field - often reflects the assumption that a particular interviewing approach is transferable across a wide range of clients. Multicultural counselling challenges this view.

Sue et al. (1996) propose a theory of multicultural counselling and therapy (MCT). This is considered necessary because of the inadequacies of current theories informing current counselling practice. These theories operate from both explicit and implicit assumptions that guide their practical application, and so an `assumption audit' is presented as the starting point for the authors developing MCT as an essential starting point for understanding this new theory.

It's suggested (p. 2) that we all conduct a `critical and independent audit' of assumptions which currently underlay our counselling practice, and compare it with the one presented below.

Underlying Assumptions:

- Current theories of counselling and psychotherapy inadequately describe, explain, predict and deal with current cultural diversity.

- Culture is complex but not chaotic.

- Diversification is occurring at such a rapid pace that mental-health professionals will

- increasingly come into contact with clients or client groups who differ from them racially,

- culturally and ethnically.

- Mental-health professionals are not adequately prepared to engage in multicultural

- practice.

- The traditional training models of professional schools contribute to encapsulation.

- A major paradigm shift is in process.

- Multiculturalism provides a fourth dimension to the three traditional helping orientations (psychodynamic, existential-humanistic and cognitive).

- Asian, African and other non-Western progenitors of counselling and psychotherapy have been trivialized.

- Individualism has dominated the mental-health field and is strongly reflected in counselling and psychotherapy.

- A culture-centred meta-theory is viable.

- All learning occurs and identities are formed in a cultural context.

- Cultural identity is dynamic and changing.

- Unintentional racism is as serious as intentional racism.

- Multicultural training increased a counsellor's repertoire of skills and perspectives.

- Informal as well as formal counselling is important in many cultural contexts.

- Culture should be defined inclusively and broadly rather than narrowly.

- Understanding the cultural and socio-political context of a client's behaviour is essential to accurate assessment, interpretation and treatment.

- An adequate research methodology for incorporating culture must include both qualitative and quantitative elements.

- Increased self-awareness is an essential starting point in developing multicultural competence.

- The accumulation of relevant knowledge depends on a well-developed cultural awareness.

- The appropriate application of skills in multicultural settings depends on both cultural awareness and relevant knowledge.

Their theory is then developed around this set of propositions.

What is multicultural counselling?

A broad definition of the term 'multiculturalism' embraces a wide range of social variables or differences. For example:

- gender,

- sexual preference,

- disability,

- social class,

- age,

- religion,

- ethnicity.

Pedersen (1994) proposed a broad definition of multicultural counselling which includes:

- 'ethnographic variables such as ethnicity, nationality, religion and language; demographic variables such as age, gender and place of residence; status variables such as social, educational and economic; and affiliations including both formal affiliations to family or organizations and informal affiliations to ideas and a lifestyle' (p. 229).

In this broad definition, each person has many different cultures or identities with each identity becoming relevant at different times and places. He argues that multiculturalism emphasises both the way we are different from and similar to other people. It challenges those who have presumed that differences don't matter as well as those who have over emphasized differences (often perpetuating stereotypes

Ivey *et al.* (1997, p. 134) describe multicultural counselling as a 'meta-theoretical approach that recognises that all helping methods ultimately exist within a cultural context'. They go on to argue that multiculturalism:

- starts with awareness of differences among and within clients;

- stresses the importance of family and cultural factors affecting the way clients view the world;

- challenges practitioners, theoreticians and researchers to rethink the meaning of counselling, and pay attention to family and cultural concerns.

By these definitions, multiculturalism has relevance for every client presenting for careers counselling and guidance in the UK.

Origins and relevance of multicultural counselling

Bimrose (1996, p. 238) traces the origins of multicultural counselling to the American Civil Rights movement in the mid-1970s. Around this time, questions were asked about the groups of people who never requested counselling, or, if they came along for a first session, did not return. A clear pattern emerged. Clients from minority ethnic groups were the least likely to request and/or persevere with counselling.

The most widely accepted explanation is that counselling (and guidance) practice is an ethnocentric activity. Many authors (e.g. Ridley, 1995, Lago & Thompson 1996, Sue et al, 1996 and Sue & Sue, 1999) have argued that mainstream approaches are white, middle class activities that operate with many distinctive values and assumptions. For example, that clients will be future and action orientated. Such approaches are ethnocentric or 'culturally encapsulated' (Wrenn, 1985), holding at their centre a notion of normality derived from white culture, which is irrelevant to many clients and has the potential for alienating them.

This explanation of why ethnically different clients find mainstream counselling unhelpful has equal relevance to other client differences such as gender, sexual preference and disability. The central message is clear - caution needs to be exercised when applying mainstream approaches to diverse groups of clients.

Implications for practice

Because a multicultural approach to counselling is relatively new, the implications for practice are still being developed. There is some agreement, however, that whilst maintaining the integrity of the distinctive new approach, multicultural counselling should strive to select and build on the best of current counselling practice. Sue et al (1995, p633) developed a `conceptual framework for cross-cultural competencies' which can help with this. It consists of a three by three matrix in which it is claimed most cross-cultural skills can either be organized or developed.

A selection of skills, techniques and strategies are presented, below, within the framework developed by Sue and Sue (1995), who identified the competencies required by the culturally skilled counsellor as being:

- awareness of own assumptions, values and biases;

- understanding the world view of the culturally different client;

- developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques.

Increasing self-awareness

Many writers in the area of multicultural counselling advocate the need for all practitioners to start on a continual process of multicultural self-awareness.

- The first task is to think about yourself;

- the second to identify the values of the dominant culture in which you practise counselling or communication;

- the third is to examine alternative value orientations.

Bimrose (1998) discusses more fully exercises and schema which have been developed to assist with this type of self-examination. For example, Locke (1992, p. 2) suggests that practitioners work through the following questions:

- What is my cultural heritage? What was the culture of my parents and my grandparents? With what cultural group(s) do I identify?

- What is the cultural relevance of my name?

- What values, beliefs, opinions and attitudes do I hold that are consistent with the dominant culture? Which are inconsistent? How did I learn these?

- How did I decide to become a practitioner? What cultural standards were involved in the process? What do I understand to be the relationship between culture and counselling?

- What unique abilities, aspirations, expectations, and limitations do I have that might influence my relations with culturally diverse individuals?

If you are able to compare your answers to some or all of these questions with others, then the effectiveness of the learning process is likely to be increased. All the questions have value, though the second question often has most impact, perhaps because it highlights the extent to which the cultural conventions surrounding the naming system of the dominant society are taken for granted by acculturated members of that society.

Developing knowledge and understanding

An exercise which can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of difference is a role play exercise adapted from a conference workshop run by Jackson (1995). The exercise requires a training group of three people, approximately two hours when these three people can work together on this exercise, a suitable room and some individual research time. Jackson identified two main purposes of the exercise:

- First, to develop empathic understanding by enabling you to attempt to discover what it might feel like to be a person who comes from a different background.

- Second, to enable you to begin to identify some practice guidelines that counsellors might follow to enhance their effectiveness with clients who are different from them-selves.

In preparation for the role-play, select someone from a culturally different group about which feel you are currently ignorant or have an inadequate understanding but would like to gain a more thorough understanding. It is important to define `culturally' in this context in the broadest possible sense (that is, to include social class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, etc.). As thoroughly as time permits, research the background of the people who come from that background. The research process should harness a range of resources, including someone from your chosen group.

Once the individual research has been completed, the training process involves working in your training group for approximately one and a half hours. During this time each member of the group will perform in turn tasks related to the three roles of client, counsellor and observer.

Client: for approximately fifteen minutes, you have an opportunity to be a person from a group that is culturally different from your own. Come prepared to present a problem or concern to a counsellor or health professional who would like to help you. Identify some realistic concern that the person you have chosen actually has had or might reasonably be expected to have.

Counsellor: you will be asked by a 'client' to help resolve some difficulty that will be presented to you. If you wish, you may ask your 'observer' for ideas and suggestions on how to proceed.

Observer: you will be available to the counsellor to offer ideas and suggestions. After the role play, you will lead the feedback session which should identify the most helpful statements or actions performed by the counsellor.

Suggested guidelines:

- Introductions: as client, introduce yourself to your two colleagues (the name of your person along with relevant cultural information). (2/3 minutes in total)

- Role play: conduct a brief counselling session in which the client presents a concern and the counsellor attempts to be as helpful as possible. (approximately 15 minutes)

- Feedback: review the session with the purpose of identifying the most helpful actions. All three members of the training group should contribute their observations. (approximately 10 minutes)

Finally, after you have each completed all three role plays, observations should be pooled so that the most useful practices can be identified.

Skills for multicultural competence

In addition to working towards a greater cultural self-awareness and developing your knowledge and understanding of client difference, practitioners need to think about the way in which their skills should to be adapted or changed to accommodate the particular needs of certain client groups.

Ivey *et al.* (1997) and Ivey (1994) suggest that culturally appropriate nonverbal behaviour is crucial to successful counselling outcomes. Ivey (1994, p. 75) advocates that all practising counsellors 'begin a lifetime of study of nonverbal communication patterns and their variations'. Various categories of nonverbal behaviour are identified and some cultural implications for each category (e.g. eye contact, posture, touching, vocal tracking) are discussed (Ivey, 1994, p29).

Non-verbal communication provides one example of skill that can be easily examined for bias and modified. An effective method of enhancing your competence in this area is practising with a friend or trusted colleague.

- Select various combinations of non-verbal communication (for example, eye contact, posture and hand gestures.

- Try to demonstrate effective listening without using the non-verbal behaviour that you would normally use in your counselling or communication. (For example, if you normally try to sustain eye contact, you could try communicating without eye contact , look away or down at the floor). How did you feel? Ask the other person how they felt.

Is it possible to adopt different styles of non-verbal communication and still listen effectively?

Conclusion

The current policy emphasis on social exclusion and equal opportunities in guidance and counselling highlights the need for professional practice that is responsive to and accommodates these important client issues in an effective manner. Multicultural counselling represents a relatively new approach, offering practical methods designed to enhance practice that can be integrated into current approaches.

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